

**Learning/Volunteer Abroad (LVA) Programs at the University of Ottawa: An
Examination of the Preparation and Training Students Receive Prior to
Departure**

Jennifer Oberhammer

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School of International Development and Global Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ottawa

Abstract

Learning/volunteer abroad (LVA) programs offer important opportunities for students to develop cross-cultural skills and global competence. Universities recognize the value of international experiential learning programs in terms of skills development and career preparation as one component in their internationalization policies and priorities. Scholarly studies on international education and LVA programs have examined university internationalization priorities in promoting international experiential learning. Other scholarly contributions to the field of LVA have documented the nature of students' experiences, learning outcomes, critical analysis of impacts, and motivations, among other important research areas. Within the LVA scholarship, there are frequent references to the importance of pre-departure training and preparation of students. Many of the references to the value of pre-departure training move beyond practical information (such as staying safe and staying healthy while abroad) to more critical discussions of cross-cultural learning opportunities, ethical considerations, and impacts. Despite these references to the importance of pre-departure training, there are few studies documenting the nature and content of pre-departure training for students participating in international experiences through an academic institution. As a result, there is no clear sense of the range of pre-departure training programs, what information students are receiving as part of their pre-departure training or the impact of training on the outcomes of the students' learning.

This thesis aimed to fill this gap by examining the preparation and training provided to students prior to their international experiences. Through the utilization of a case study approach based on the University of Ottawa's LVA programs' pre-departure training, this research specifically analysed the content that is currently employed during pre-departure training and how it ranged across LVA programs. The findings demonstrate that, while all LVA programs

provided pre-departure training and covered similar content themes, there was also a range in the content provided across the LVA programs' pre-departure training. Specifically, the greatest diversity in content was found in the depth of discussion provided to students regarding cross-cultural understanding, ethics, experiential learning, and reflection.

Analysis of the identified differences across LVA programs suggest there are likely implications for students' learning generated from their experience abroad. When students are not prepared to critically understand the complexities associated with living, studying, and/or working cross-culturally and how to reflect upon and generate knowledge from their experiences overseas, learn/volunteer programs may have limited or even negative impacts on cross-cultural understanding and global competence.

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Learning/Volunteer Abroad (LVA) Programs at the University of Ottawa: An Examination of the Preparation and Training Students Receive Prior to Departure

1. Introduction:

1.1. Internationalization and LVA Programs within Canadian Universities

The promotion of learning/volunteer abroad (LVA) options for Canadian students arises, in part, from university strategic commitments to internationalization. Within Canada, the majority of universities have created internationalization strategies or have included internationalization as part of their core mandate (Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Universities Canada, 2014; Heron, 2011). Universities therefore contribute in important ways to internationalizing education (Altbach & Teichler, 2001) with LVA options and student mobility programs as a key component of that strategy. Internationalization is defined by Knight as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003). According to a Universities Canada’s 2014 survey, 97% of Canadian universities had international experiences available to their students and 80% stated that internationalization ranked within their top five planning priorities (Universities Canada, 2014). Approximately 25,000 (or 3.1% of) students registered in full-time undergraduate studies at a Canadian university travelled abroad as part of their education in 2012-2013 (Universities Canada, 2014). International experiences through Canadian universities occur in a variety of different types of programs including, but not limited to: international field schools, service learning, study abroad, international exchanges, international internships, field research courses, international work experiences, etc. (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2016). This thesis begins with a discussion of university commitments to LVA programs through internationalization strategies to contextualize the institutional

responsibility to adequately prepare students for their international experiences. When Canadian universities prioritize LVA programs through their internationalization strategies, it is imperative that these universities also facilitate the learning experience, and an essential component of that learning experience is the pre-departure training.

According to Universities Canada, the main reasons why Canadian universities are prioritizing internationalization is: (1) to prepare students to be internationally knowledgeable and inter-culturally competent; (2) to build strategic alliances with other universities internationally; (3) to internationalize their campus; (4) to increase the university's global profile; and (5) to increase revenue (Universities Canada, 2014). While the percentage of students going abroad as part of the university studies is relatively small, students have also created demand for LVA programs within and outside of university programs to provide them with the opportunity to understand and experience global issues and connectivity (Drolet, 2014; Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Tiessen, 2012). Furthermore, international education experts and university administrators argue that much larger numbers of students should be going abroad as part of their education to better prepare them for the globalized job market (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2016). The motivations expressed by students for participation in LVA programs include similar priorities as Canadian universities; particularly preparation for international work and intercultural competence. Other motivations identified by students include: (1) to experience personal growth; (2) to help others; (3) to enhance cross-cultural learning; (4) to develop skills; (5) to test an academic or career choice; and (6) job experience (Tiessen, 2012).

Throughout this thesis, several other research studies are documented and lay the foundation for our understanding of the internationalization context, motivations and impact of

LVA programs as educational opportunities for Canadian students. International learn/volunteer opportunities can provide students with a valuable learning opportunity that develops students' cross-cultural competency, their understanding of inequality and how to work in solidarity with the Global South to challenge the global structures that perpetuate global inequality (Tiessen & Huish, 2014). However, a review of the literature underscores the need for a deeper analysis of LVA programs, particularly their impacts on universities, students and host communities. The contribution to the scholarship provided in this thesis is specific to the role that universities play in facilitating international and intercultural education, specifically how well universities prepare students for their cross-cultural experience in LVA programs.

1.2. Research Rationale

Scholarship on international education and LVA programs for university students has documented many important studies pertaining to the student experience, learning outcomes, critical analyses of impacts, identity formation, and motivations (Cameron, 2014; Clost, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; MacDonald, 2014; Huish, 2014; Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Tiessen, 2014; Roddick, 2014; Simpson, 2004; Heron, 2011). These important contributions to scholarship are explored in greater detail throughout this thesis. Many of these scholarly contributions highlight the significance of good preparation and pre-departure training (Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Travers, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014) and that in-depth pre-departure training, reflection and return debriefing are essential to advanced learning and improved inter-cultural communication during students' international experience (Drolet, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Dean & Jendzurski, 2013; MacDonald, 2014; Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014; Schwartz, et al., 2011; Travers, 2014). Authors such as Desrosiers and Thomson (2014), Schwartz, et al (2011), and

Dean and Jendzurski (2013), have reflected on their own program-specific methods used to prepare students prior to their international experience and offer recommendations as to what content should be taught during pre-departure training. Furthermore, Tiessen and Kumar discuss how ethics preparation can be enhanced for LVA programs (2013). However, there is no empirical research documenting the nature of pre-departure training within or across Canadian universities, as the research examining pre-departure training is largely anecdotal or case study-oriented. Furthermore, there are no comprehensive studies examining a variety of training programs, or the similarities and differences across these programs. The challenge that anecdotal or case-specific scholarship on pre-departure programs poses is that we do not have a clear sense of the range of pre-departure training programs nor do we know what the majority of students are receiving as part of their pre-departure education.

During the review of the literature, no scholarly sources were available that examined the existing content of pre-departure training used within Canadian universities. As such, the research conducted for this thesis fills an important gap in the literature as it seeks to understand the diversity of content currently taught during pre-departure training across a range of LVA programs within a Canadian university. The research presented herein offers insight into the nature of the content of pre-departure training across several programs offered at one Canadian university. In particular, the analysis emerging from this examination offers potential revisions and recommendations for improved preparation of students in line with the broader debates in the literature on LVA.

1.3. Research Questions and Hypothesis

Through the use of a case study that employed the University of Ottawa, this research explored the topics and issues that are taught to students in the pre-departure training offered for

LVA programs at the University of Ottawa and how this content may vary across the different LVA programs.

This research aimed to: (1) understand the content of pre-departure training offered to students at the University of Ottawa who participate in LVA programs; (2) understand if the content of the pre-departure training differed across the LVA programs at the University of Ottawa; and (3) analyse the content of LVA pre-departure training in the context of the scholarly debates in the literature on LVA. A hypothesis that emerged from the critical literature and scholarly contributions of LVA, is that pre-departure training varies considerably across LVA programs and that University-based LVA programs generally provide limited preparation to students regarding ethical issues they will encounter and the social justice dimensions of these experiences abroad, particularly for those students who travel to the Global South where inequalities are most visible.

The research questions guiding this project included:

- (1) Do students receive pre-departure training for LVA programs at the University of Ottawa? If so, what is the content of the training?
- (2) How does the pre-departure training content differ across LVA programs at the University of Ottawa?
- (3) What are the implications (if any) of the diverse training materials?

To answer these research questions and to contribute to filling the aforementioned knowledge gap, this research employed a case study of the University of Ottawa's LVA programs. A total of seven pre-departure training programs were examined. The examination of these programs included the following methods: 1. Content analysis, coding based on key terms

and subject themes; 2. Five interviews with program representatives, coding and content analysis of the interview transcripts based on key terms and subject themes; and 3. Literature review of scholarly material, reports, and documents. Further details of my methods are discussed in the Methodology section.

1.4. Definitions

The practice of LVA takes on numerous forms including, but not limited to, study abroad, international internships, international research internships, international practicums, field research courses, volunteer abroad, international development volunteering, semester abroad, international exchange, and gap years. The Canadian Bureau for International Education provides definitions for many of the terms used for various types of international learning and volunteering experiences (2016). An examination of the diverse LVA options and the lack of a widely-accepted typology of terms make the categorization of LVA options a significant challenge, particularly when programs combine some elements of study abroad with practicum placements or volunteer work.

The term LVA is used by Tiessen and Heron (2012) and defined by Tiessen (2012) to describe youth (18-30 years) who travel abroad, often to the Global South, for short periods of time (less than six months) for the purpose of learning and/or volunteering. For the purpose of this research, the term LVA will be used to represent the numerous terms often used when students go abroad as part of their university education to learn and/or volunteer. These experiences can include international internships, international exchanges, field research courses, semesters abroad, international electives, international work-terms, etc.

When defining LVA programs it is important to discuss the difference between volunteer abroad and volunteer tourism (aka “voluntourism”). In some of the literature examined on the topic of LVA, the differences between volunteer abroad and volunteer tourism is not always distinguished and definitions for volunteer tourism can overlap with elements of volunteer abroad programs (Baily & Russell, 2012; Lyons & Wearing, 2008). Tiessen’s (2012) article on motivations for LVA programs does distinguish volunteer tourism as different from volunteering abroad through development internships. The main difference noted by Tiessen is that volunteer tourism is a form of tourism that includes a short (one to four weeks) volunteer experience (Tiessen, 2012). Alternatively, the practice of volunteering abroad prioritizes the volunteer work, not the tourist experience and is often longer in length than volunteer tourism (Tiessen, 2012). On the other hand, Wearing’s definition does not distinguish between volunteer tourism and volunteering abroad. Rather, he defines volunteer tourism as an alternative form of tourism whereby participants are seeking a tourist experience with an added volunteer element (Wearing, 2001).

The literature used within this research touches on all forms of international learning and volunteering, including both volunteer abroad and volunteer tourism; however, when analysing the literature and data collected on pre-departure training material, differences will be identified and discussed in greater detail between volunteer tourism experiences and LVA programs where appropriate.

1.5. Case Study Context: About LVA Programs at the University of Ottawa

The University of Ottawa is located in Canada’s capital city, Ottawa. According to the university’s website, it is the largest bilingual university in Canada with over 40,000 students

registered within the university's 450 programs offered through ten different faculties (University of Ottawa, 2016a).

The University of Ottawa offers a number of different LVA programs for students to participate in as part of their undergraduate and graduate degrees. According to the University of Ottawa's website, 781 students travelled abroad in 2014-2015 for an international exchange through the International Office (including COOP students) (University of Ottawa, 2015b). International exchanges at the University of Ottawa are only one of many LVA opportunities offered to students. Statistics indicating participant numbers were unfortunately not available for other LVA programs. However, the university's strategic plan notes doubling the number of students participating in mobility programs to 1,000 a year between 2011 and 2020 (University of Ottawa, 2011). Therefore, when accounting all international mobility programs, current numbers could be estimated to be within the range of 800-900 students travelling abroad each year.

Through internet research and discussions with university staff involved in LVA experiences, three central offices at the University of Ottawa were identified as offering LVA programs to all eligible students: The International Office, the Cooperative Education Office, and the Office of Undergraduate Research. There were also five faculties, which organized and offered their own LVA programs: The Faculty of Social Sciences, Telfer School of Business Management, the Faculty of Civil Law, the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and the Faculty of Medicine. Extensive internet research of the university's website did not identify any other faculties offering LVA experiences, yet some faculties may still offer students LVA experiences not identified within the faculty's main webpage. For the purpose of this research,

only LVA programs identified within the faculty's publically available webpage were used as part of this research sample.

2. Literature Review

There is a wide body of literature that critically analyzes the various practices of LVA. The following literature review will situate the goals and importance of this research within the broad theoretical framework of critical theory followed by a critical discussion of the overarching themes that emerge within the literature that employs a critical theoretical lens; these themes include: a brief historical context of the practice of LVA; a discussion of how LVA is influenced by the marketing of development; an examination of the colonial parallels identified in the practice of LVA; students' motivating factors for participating in LVA programs; and, the ethical considerations for student preparation. The literature review will also draw on two additional theoretical lenses of cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism to position the discussion of LVA within the context of global citizenship education. Lastly, this literature review will emphasise the importance of student preparation for LVA programs and provide the rationale for this research.

It is important to mention that within the overall body of LVA literature, authors often narrow their focus to a particular type of LVA experience whether it be: study abroad/learn abroad, work-study abroad, international experiential learning, international internships, international placements, and/or global citizenship education. There is also substantial literature discussing volunteer tourism, which has been included within this literature review because of the similarities between volunteer tourism programs and LVA programs offered through universities. However, where it was important to do so, distinctions between the types of

programs have been made within the review. In general, all forms of volunteering and/or studying abroad will be discussed using the term LVA.

2.1. Critical Theoretical Framework and LVA

For this research, critical theory was broadly used as a guiding theoretical framework for understanding the research findings and the scholarly works analysed. Critical theory evolved from the works of German philosophers and social theorists known as the Frankfurt School (Boham, 2015; Rexhepi & Torres, 2011; Marrow & Brown, 1994; Sen, Salas, & Segal, 2010). Critical theory is concerned with analysing society and social practices to understand ways to improve social issues identified (Sen, Salas, & Segal, 2010; Marrow & Brown, 1994). In applying a critical theoretical lens, a social phenomenon is examined and understood through consideration of the multiple dimensions that influence it, such as historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts (Sen, Salas, & Segal, 2010). Power, relations of domination and social inequality are another focus within critical theory so that critiques of the practice can influence visions of alternative solutions (Marrow & Brown, 1994). As well, critical theory employs reflexivity to understand the researcher's own values, beliefs and bias in understanding the phenomenon at hand (Sen, Salas, & Segal, 2010). Furthermore, the ideology of critical theory can be found in other theoretical frameworks including post-colonial theory, feminist theory, and critical race theory (Boham, 2015; Sen, Salas, & Segal, 2010). The use of critical theory does not necessarily mean applying a judgemental lens to the findings, but rather attempting to understand what are essential components of what is occurring within the social phenomenon being examined and what may be alternatives or improvements (Sen, Salas, & Segal, 2010). It is within the contextual lens of critical theory whereby a critical analysis of LVA experiences and limits

identified within the literature and findings allows for the development of comprehensive recommendations for enhancing the practice of LVA.

The use of a critical theoretical lens in analysing the practice of LVA programs thus takes into consideration the historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts that influence the practice as a whole. Furthermore, a critical theoretical lens provides a crucial and comprehensive understanding of the LVA as a means of generating positive change within the practice.

The following literature review discusses how critical theory is employed within the LVA literature by providing background of the historical evolution of contemporary LVA practices; context for the influence of development marketing on LVA; discussing the colonial parallels that are critiqued as being recreated through LVA programs; analysing the motivations of students seeking out LVA experiences; and lastly, understanding some of the ethical encounters associated with LVA.

2.2. Historical Context of LVA Programs

When understanding LVA practices through the use of a critical theoretical lens, it is important to understand the historical context of LVA. The following subsection contextualizes LVA within its historical roots in missionary work to the contemporary forms of going abroad to learn and/or volunteer.

The practice of young people travelling to other parts of the world to study, work, or volunteer is by no means a new phenomenon. The origins of contemporary LVA date back to missionary work by the Jesuits in Canada in the 17th century (Epprecht, 2004) and more globally in the 19th century whereby missionaries, doctors and teachers travelled to provide aid to others

(Benson, 2011; Epprecht, 2004). Following the First World War, this act of international help for others developed through work brigades (Epprecht, 2004) and a growing desire among people for peace and relief of suffering (Tomazos & Cooper, 2012). The Peace Corps and Red Cross were two organizations created out of this desire, and of which their practices of volunteering and providing aid have been incorporated into contemporary LVA programs (Tomazos & Cooper, 2012).

Some forms of LVA have evolved differently after this “helping desire” following WWI. One evolution is in the form of volunteer tourism, which has developed out of the wider tourism market as a form of alternative tourism that promotes itself as both sustainable and community engaged (Wearing, 2001). Volunteer tourism has formed alongside other kinds of alternative tourism including eco-tourism, backpacking, adventure tourism (Wearing, 2001), poverty tourism (Rolfes, 2010), and orphan tourism (Richter & Norman, 2010). Volunteer tourism, according to Mostafanezhad (2013) is one of the fastest growing niche markets in world tourism. The niche market of volunteer tourism has been described as commoditizing people’s altruistic values into a profitable business (Tomazos & Cooper, 2012) and a practice termed ‘self-serving philanthropy’ by Wren and Bedian in Tomazos and Cooper (2012).

LVA programs centred on learning have also evolved from the desire for peace and the relief of suffering following WWI. International learning opportunities in the 1920/30s initially focused on a homestay visit to foster a learning about the “other” to avoid war and poverty (Epprecht, 2004). Beginning in the mid-90s, the priority of learning abroad moved towards more current agendas of youth employment strategies and critical thinking of development objectives (Epprecht, 2004). Today there is a multitude of different programs offering opportunities for all age groups that include international volunteering, studying, or some combination of the two.

While the focus of LVA programs is primarily targeted towards youth, who are more easily uprooted and eagerly seeking international experience to build their credentials for employability, there are also LVA programs that focus on recruiting skilled professionals belonging to the 55 plus age group who may have been made redundant and are seeking new opportunities to enhance their CVs in today's globally competitive environment (Smith & Laurie, 2011).

The historical context above provides some background context in regards to how LVA practices today have evolved from missionary work and a desire for peacebuilding through helping and understanding others to the contemporary practices geared towards learning and helping through volunteerism. There are also colonial legacies that are apparent in the historical evolution of LVA programs; this is a theme that will be discussed in greater detail later in this literature review. While a critical theoretical lens values the importance of understanding the historical context and how it influences the practice of LVA, there are also more contemporary elements that have influenced the practice and our understanding of LVA programs that are equally important to understand. LVA programs have also evolved and continue to change in response to how international development is understood and marketed today.

2.3. Influences of Development Marketing on LVA Programs

Many forms of LVA practiced today foster an element of international development understanding either through work via internships and volunteering, or through research and learning within the Global South (Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014). How development is understood and marketed within LVA programs is, therefore, also crucial in developing a comprehensive understanding of LVA.

The historical context above discusses the desire to help and develop an understanding of “others” that resulted following the devastation caused by the First World War. This desire to help has been analysed within the literature in regards to how development is marketed and understood through images, videos and humanitarian campaigns (Clost, 2014; Mostafanezhad, 2013; Simpson, 2004; Keese, 2011; Smith, 2013; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; Kirk, 2012). The way in which development is marketed is argued to not only portray a need within the Global South (Keese, 2011; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; Clost, 2014), but also create “public imaginaries” that popularises development by “making it sexy” through the use of celebrity involvement (Smith, 2013, p. 403). Celebrity campaigns such as “Make Poverty History” or “We Days”, from the popular voluntourism organizations “Me-to-We”, contribute to how the Global North understands poverty and inequality and the “need” for development within the Global South (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; Smith, 2013; Dorga, 2007; Wells, 2013).

When celebrity campaigns popularise the notion of international development work, it generates an interest in people, particularly youth, to get involved and participate in development work through LVA type programs. Video campaigns by NGOs that were analysed by Wells (2013), used melodrama to entice peoples’ moral good to act and support the cause to end poverty. The choice of photographs and discourse used to market LVA options is also carefully chosen by organizations and programs to draw in volunteers and students (Clost, 2014; Mostafanezhad, 2013; Keese, 2011; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Organizations often want to depict not only a need by communities, but also the safe, friendly, and culturally vibrant experience that volunteering overseas offers (Keese, 2011). Marketing has, subsequently, played a role in the growth of LVA programs and their demand by students within educational intuitions. Images of celebrities, such as Angelina Jolie, and their presence in humanitarianism and global issues has

been argued by Mostafanezhad to influence female youth to get involved in similar experiences (2013). As well, social media sites allow for youth to recreate these images of celebrities through their own experiences posting similar pictures such as the common white female surrounded by dark-skinned children (Mostafanezhad, 2013). Images such as these recreate power and knowledge imbalances between white and non-white bodies that is argued among the literature as creating parallels to colonialism (Mostafanezhad, 2013; Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014; Perold, Graham, Mavungu, Muchemwa, & Lough, 2012).

LVA programs have roots in various historical events and practices that contributed to a desire among people to help others, but have since been popularized by how NGOs and LVA organizations make use of images and celebrity campaigns to make development attractive and trendy. The use of critical theory allows us to understand how the historical evolution of LVA and contemporary marketing of development that influence LVA have contributed to creating power imbalances between the Global North and South. The next couple of subthemes within this literature review provide more of a critical analysis of the practice of LVA in regards its colonial legacies and ethical challenges.

2.4. Colonial Parallels and International Development Work

Within the large body of literature that applies a critical theoretical lens to understanding LVA programs, there are numerous critiques regarding the neocolonial elements of LVA programs and the ethical challenges these parallels create. The colonial parallels that LVA programs have been critiqued for reproducing generally discuss the oversimplification of development through LVA programs; the power and knowledge imbalances between Global North and South that are present in LVA practices; the imbalance of benefits between the Global

North and South that derive from the practice of LVA; and lastly, how LVA can be understood as a consumable experience of “others”.

LVA programs that emphasize international development work through volunteering have been critiqued as oversimplifying the practice of international development (Simpson, 2004). The simplification of development occurs when a “geography of need” is created, but the systemic causes of inequality and poverty are omitted from understanding why a “need” exists (Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2010; Ingram, 2011). Thus, development becomes about providing for the identified need and anyone with a “desire to help” can “do” development (Simpson, 2004; Ingram, 2011; Sin, 2010). The understanding of development as simply addressing the identified “need” goes back to the discussion above regarding how development discourse is created through marketing and celebrity campaigns like “Make Poverty History” (Smith, 2013). The public campaigns by NGOs to fundraise towards ending poverty are often successful in raising money. However, as is argued by Kirk (2012), these fundraising campaigns fail to change how the public understands the causes of global inequality and, therefore, fail to create any systemic change that is required to truly end poverty and inequality. Instead these campaigns to end poverty are reinforcing the mentality of a “need” and the solution being acts of charity (Kirk, 2012). Furthermore, acts of charity become understood as a powerful giver or an “us” and a poor and needy receiver or a “them” (Kirk, 2012). As a result, people give towards these charity campaigns to end poverty so that we can make “them” more like “us” (Kirk, 2012) and the act of solidarity and a critical understanding of the causes of global inequality are left underdeveloped or nonexistent. If students, or the general public, are truly concerned with ending poverty or global injustices, then they will require an attitude of working *with* or “alongside” them as opposed to that of “saving” them (Kirk, 2012; MacDonald, 2014). Many LVA opportunities

similarly market their programs through perceptions of a “need” within the Global South and young volunteers as being in an able position to assist (Simpson, 2004). As well, many NGOs offer LVA programs, hence, how NGOs market and contribute to our understanding of development as “doable” (Simpson, 2004) is important in critically understanding the practice of LVA programs.

While the argument that development is oversimplified through LVA practices is valid, it is also important to distinguish that LVA programs vary greatly in their design and objectives. It must also be considered that there are LVA programs designed to engage students in a critical understanding of international development and the structural and systemic causes of inequality (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014). There are also LVA programs that strive to foster actions of solidarity instead of charity within participating students. Not all LVA programs, however, strive towards this and those that do may still be able to enhance their programming to generate greater understanding towards solidarity and critical reflexivity.

Another common critique of the LVA industry as recreating colonial parallels is in regards to the power and knowledge imbalances that are present within the practice of youth from the Global North travelling to learn and/or volunteer within the Global South. When LVA programs’ objectives are to “help” based on a perceived “need” within the Global South that has been identified by the Global North, then the knowledge of the Global North becomes superior to the knowledge and ability of the Global South (Heron, 2007). The knowledge formation of the South being in need of the North’s assistance can be deconstructed to be understood as Eurocentric notions derived from Western domination through colonialism (Wearing & Grabowski, 2011). Furthermore, not only is the Global North positioned in a place of power to identify the need, but their status of power is also played out in the North’s ability to provide the

assistance through young, often unskilled, volunteers (Simpson, 2004). Young students or volunteers without the formal training or experience are, consequently, automatically positioned as more knowledgeable than their host community/organization (Simpson, 2004; Heron, 2007). Furthermore, unskilled youth practicing development through LVA raises grave ethical concerns regarding the imbalance of power and potentially harmful outcomes that may arise when unskilled students are positioned as experts in the field (Simpson, 2004; Heron, 2007).

The imbalance of power dynamics is also apparent in terms of how host communities' lack the power to dictate who can volunteer with them and what qualifications and skills the volunteers must possess (Perold, Graham, Mavungu, Muchemwa, & Lough, 2012; Sin, 2010; Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014). The recruitment and placement of volunteers is often done through intermediary organizations (NGOs, academic institutes, volunteer abroad organizations, for profit voluntourism corporations) that place volunteers within host organizations (Perold, Graham, Mavungu, Muchemwa, & Lough, 2012; Sin, 2010; Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014). While Perold, *et al*, do discuss that white volunteers are valued by host organizations because of the trust they produce, as well as the status and assumed knowledge they bring to the organization (2012), the imbalance of power present within LVA also raises questions about who benefits the most from LVA programs.

The imbalance of benefits between the volunteers and host organization/communities that results from LVA programs is another element of how LVA is discussed as recreating colonial parallels. There is often an assumption that volunteering in the Global South benefits the local communities and organizations. However, when benefits of hosting international volunteers are identified, they are frequently presented as minor forms of assistance (Tiessen & Heron, 2012). Additionally, host organizations do not consider all aspects of hosting international volunteers to

be beneficial as volunteers take up valuable resources and time to ensure foreign volunteers/students are safe and their needs are met (Tiessen & Heron, 2012). Volunteers and students on the other hand benefit greatly from the cross-cultural and international experience required within today's globally competitive job market. A clear imbalance of benefits therefore exists when volunteers are benefiting more from their experience than they are giving back to their host community/organizations. The inequality of benefits identified are argued, by Heron (2011) and Sin (2010), to have similarities with colonialization, when the colonizers gained more from their relationship with the colonized.

A final aspect of LVA that is critiqued as being neocolonial goes back to understanding LVA as a consumable experience of the Global South or "others" (Simpson, 2004). LVA programs can be a method in which people learn about other people and cultures, especially those in the Global South who are understood as living an "authentic" lifestyle (Ingram, 2011). However, this experience of the "authentic other" is critiqued as being a commoditization of the Global South as consumable experiences that place less value on the South (hosts) compared to the North (volunteers) (Ingram, 2011, p. 216). Not only are there colonial parallels when the North is able to purchase experiences of "others" in the South, but the "othering" that occurs in this process also reinforces colonial type relationships of an "us" versus a "them" (Ingram, 2011; Sin, 2010; Simpson, 2004). The divide between "us" and "them" similarly links back to the discussion above regarding power and knowledge imbalances and the North being in the superior position to know best and provide for the identified "need" within the Global South. The relationship between North and South is analysed, by Sin, as a "geography of responsibility" whereby the volunteers from the Global North are in a privileged position to be responsible over the Global South who is in a less privileged position (Sin, 2010, pp. 984-987). Geographies of

responsibilities overlap with discussions in the literature that draw on cosmopolitanism; this is discussed later in this literature review.

All of the above colonial critiques of LVA also highlight the ethical challenges that are present within the overall structure of LVA. When privileged students/volunteers from the Global North are afforded the ability to use the Global South as a place to enhance their résumés and generate an understanding of others, there are clear ethical concerns when benefits are one-directional (Tiessen, 2012; Tiessen & Heron, 2012). Additionally, when unskilled students are placed in positions to offer expertise on development, not only does this produce unethical relationships that undermine local knowledge, but it generates a greater likelihood for ethical consequences that may arise from youth practicing development with an immature understanding of its complexities (Simpson, 2004; Heron, 2007; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014).

A critical theoretical lens provides a crucial understanding of contemporary LVA and how there are structural and social aspects of the practice that continue to reinforce, if not recreate, parallels with colonialism and power imbalances that generate relationships of dominance. Within the critical discourse of LVA, numerous authors argue for a movement away from a helping discourse of “doing for” and instead moving towards an experience that involves “being with” the host community if we are to break free from a colonizing pedagogy within LVA (MacDonald, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014). To effect this change within the practice of LVA it is also important to understand the students/volunteers motivations for participating in LVA opportunities.

2.5. Motivating Factors for LVA

Students' motivations for participating in LVA experiences are also critically analysed within the literature and provides important insights into broader understanding of LVA (Baily & Russell, 2012; Tiessen, 2012; Wearing, 2001; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Ingram, 2011; Grimm & Needham, 2014; Soderman & Snead, 2008). Specifically, motivations are important for understanding how to improve the volunteer experience, the management of volunteers, and the relationship between volunteers' intent and the impact on the programs they work with (Tiessen, 2012). What motivates students to participate in LVA also contributes to what students' objectives are through LVA programs, which is crucial in understanding student preparation and learning from LVA experiences.

The literature on motivations for LVA tends to differentiate motives as either altruistic or self-centric/personal in nature (Tiessen, 2012; Grimm & Needham, 2014; Soderman & Snead, 2008; Wearing, 2001; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Baily & Russell, 2012). Overall the most common motivations discussed within the literature included: a desire to travel, adventure, cross-cultural understanding, giving back or helping others, and/or professional development (Wearing, 2001; Tiessen, 2012; Baily & Russell, 2012; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). Therefore, both altruistic and personal reasons contribute to why students choose to volunteer/learn abroad (Grimm & Needham, 2014). Given the critiques discussed above regarding a helping discourse that is created through marketing of development and LVA programs, it could be assumed that altruistic motivations take precedent over personal or self-centric motivations. Certainly, Wearing's book on volunteer tourism found motivations for volunteering abroad to be primarily altruistic, such as improving lives or doing something worthwhile, followed by personal motives for travel (Wearing, 2001). However, several other scholarly sources determined

students/volunteers' motivations to be primarily personal or self-centric (Tiessen, 2012; Ingram, 2011; Grimm & Needham, 2014). More specifically, Tiessen's findings concluded that personal motivations, such as testing career and academic choices was most commonly stated by students as their "most important" motivation (2012). Furthermore, when volunteers participate in LVA based on the desire to experience "others" and/or be immersed in a place of "authenticity" then their motivations would side towards self-centric and personal (Ingram, 2011, p. 215).

Motivations have also been discussed in the context of push and pull factors (Grimm & Needham, 2014). Push factors are internal psychological motivations, such as personal growth or self-discovery (Grimm & Needham, 2014). Pull factors are perceptions and expectations of the volunteers that are attracting them to a particular destination, such as experiencing other cultures or a developing country (Grimm & Needham, 2014). Push and pull factors of motivations recognizes that volunteers/students have personal factors that push them into pursuing an LVA and external pull factors that draw them to a particular LVA program or destination (Grimm & Needham, 2014). Given that either push or pull factors could be said to be based on altruistic values, of perhaps assisting with a particular cause, the use of push and pull motivating factors does not identify if motivations are self-centric/personal or altruistic in nature. While the literature on motivations primarily found that students' motivations are more self-centric in nature, this is not to say that some students may have more altruistic motivations for participating in LVA experiences, such as reasons of solidarity, or a genuine interest in global justice. Unfortunately, within the current scholarly work these motivations have not yet been identified as students' primary motivations and are purely anecdotal.

The literature on motivations also discusses the complex nature of studying volunteer/student's motivations for participating in LVA programs (Grimm & Needham, 2014;

Soderman & Snead, 2008; Tiessen, 2012). It is challenging to understand the entirety of motivations because it requires that all dimensions be considered, such as a volunteer's self-reported motivations, push and pull factors, perceived motivations by others such as the organization and facilitators, as well as the dynamic and fluid nature of motivations (Grimm & Needham, 2014). It must be also considered that volunteers may not even know their true motivations to self-report, thus adding to the complexity of understanding students/volunteers' motivations (Tiessen, 2012). This is because, as Tiessen argues, to truly understand what motivates us, we must first critically understand ourselves (2012).

Overall, the literature on motivations demonstrates that there are multiple factors to consider. It also demonstrates that while altruistic intentions may be a motivational factor, the current scholarly evidence shows that students/volunteers primarily choose to go abroad to volunteer/study for personal reasons. Where motivations are primarily personal in nature, then outcomes are likely to be imbalanced and largely benefit the student/volunteers (Tiessen, 2012). A one-directional flow of benefits reinforces the critiques above regarding the imbalance of knowledge, privilege and power that is systemic within the current structure of LVA and thus raises concerns over the ethical nature of LVA. Creating a more equally balanced exchange of North and South through LVA's is something to strive towards, but this requires a greater critical reflection of the practice as a whole, including some of the ethical considerations present in regards to preparing students for LVA experiences.

2.6. Ethical Encounters and Considerations within LVA

Ethical issues constitute another important thematic priority in the literature drawing on critical theory to understand LVA. Prior to the discussion of ethical encounters within LVA it is important to note that there are numerous ethical challenges of LVA that overlap considerably

with the discussion above regarding colonial parallels within LVA. The neocolonial aspects of LVA that result in ethical challenges of the practice are also deeply connected to the broader structural issues of LVA (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). However, this section primarily deals with understanding the ethical encounters students will have through LVA and considerations for preparing students/volunteers for encountering ethical dilemmas and understanding their potentially unethical actions in responding to challenging situations (Epprecht, 2004; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Tiessen & Epprecht, 2012).

How students are ethically prepared for an LVA experience requires individuals to understand their own perceptions of what is right and wrong (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). An ethical understanding, thus, requires one to reflect upon themselves and their actions (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). It is inevitable that students/volunteers will encounter ethical dilemmas while abroad (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; Epprecht, 2004). Ethical predicaments can range greatly from misperceptions between student/volunteer and host community regarding issues of status, privilege, wealth, gender roles, etc. to misunderstandings or a complete lack of understanding regarding the greater structural causes of inequality and poverty students/volunteers will encounter and how this presents itself in unethical situations within the host country, such as through corruption (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; Epprecht, 2004; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014). Consequently, adequate ethical preparation is essential for students participating in LVA programs to, firstly, critically reflect and deconstruct the unethical situation, and, secondly, understand how to appropriately respond/ behave in challenging circumstances (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Students are, however, unlikely to have the necessary ethical preparation required for understanding the issues they may encounter during an LVA and how to respond (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; Cameron, 2014).

Additionally, when ethical preparation is provided it tends to focus on behavioural ethics regarding how students/volunteers should respond in challenging situations (Cameron, 2014). A holistic understanding in ethics of LVA must also include consideration for normative ethics or a moral consideration for the challenging situation (Cameron, 2014). Where students are ill-prepared to understand ethics in a cross-cultural setting and respond in an ethical manner they risk causing harm while abroad (Huish, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014). Therefore, it is important to understand the extent to which students are being prepared for LVA experiences and whether or not their preparation includes consideration of ethics and to what depth. Student preparation will be discussed in greater detail at the end of this literature review.

2.7. Summary of Critical Analysis of LVA

While the scholarship outlined above provides an important critical analysis of some of the ways in which LVA has been understood, it is also important to note that not all LVA programs operate the same. This has been mentioned in the introduction section. While the concept of LVA includes volunteer abroad, there are differences between programs that offer volunteer abroad opportunities for learning and creating understandings of solidarity in comparison to volunteer tourism type programs that are critiqued for suggesting youth from the North have the ability to “fix” global problems of inequality, poverty, social injustice, etc. That said, it is also important to note that, even if LVA programs institute a more learning-focused international program that fosters students understanding and critical thinking of the complexities of development, and moves away from the helping imperative, this does not mean that power structures and motivations for participation are not in some ways an unintentional continuation of colonial histories (Wilson, 2011).

Critical theory is not only employed throughout the scholarly literature, but it also provides an important lens through which to examine the broader arguments and debates within the LVA scholarship. The above subsections of the literature review provided a critical analysis of the historical context and evolution of LVA and how LVA is influenced by development discourse. Critical theory is also employed in the deconstruction of LVA and identifying its colonial legacies and parallels that contribute to a power domination of the Global North over the Global South that is still prevalent within some LVA programs. As well, critical theory provides an important lens through which to understand volunteers/students' motivations for participating in LVA and the ethical considerations required when preparing students for LVA. By employing a critical theoretical framework in this research it is also important to understand how the social phenomenon of LVA can be improved and work towards creating systemic change within the practice of LVA and in regards to the level and content of student preparation. A broader critical theoretical lens can also draw on other theoretical lenses such as cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism to understand how global citizenship education has become an important component within many LVA programs, especially those offered through universities.

2.8. LVA and Global Citizenship through the Theoretical Lens of Cosmopolitanism and Neoliberalism

The following subsection discusses global citizenship education by employing additional theoretical frameworks of cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism as part of the broader framework of critical theory. Global citizenship is a common term used within the discourse of LVA as many universities' mandates for internationalization often claim to create global citizens (Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Myers, 2009; Cameron, 2014; Pashby, 2010; Heron, 2011; Jefferess, 2008). Within the literature on LVA, cosmopolitanism has been used to deconstruct the concept

of global citizenship education and challenge the meaning behind what global citizenship truly entails (Cameron, 2014; Andreotti, 2006; Oxley & Morris, 2013; Pashby, 2010; Jefferess, 2011; Jefferess, 2008; Zeddies & Millei, 2015). The concept of global citizenship is said to have developed from cosmopolitanism, which means “world citizen” (Cameron, 2014). However, there is no clear or agreed upon definition of what it means to be a global citizen, how to become a global citizen, or who can become a global citizen (Cameron, 2014; Jefferess, 2008). Through the lens of cosmopolitanism, global citizenship education can be understood from the concepts’ aspirational roots in moral obligations towards humanity (Cameron, 2014; Jefferess, 2008; Andreotti, 2006; Jefferess, 2011). A cosmopolitan lens is thus important for this study when understanding global citizenship education through LVA. More specifically, cosmopolitanism offers an understanding of students’ roles and responsibilities and moral obligation when participating in LVA and the imbalance of power and privilege that is inherent in claiming global citizenship status. Additionally, a neoliberal framework contributes to understanding the individualistic nature of global citizenship education and will also be discussed in greater detail below.

The literature discussed above through a critical theoretical framework examined the roots of and challenges associated with the helping imperative that is often embedded in LVA programs. A cosmopolitan lens contributes to this discussion through an understanding of our moral obligations towards others and our rights and responsibilities as ‘world citizens’. If global citizenship is to be understood through cosmopolitanism then it becomes less about one’s rights and responsibilities as citizens within a nation, but about one’s moral obligations to other human beings as equal citizens of the world (Jefferess, 2008; Cameron, 2014). Global citizenship, therefore, can be said to allow one’s identity to expand beyond their national borders to adopt an

ethical responsibility towards others (Jefferess, 2008). However, in adopting an ethical responsibility towards others through compassion and acts of caring (charity), one must also be conscious to ensure they ‘do no harm’ (Cameron, 2014; Andreotti, 2006). The ethical responsibility of global citizenship is analysed by Cameron (2014) through “thin” and “thick” forms of global citizenship. Thin global citizenship is described as compassion for others, especially those who are more vulnerable. Thick global citizenship goes beyond just compassion and voluntary actions towards others to include both positive and negative moral obligations (Cameron, 2014; Andreotti, 2006). Positive moral obligations could include doing something good and worthwhile, such as volunteering abroad, whereas negative moral obligations would involve not causing harm nor benefiting from harm that is done to others (Cameron, 2014). While LVA programs already demonstrate positive moral obligations, they must also begin to adopt a practice of negative moral obligations into their design, implementation and practice to ensure there is no inadvertent harm being caused (Cameron, 2014; Andreotti, 2006). However, changing the structural aspects of LVA that have evolved from colonial relationships and contribute to global inequality, requires systemic changes within the practice as a whole. A first step towards this change requires changing the discourse from a helping imperative towards one of solidarity (Kirk, 2012; MacDonald, 2014). A discourse of solidarity is something that will be discussed throughout this thesis.

A cosmopolitan lens also contributes to the previous critical discussion regarding the imbalance of power and privilege that is prevalent in the structure of LVA in understanding that global citizenship is not afforded to all citizens of the world (Jefferess, 2011; Jefferess, 2008; Zeddies & Millei, 2015; Cameron, 2014). While the idea of global citizenship represents a universal inclusivity, cosmopolitanism allows us to understand that global citizenship actually

produces “insiders and outsiders” (Jefferess, 2008). In other words, some are in a privileged position to become a global citizen, while others are positioned to be “helped” by global citizens (Jefferess, 2008; Cameron, 2014; Zijdemans-Boudreau, Moss, & Lee, 2013; Jefferess, 2011; Sin, 2010). Responsibility towards others based on one’s privileged position to “help” those in “need” of assistance was similarly critiqued above as recreating colonial practices through a geography of responsibility that is based on global power imbalances and inequality (Sin, 2010; Simpson, 2004). Therefore, who can claim global citizenship status is dependent upon one’s privileged position to provide assistance. Furthermore, where international experience is a predetermination of global citizenship status, then those who are not afforded the privileged ability to cross borders become excluded (Cameron, 2014; Myers, 2009; Pashby, 2010). However, globalization has allowed the world to become much more interconnected through various technologies, including the internet. As a result, it could be argued that one may not need to cross borders to become a global citizen if experiences can be had through various forms of media. On the other hand, if to be a global citizen you must abide by both thin and thick forms of global citizenship, then it can be questioned as to whether or not such a status is even attainable in a world where global structures produce inequality.

Global citizenship identity can also be constructed in highly individualistic terms. Through employing neoliberalism as a framework for analysing global citizenship identity, international volunteering can be understood as “producing and being produced through dynamics and relationships between the state, the corporate sector and civil society” (Smith & Laurie, 2011, p. 546). Consequently, not only is volunteering abroad framed as a way to develop the individual’s status as a global citizen, but international volunteering opportunities are promoted by corporations who have partnered with NGOs to provide employees with a way to

achieve global citizenship status while offering their skills to the Global South through such partnerships (Smith & Laurie, 2011). Global citizenship then becomes about the autonomy and needs of the individual volunteers and NGOs/agencies who offer the experience to develop the skills of the volunteers via international experiences, and less about those in “need” within the Global South (Smith & Laurie, 2011).

Similar critiques of global citizenship identity can be found in critical analyses of “Me-to-We”, a social enterprise that offers volunteer tourism and other ways for young people to become engaged within their communities but in ways that “reframe humanitarianism and global citizenship education in terms of the self-help industry and appeals to the desire for (post)consumer feelings of fulfilment and distinction” (Jefferess, 2012, p. 18). The “Me-to-We” movement is built on the notion of the autonomous individual and his/her desire to act on a “personal ethic of goodwill towards others” without consideration for global social and political structures, the relationships, and the volunteers’ complicity in them (Jefferess, 2012, p. 19). The literature on global citizenship education is, thus, useful in understanding the value and ethics of LVA in terms of how it is promoted within educational institutions as part of an international experiential learning opportunity. Universities’ internationalization strategies often focus on building alliances with other academic institutions globally to increase the university’s global profile and develop their students’ global competency (Universities Canada, 2014). Internationalization and global citizenship are again individualistic by focusing on the individual and institutional benefits.

Through employing critical theory framework, including cosmopolitan and a neoliberal lens, to examine the literature above, it is evident that there are numerous critiques of the practice of LVA that highlight the ethical challenges that arise when students travel abroad to learn and

volunteer. While the literature provides a critical analysis of the practice, it also offers aspirational elements in regards to the potential value that LVA holds and ways in which the practice can be improved so that it can contribute to broader systematic change in reducing global inequality through actions of solidarity. LVA, practiced through academic institutions, can provide students with valuable learning opportunities that can foster a greater understanding of these critiques and ethical challenges that arise from LVA, as well as other issues within international development. What remains to be discussed within this literature review is the learning element of LVA and the importance of student preparation for LVA as to provide not only rationale for this study, but also recommendations towards improving the practice of LVA in a way that can foster greater critical learning from students and a desire for social justice.

2.9. Experiential Learning Through LVA and the Importance of Student Preparation

The above review of the literature, through a critical theoretical framework that also drew on cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism, has demonstrated that the practice of LVA is widely critiqued for reproducing colonial practices and being unethically structured to allow for the continued power domination of the Global North over the Global South. However, in employing a critical theoretical framework, it is also important to envision solutions to the critiques generated from examining the practice of LVA. Thus this section will analyse how LVA has potential to challenge the structural causes of inequality and social injustice globally through the learning opportunities that LVA programs offer students (Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014). In doing so, this section will also highlight the importance of good preparation for students embarking on an LVA experience if students are to learn to the full potential that LVA programs create and truly generate a critical understanding of poverty, inequality and injustice while fostering solidarity.

LVA programs offered through universities are essentially a practice of experiential learning (Tiessen & Huish, 2014). However, it cannot be assumed that all LVA programs foster the elements necessary for students to learn from their experience. Nor can it be assumed that experiential learning through LVA will improve students understanding of inequality, injustice, and poverty (Tiessen & Huish, 2014). Experiential learning is a conceptual model that suggests learning is a process and that knowledge is created from taking and transforming experiences (Zijdemans-Boudreau, Moss, & Lee, 2013; McCarthy, 2010). For students to generate knowledge through experiential learning they must work through Kolb's four modes of learning: have a concrete experience, reflect upon observations generated through the experience, develop abstract conceptualisations from the reflective process; and test the abstract concepts generated (McCarthy, 2010; Zijdemans-Boudreau, Moss, & Lee, 2013; Tiessen & Huish, 2014). Thus LVA as a form of experiential learning can provide students with a valuable opportunity to learn through experience and generate a knowledge based on what is learned in the classroom with real life experiences (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Travers, 2014; Tiessen & Huish, 2014). However, for students to actively engage in experiential learning through LVA, preparation becomes a crucial component of the LVA experience (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Travers, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014).

2.9.1. Importance of Preparation for Learning Through LVA

The critical debates and cosmopolitanism scholarship examined abroad frequently point to pre-departure training as central to improving the LVA experience and reducing problematic issues that surround a discourse of "us" and "them" and instead move towards a discourse of solidarity that involves being with "them" (Drolet, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; Dekaney, 2008; Holmes, Bavieri, & Ganassin, 2015; Highum, 2014;

Schwartz, et al., 2011; Travers, 2014; MacDonald, 2014). Comprehensive preparation and training is directly linked to critical reflection and deep learning opportunities for students. However, not all experiences will necessarily translate into learning (Travers, 2014; Raymond & Hall, 2008). The level and quality of students' learning from their experiences abroad is largely dependent upon their level of preparation before departure, their reflection throughout the experience, and their debriefing upon their return (Dean & Jendzurski, 2013; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Drolet, 2014; MacDonald, 2014; Travers, 2014). Preparation through pre-departure training must not only prepare students for the logistics of an international experience, but it needs to also prepare students for understanding their experiences abroad and how this experience relates back to their classroom discourses and, more importantly, how it can generate positive change (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Drolet, 2014). Furthermore, if LVA can be considered a method for fostering actions of solidarity within students and a critical understanding of development issues, then students will require preparation that addresses ethics and cross-cultural understanding, teaches reflection and critical reflexivity, and provides a context of colonialism and its legacies in global structures and practices today (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014).

While numerous scholars argue for good student preparation for LVA as a means of enhancing students learning from their experience, there was no literature or scholarly works identified that discussed the current content of student preparation through pre-departure training for LVA. Within the scholarly work for LVA preparation the common themes identified in the type of content students are taught within their pre-departure training included logistics, intercultural learning, language acquisition, and risk management for health and safety (Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Dekaney, 2008; Holmes, Bavieri, L, & Ganassin, S, 2015; Drolet, 2014;

Schwartz, et al., 2011; Highum, 2014; Wurtz, 2014). Preparing for the logistical dynamics of an LVA and learning about other cultures and the basic language of the host community are important elements of student preparation in regards to informing students about their forthcoming international experience (Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Dekaney, 2008; Holmes, Bavieri, & Ganassin, 2015; Drolet, 2014; Schwartz, et al., 2011; Highum, 2014; Wurtz, 2014). However, student preparation that focuses on logistics, intercultural learning and language acquisition can also be considered superficial means of preparation that focus primarily on the students' level of preparation and integration into a new environment, but not the students' understanding of the historical and structural elements that contribute to a global structure that allows students to go abroad to learn or volunteer (Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014). Additionally, risk management is important from a standpoint of the students' basic health and safety and - probably more so - from the liability perspective of the university (Highum, 2014); however, this content does not engage students in a discourse of solidarity nor does it change the structural inequalities of LVA. Furthermore, preparation that focuses on students' safety can lead to reinforcing stereotypes of the Global South as a dangerous environment (Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014).

Preparation that provides a more in-depth discussion of LVA was also discussed within some of the literature. Specifically, some authors emphasize the need for student preparation to include critical discussions of identity, global power relations, students' privilege, and ethics (Drolet, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Pre-departure training that provides a more in-depth discussion about where students are coming from, the status they inherently carry as Westerners, and the concept of what it means to "do no harm" while abroad provides students with a basis for better understanding what they will experience abroad and how

to interpret their experiences (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Drolet, 2014). Thus, if students are to learn how to act in solidarity with others instead of reinforcing stereotypes and a helping discourse, then this must start with a comprehensive understanding of global relations, development, structural and systemic causes of poverty and inequality and where students, as citizens of the Global North, fit into this experience (Cameron, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014).

While the literature on LVA that focuses on student preparation and pre-departure training provides valuable insight into the type of content that should be discussed with students, there is no scholarly work that examines what content is currently taught to students during pre-departure training for LVA. While the critical literature demonstrates the importance of student preparation and how they should be prepared to generate critical reflection and learning, there is a gap within the scholarly works that examines current pre-departure training and the content that is currently employed to prepare students for LVA. Without an understanding of the currently applied methods and content of student preparation, it is difficult to envision methods in which to enhance the practice of LVA through universities in an effort to develop critically aware and socially engaged students. This concludes the literature review and provides rationale for this research. The following subsection will reiterate the research objectives and questions leading to the Methodology section.

2.10. Research Objectives/Questions

The objective of this research project is to better understand the content of pre-departure training provided to students who participate in LVA programs through the University of Ottawa. This research aims to understand if there are differences within the content of pre-departure training across the different LVA programs at the University of Ottawa. Secondly, this

paper further seeks to understand if there are any implications associated with any diversity in the pre-departure training across programs. And lastly, this research aims to examine the pre-departure content within the context of scholarly debates within the literature. Specific research questions include:

- a) What is the content of pre-departure training offered to students who participate in LVA programs at the University of Ottawa?
- b) How does the pre-departure training content differ across the LVA programs at the University of Ottawa?
- c) What are the implications of diversity in pre-departure training content?

3. Methodology

The methods used for this qualitative research included a case study of the pre-departure training available through the University of Ottawa's LVA programs. In addition to using a case study, a content analysis was also conducted with voluntarily provided pre-departure training materials from LVA program facilitators at the University of Ottawa. As well, semi-structured interviews were conducted with willing pre-departure training facilitators to gain a deeper understanding of the pre-departure training provided, its content, and the professional opinions of pre-departure training facilitators.

3.1. Rationale for a Case Study

This research initially aimed to understand the content of pre-departure training provided to Canadian post-secondary students participating in LVA programs through their academic institutions and/or non-governmental organizations. The methods I originally attempted to use

included collecting pre-departure training material from a sample of universities and NGOs' LVA programs to conduct a content analysis. After several months of attempting to find publically available pre-departure training materials and contacting various NGO programs to request access to their pre-departure training materials, I had managed to collect only a limited amount of data. The types of training material collected did not provide the level of detail this research was looking to analyze.

Having participated in pre-departure training for two different LVA experiences during my undergraduate degree, I knew that the content contained within manuals, training guides, and handbooks was only a small portion of the content that is actually covered during pre-departure training sessions. My thesis committee recommended, based on my research proposal, that I consider the use of interviews as a research method. Through interviews with pre-departure training facilitators, I was able to gain a better, more comprehensive understanding of the pre-departure training being analyzed. Not only did interviews provide an understanding of the possible content discussed in in-person training that is not captured within the manuals/handbooks, but interviews also allow me to inquire about the facilitator's professional opinions and recommendations.

While it would have been ideal to conduct research on a large sample, if not all Canadian universities' LVA program's pre-departure training content, the sample size and logistics of collecting and analyzing data would have been too large a task for a Master's research project. As well, many universities offer numerous LVA programs with different pre-departure training for each LVA program.

Following discussions with my thesis supervisor and suggestions provided on my research proposal by my committee, I decided to conduct a case study of the University of

Ottawa's LVA programs' pre-departure training. A case study is a research method used to understand a single setting or environment in-depth (Creswell, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989). Therefore, conducting a case study of a single university still provided valuable in-depth information and contributed to the knowledge gap, while also being manageable for the tight timeframe associated with a Master's level research project.

As previously mentioned, the University of Ottawa was chosen for this case study for several reasons: (1) it is located in Ottawa, and easily accessible; (2) it has a school of International Development and Global Studies; (3) it offers a large number of LVA programs across different offices, centres and faculties; and (4) and it has a strategic plan (Destination 20/20) to expand the number of student mobility programs over the next few years. According to the University of Ottawa, internationalization is a priority (University of Ottawa, 2016h). The university has listed five goals within their strategic plan for internationalization. Two goals that target LVA type activities include: (1) offering more students opportunities to go abroad for learning and language activities, and (2) doubling the number of students participating in mobility programs (University of Ottawa, 2016h). The University of Ottawa also aims to establish new partnerships with universities around the world with some of the priority countries being within the Global South (University of Ottawa, 2016h).

3.2. Additional Research Methods

Within the case study of the University of Ottawa, additional research methods were used which included semi-structured interviews with pre-departure training facilitators/leaders and a content analysis of the interview transcripts and pre-departure training materials, which were voluntarily provided by some LVA programs.

3.2.1. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used because interviews are a useful method for gaining factual information that cannot be obtained from other sources (Willis, 2006). For this research in particular, interviews allowed for a greater understanding of the detail of the content that is taught to students, which may not have been captured in analyzing the training content provided for analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five knowledge experts or authorities (Yegidis, Weinbach, & Myers, 2012) who had in-depth knowledge on the subject matter of LVA pre-departure training. In the context of this case study, the expert authorities were professors and university staff who facilitated pre-departure training. The use of interviews was also valuable for this research in potentially understanding the intention behind the content chosen for pre-departure training, the professional opinions of pre-departure training facilitators/experts regarding the value of pre-departure training, how it may have evolved over time, possible student feedback on the training, and recommendations for improvement (if any). It must be noted that by using qualitative semi-structured interviews as a research method, the research findings and analysis are subjective in nature given that objectivity is said to be unobtainable when using qualitative interviews (Yegidis, Weinbach, & Myers, 2012).

3.2.2. Content Analysis

A content analysis examines different types of communication to better understand a phenomenon (Bouma, Ling, & Wilkinson, 2012). For this research a content analysis was conducted with the interview transcripts and hard copies of pre-departure training material used by facilitators and voluntarily provided for analysis. The content provided included pre-departure

training presentations (PowerPoint slides), syllabus, facilitator notes, assignments, and training notes. The content was analyzed to identify certain words, phrases, topics that are presented within the pre-departure training and to classify common content themes (Bouma, Ling, & Wilkinson, 2012). Through the use of a content analysis, this research was able to examine the content taught in pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa and identify any similarities and/or differences across programs.

3.3. Identification of LVA Programs at the University of Ottawa

To identify the LVA programs offered through the University of Ottawa I reviewed a draft Study Abroad Handbook developed for University of Ottawa students. I was intimately familiar with this unpublished Handbook as I was actively engaged in the research and report-writing for this draft document in summer 2014 while a Research Assistant for my supervisor Rebecca Tiessen. From the list of all the international experiential learning opportunities summarized in the Study Abroad Handbook I began searching each program on the University of Ottawa's webpage to identify if the program still existed and whether or not it had changed significantly.

For background research, I also conducted a search of the university's main website using key works, including: *international*, *study abroad*, *internships*, *international volunteer*, and *mobility*. The additional background search was to identify if any additional international experiential learning opportunities or LVA programs had come into existence since my initial research in the summer of 2014. In addition, I also searched the main webpages for each of the 10 faculties for links to international, mobility, study abroad, internship, field courses, and any other internationally based experience run by each faculty.

The search results determined that there were three central programs or offices that offered some sort of LVA program to all eligible uOttawa students and five faculties offering some form of LVA program to their students. There was also one centre that offered pre-departure training open to all uOttawa students going abroad to volunteer/study; however, this centre did not offer LVA experiences, rather it provided opportunities for student engagement locally and resources for students interested in travelling abroad. Table 1 below shows the programs identified.

Throughout this research I also asked various staff members at the University of Ottawa who were working with, or closely related to LVA programs, about what LVA programs they had knowledge of at the University of Ottawa. Furthermore, during interviews with five (n = 5) participants, I inquired as to whether the participant knew of any additional LVA programs offered through different faculties/offices in effort to identify if there were more LVA programs. From my discussions with the various key informants and interview participants I could not identify any additional LVA programs that were not already covered within one of the Offices/Centres/Faculties mentioned above. One informant did, however, inform me that there were several student associations and clubs at the University of Ottawa that organize international volunteer trips each year. These clubs and associations were not included in my research for reasons identified in more detail in the below discussion of my selection criteria.

Table 1: LVA programs identified within the University of Ottawa:

Office/Centre/Faculty	Type of LVA Programs	Pre-departure Training (Y/N)
International Office	Outgoing exchanges	Yes
	Summer programs	
	Internships	
Cooperative Education	International work placements	Yes
Undergraduate Research Office	Summer Undergraduate International Research	Yes through the International Office

	Internships (SIRI)	
Faculty of Social Science	International Internships	Yes
	Field Research courses (5)	
	Model UN	
Faculty of Medicine	International Electives	Yes
	International Medical Practicums/Internships	
Telfer School of Business Management	International Exchange	Yes
Faculty of Civil Law	International Exchange	Yes through the International Office
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies	Cotutelle	Yes through the International Office
	Marco Polo	
Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement	N/A	Yes open to all students

3.4. Selection Criteria

Of the LVA programs identified in my search, not all were selected to be examined as part of this research. With an understanding that there would be numerous ways in which a student at the University of Ottawa could go abroad to learn or volunteer, it was important that a criteria be set for what LVA programs would be included or not within this research.

For the LVA programs to be included in this research they had to meet the following criteria: (1) the program must have included an international component whereby the student physically traveled outside of Canada; (2) the program must have included a destination within the Global South (programs that exclusively dealt with countries within the Global North were not included); and, (3) the program must have had some form of pre-departure training whether optional or mandatory.

There were a few LVA programs identified on the University of Ottawa's website that did not mention requirements for pre-departure training. In these cases I followed up with the

program either via email or phone call to confirm whether or not students were required to or had the option to participate in pre-departure training for the LVA experience.

One exception was made in the selection criteria to include the Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement. This centre does not offer any LVA programs, however, they do provide pre-departure training for students who take it upon themselves to find an LVA program within or outside of the University of Ottawa. Given that the focus of this research project is to understand pre-departure training content, this program was selected to be included within this research.

3.5. Overview of the LVA Programs Selected

In total, nine (n = 9) offices/faculties/centres were chosen to be included within the sample size. Of these nine offices/faculties/centres 13 (n = 13) LVA programs were initially identified (see table 1 above) as potential samples. A brief description, based on the University of Ottawa's website, of each LVA program is provided below.

The International Office – The International Office at the University of Ottawa organizes and supports both incoming and outgoing international students, while also providing support to students, faculty, staff and international institutions on international engagement (University of Ottawa, 2016j). The LVA programs offered through the International Office for uOttawa students going abroad included international exchanges, summer programs and internships. The international exchange program is open to students in all faculties except for the faculties of Education, Medicine and Telfer School of Management. The exchange program provides full-time undergraduate and graduate students with the opportunity to study at a partner university outside of Canada for one or two semesters in countries both in the global North and

South. The summer program is also an international exchange in which students study part-time abroad at a partner university during the summer semester. This LVA program is open to the same students as the exchange program, but the number of country destinations and host universities is more limited. Both global North and South countries are destination options. Lastly, the internships offered through the International Office are done in cooperation with participating faculties and academic units. Internships are primarily research-based and involve travelling to countries within the Global North. All students participating in the exchange program must take a pre-departure workshop provided through the International Office.

Cooperative Education – The Office of Cooperative Education at the University of Ottawa allows students who are accepted into the program the opportunity to work for two to four sessions during their undergraduate or graduate degrees. Cooperative education (COOP) work placements within Canada are paid and international work placements may be voluntary or paid. The COOP program is open to students studying in certain programs (75 programs have the COOP option) from seven different faculties (Arts, Engineering, Law, Science, Social Science, Telfer School of Management, and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). According to the COOP office, in 2015, 279 out of 2583 COOP students had a “mobile” (non-Ottawa national or international) work placement. Students can either find their own international work placement and have it approved by the COOP office or apply to the international placements available through the COOP office’s job board. COOP students who work abroad for a work term must complete an international mobility session, meet individually with a COOP specialist and attend a pre-departure training workshop prior to departure (University of Ottawa, 2016b).

Undergraduate Research Office – The Undergraduate Research Office offers Summer Undergraduate International Research Internships along with other international research

internships to undergraduate students. Destination countries are primarily within the Global North; however there are a few internships located within the Global South. Students from all faculties and programs are eligible provided they apply to an internship open to their program discipline. All internships are offered with partner universities and are research based. The research internships offered through the Undergraduate Research Office are in partnership with the International Office and students participate in the International Office's risk management workshop/pre-departure training (University of Ottawa, 2016e).

Faculty of Social Science International – The Faculty of Social Science's International Office (FSS International) offers three different types of LVA programs: International Field Research Courses, International Internships and a Model United Nations Course. Field Research courses are to different countries each year and last an average of three weeks abroad. Students travel with a professor and conduct research in the host country. The destinations vary each year, but usually include countries within the Global North and South. Preparation or Pre-departure training is mandatory for each of the Field Research courses and is provided by the facilitating professor. Students participating in the Field Research courses are also encouraged to reflect throughout the course while abroad and some professors organize a return debriefing session with students. International Internships are offered through various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) partnered with FSS International to various countries within Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe. Students must participate in pre-departure training through FSS International as well as with the NGO organizing the internship. In some cases, the NGOs also provide in-country training. All students are also required to participate in a post-internship workshop and complete reflective assignments throughout their internships (University of Ottawa, 2016i).

Faculty of Medicine – The Faculty of Medicine provides opportunities for medical students to participate in an LVA experience as part of their medical degree through international electives and the global health program, which requires a practicum placement overseas or within a vulnerable population in Canada (University of Ottawa, 2015a). All students going abroad through the Faculty of Medicine must participate in the faculty’s pre-departure training provided by the Office of Internationalization¹. The University of Ottawa’s International Office also presents on risk management at the Faculty of Medicine’s one day pre-departure training.

Telfer School of Management – The Telfer School of Management organizes LVA programs for students registered within its faculty. The type of LVA program includes international exchanges and the Telfer BCom program option for International Management (University of Ottawa, 2016f). Telfer’s partnerships with International Institutions are primarily located within the Global North, with the exception of a couple countries within the Global South (University of Ottawa, 2016f). Telfer students are also eligible for the Cooperative Education program and could participate in an international work term through COOP (University of Ottawa, 2016f). Telfer students must participate in mandatory pre-departure training organized within the faculty prior to going abroad.

Faculty of Civil Law – The Faculty of Law’s Civil Law section organizes international exchanges for their students in collaboration with the International Office (University of Ottawa, 2016c). While the partner institutions are primarily located in countries within the Global North, there are a couple of institutions within the Global South (University of Ottawa, 2016c). Students

¹ The Office of Global Health is said to no longer exist and has become the Office of Internationalization; however, the website material, which contained up to date information, still kept the title Office of Global Health. The contact person was the same for both offices and therefore information under the webpage for the Office of Global Health is referenced under the Office of Internationalization.

must participate in the risk management pre-departure training provided by the International Office prior to going abroad.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies – The Faculty of Graduate Studies offers the Marco Polo International Student Mobility Initiative for Master students to spend one of their academic years abroad or outside of Ontario and to complete an internship within a developing country (University of Ottawa, 2016g). There is also the Cotuelles program for doctoral students, which allows students to complete their degree at the University of Ottawa in partnership with another university outside of Ontario/Ottawa/Gatineau region (University of Ottawa, 2016g). Both LVA programs are organized in conjunction with the University of Ottawa's International Office.

Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement – The Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement provides information and services to all University of Ottawa students regarding community engagement (University of Ottawa, 2016d). While the centre no longer organizes LVA programs, it has established a pre-departure training program and provides this training to students who are going abroad to volunteer, but who cannot access pre-departure training through other programs (University of Ottawa, 2016d). These students are primarily travelling on their own or through independently organized volunteer abroad opportunities.

While the above mentioned faculties/offices/centres offer a wide variety of LVA type programs, this research did not examine each program and what it offered in detail as the focus of this research was on pre-departure training provided to students. Where collaboration between faculties and offices/centres occurred to provide pre-departure training, the programs were grouped together and only the programs that offered the pre-departure training was recruited to

participate in this research study. For example, the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Graduate Studies were not contacted to participate in this research study because they work in partnership with the International Office with regards to the pre-departure training component.

3.6. Recruitment Process and Data Collection

After identifying and selecting LVA programs to be included within this research study I reached out to each program to request their participation in the research project. My recruitment process was done in two stages. First, I sent emails to all selected LVA programs briefly explaining my research project, asking several background questions regarding information not found on their websites, and requesting access to their pre-departure training material to be analyzed as part of my research project using content analysis. For programs with a professor or faculty member leading the LVA program and pre-departure training an email was sent directly to the professor/facilitator listed on the website. Where no facilitator/professors was listed for that LVA program an email was sent to the general inquiries email address listed online and/or I called the office directly to find out further information and the contact for pre-departure training.

Approximately two weeks following my initial email requesting access to training material I received ethical clearance from the University of Ottawa's Office of Research Ethics and Integrity to conduct interviews as part of my research project. Having clearance from the Ethics board, I sent emails to the same identified LVA programs/facilitators explaining my research project and requesting an interview with the pre-departure facilitator/leader to better understand the content taught as well as their professional opinions regarding pre-departure training (see recruitment email in attached annexes).

In general, most people contacted via email responded within one or two weeks to either agree to participate or to request further information about the research prior to consenting to participate. A few people/programs contacted did not respond within two weeks and I followed up with a phone call and or email to identify if I had reached out to the correct person. Program representatives who did not respond to a second email or phone call were not contacted again. Where people/programs had responded, but did not provide a definitive answer to participation, I followed up via phone and email.

In total seven (n = 7) LVA programs/facilitators responded to my emails expressing interest to participate in an interview and/or share their pre-departure training materials. Over the course of eight weeks five (n = 5) interviews were conducted and six (n = 6) LVA programs provided their pre-departure training materials. To protect the confidentiality of participants, the names of participating programs and participants interviewed have been changed to LVA program #1, 2, 3, etc. The pseudonyms for each program were used for both interview participants and content provided. While the content analyses of the interview transcripts and resource material (pre-departure manuals, etc.) were conducted separately, where programs participated by providing both forms of data the information is discussed as a whole of the program's pre-departure training.

When conducting qualitative research it is important to be aware of one's bias in order to minimize the degree of subjectivity (Yegidis, Weinbach, & Myers, 2012). In effort to ensure as much objectivity as possible with a qualitative research study, I made sure to ask interview questions in the same manner each time and record and transcribe interviews to ensure an accurate reporting of the data results (Bouma, Ling, & Wilkinson, 2012).

3.6.1. Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the topic of this research and what the research aimed to understand. Where I requested access to facilitators' pre-departure training material, I provided background information regarding my research goals and how the content would be used. All content was provided voluntarily by the facilitators.

All participants who agreed to be interviewed were provided with a consent form. The consent form provided information regarding the purpose of the study, what was required for their participation, the risks associated with their participation, information about their confidentiality and that I would not be guaranteeing anonymity. As all participants were professionals and experts in their fields there was minimal risk that they did not fully understand the information provided within the consent form for which they read and signed prior any of the interviews commencing.

3.7. Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews and pre-departure training materials were organized, coded and analyzed separately. While the interviews were semi-structured in nature, they did follow an interview guide and all participants were asked the same main questions. Interviews were transcribed and organized by interview questions and answers for each interview conducted. Answers were then analyzed by question and common themes were identified within each answer.

The data collected from pre-departure training materials was more difficult to organize and code given the variety in the types of material provided. The material included pre-departure training handbooks, PowerPoint presentation slides, syllabus, facilitators' notes and training

outlines, and training schedules. The material provided cannot be said to be an accurate portrait of all the content that is potentially discussed within pre-departure training. However, this overview provides insights into main ideas and themes employed by pre-departure training facilitators.

The content from training materials was organized and coded into the same themes identified within the interviews. For programs that participated in both an interview and provided training materials the data complemented each other to provide a more accurate idea of what content is covered and the learning objectives of the pre-departure training sessions.

It is important to note that the analysis of the data was likely biased by my own understandings of the interview transcripts and training materials. In qualitative research studies it is important to understand that there will be some degree of subjectivity in analysing the research data (Yegidis, Weinbach, & Myers, 2012). As a student at the University of Ottawa who has previously participated in two different LVA programs identified within this research and having spent a considerable amount of time researching the topic of LVA programs I had undoubtedly analysed the data based on my past experiences and knowledges. While I tried to remain as objective as possible when analysing the data, having participated in several of the LVA pre-departure training sessions in the past and experienced living overseas through an LVA program it was likely that my analysis of the data was biased by my own LVA experiences and pre-departure training (Yegidis, Weinbach, & Myers, 2012). While I am mindful that my past experience is likely to influence how I understand the data being analysed, I made sure to only analyse data collected via interviews and training material and not add in additional information that may have not been collected, but that I know may exist based on my past experiences.

Once the data was organized into a table with themes identified by LVA program I analysed the content again to understand what content was being covered as well as what similarities and differences there were across the LVA programs in terms of their content and themes.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Findings Overview

The findings obtained through primary data collection of pre-departure training materials and semi-structured interviews with training facilitators at the University of Ottawa are discussed below. These findings are representative of a total of seven (n = 7) LVA programs that agreed to participate. Five (n = 5) programs participated in a semi-structured interview and five (n = 5) programs participated through providing their pre-departure training materials (three of these programs participated in both an interview and provided training materials).

Table 2: LVA Program Participation in Study

<i>Research Participation</i>	<i>LVA Programs</i>						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
<i>Interview</i>	X	X	X	X	X		
<i>Training material</i>		X		X	X	X	X

As mentioned previously, this research sought to understand pre-departure training for LVA programs within the University of Ottawa. More specifically this research wanted to understand if pre-departure training was available to students participating in LVA programs, and if so, what content was presented within the training available; whether there was diversity in training content across LVA programs at the University of Ottawa; and lastly, whether or not there may be implications if there was diversity in the content found across LVA programs.

While this research aimed to be exhaustive of understanding all content that is discussed within the pre-departure training of LVA programs at the University of Ottawa, it is important to note that the pre-departure material and interviews may not identify all content that is taught during the training that is provided to student. This is because the training can change from year to year and/or from one session to another. Additionally, students ask questions that may not have been incorporated into the training materials. The diversity of students and their backgrounds can also affect what is discussed in pre-departure training. Two participants mentioned this and discussed that the students' interests and concerns can drive the types of conversations that occur within pre-departure training sessions. Lastly, it is also possible that facilitators may have forgotten to mention all content that they teach within their pre-departure training sessions.

In general, pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa covered many of the content themes discussed within the critical literature including: logistics, risk management (health and safety), culture, ethics, and experiential learning. While the content themes were generally the same across LVA programs, differences were also identified within some content themes. The following subsections provide a more in-depth overview of the research findings by, firstly, providing an overview of pre-departure training for LVA at the University of Ottawa. Secondly, this section will discuss the content identified in the research as categorised by themes. In addition, this section will examine the importance of the content discussed, followed by the role of pre-departure training, through the perspective of training facilitators. An overview of the similarities and differences of the content across the LVA programs will be discussed. And lastly, recommendations by the research participants will be presented.

4.2. Pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa

As discussed in the previous section, the University of Ottawa has numerous LVA programs available to students across its ten faculties. The LVA programs are offered through various offices and centres at the university, as well as through some faculties. In all of the LVA programs identified, pre-departure training was available to students.

Pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa is primarily program based. While there is some overlap and coordination between LVA programs offered by different offices, centres and faculties, each program predominantly organizes and facilitates their own pre-departure training sessions. The exception is with the International Office, which provides pre-departure risk management training to all students participating in an international experience through the University of Ottawa.

The duration of the pre-departure training examined within this research ranged from approximately 2-30 hours in length. The average total length of most training was approximately 12 hours. While some program's training was completed in a single one-day session, most programs spread out their training to occur over the course of a few months, with each session lasting shorter durations of time. One program provided pre-departure training online through the University of Ottawa's Blackboard Learn for students to complete independently at their own convenience; this program also provided some in-person training.

In some of the LVA programs examined, professors travelled with students for the duration of the experience and were available for questions and to facilitate students' reflection throughout the experience. All students had support from the University of Ottawa's

International Office, or their LVA program directly, while abroad in the event of a problem with their LVA experience or an emergency situation.

4.3. General Content of Pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa

To understand the general content of the pre-departure training for LVA programs at the University of Ottawa, I reviewed the interview transcripts and training material provided. The information collected was categorized by programs and organized into common themes. The content themes that I identified included: logistical information; risk management (health and safety); culture and language; ethics; experiential learning and reflection; LVA program expectations and requirements; and other information where the content was specific to the particular LVA program.

4.3.1. Logistics

Logistics is defined by the Oxford English dictionary as “detailed coordination of a large and complex operation” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2002). The content theme of logistics was difficult to separate out from other themes identified such as safety (risk management), health, and to some extent even culture, language and LVA expectations. This is because all content within pre-departure training could be argued to fall within logistical preparation for going abroad as it is all a component of the coordination of the experience. For this research the content theme of logistics was narrowed down to include the more administrative side of preparing to go abroad (see table 3 below).

Of the seven LVA programs examined, six discussed logistical content within their pre-departure training. This is captured in table three below showing what sub-themes were commonly discussed within logistics. Only one program did not mention, in their interview or

within the training material provided, information about logistics. This LVA program did, however, provide detailed logistical information on their website. Therefore, it could be said that this particular LVA program chose to provide students with logistical information prior to pre-departure training as to allow the students to focus more on the other content they provide during the official training session. Four of the interview participants discussed that students often wanted to cover logistical information prior to other content. This was explained as students having anxieties about the practical aspects of the experience, which often related to logistical information. Once the students' logistical questions and concerns about passports, visas, what to pack, etc. were out of the way, the students were able to focus on the other topics being presented.

In general, the type of information identified as logistical within material and throughout interviews included information about travel documents such as: how to obtain a passport and visa; how to arrange flights; what to pack; financial information about the LVA experiences, as well as finances while overseas and how to access money; insurance; photocopying documents; etc. Other information pertaining to health, safety and risk management, which could be categorized as logistical information, but was categorized separately for this research and is discussed below.

Table 3: LVA Programs discussing Logistics within Pre-departure training:

Logistics sub-themes	LVA Programs						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
General logistics (no further description)	X		X			X	
Passports, visas, flights, documents etc.		X			X		X
Packing		X	X				X
Finances (scholarships, tuition, expenses)		X	X				X
In country logistics	X	X	X				

4.3.2. Risk Management

The content theme of risk management includes understanding what risks there may be for students travelling abroad to learn or volunteer and how to mitigate against these potential risks. “Risk” according to the University of Ottawa’s Risk Management Manual is “anything that may cause an activity to fail to meet its goals and objectives” (University of Ottawa, 2006, p. ii). Risk management for students participating in LVA experiences overseas, especially to the Global South, mainly covers aspects of health and safety and how students can manage the potential risks. According to several participating LVA programs interviewed, risk management is important from a responsibilities aspect of the University of Ottawa. Given that students are travelling abroad to learn and volunteer as part of the University of Ottawa community, it is important that the university provide a minimum level of risk management training to students to ensure students have the knowledge and tools to be safe while abroad and avoid potential risks.

All students participating in an LVA experience through the University of Ottawa are required to participate in a risk management workshop in addition to their LVA program’s pre-departure training. Consequently, not all LVA programs discuss risk management in great detail (if at all) within their own pre-departure training. While all LVA programs ensure students receive the risk management content of pre-departure training, three programs provided content specific to risk management, health and safety. One of these LVA programs provided the training to all uOttawa students and two LVA programs provided additional information on risk management. The chart below provides an illustration of risk management content provided.

In general, the content discussed within the theme of risk management included discussions regarding how students can identify, prevent and mitigate risk; what students should do in an emergency situation; understanding what is an emergency versus non-emergency

situation; avenues of assistance; understanding travel warnings; registering with the Canadian government to go abroad in case of an emergency; traffic dangers in other countries; specific safety concerns for women travelling abroad. Health risks were also included within risk management. Health discussions primarily focused on how to medically prepare to go abroad to the Global South (e.g. required vaccinations, medications and medical supplies to bring form home; travel health insurance, common tropical illnesses, etc.). These themes are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: LVA Programs discussing Risk Management within Pre-departure training:

Risk Management (Health and Safety) sub-themes	LVA Programs						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Identifying and preventing risk		X			X		X
What is an emergency and what to do		X			X		X
How to access assistance					X		X
Medication		X			X		X
Vaccinations		X			X		X
Common illnesses							X
Health and evacuation insurance		X			X		X
Registration with Canadian government		X			X		X
Traffic safety							X
Travel warnings		X			X		X
Risk to women							X

4.3.3. Culture and Language

Culture within LVA pre-departure training is a common content theme discussed by most LVA programs. The understanding of culture, gaining intercultural skills, and the ability to interact within a different culture are important components commonly discussed within LVA pre-departure training (La Brack & Bathurst, 2012; Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Schwartz, et al., 2011). Culture can be defined in many different ways. For the purpose of this research, training content examined was categorised as “culture” if it related to discussions about customs, beliefs,

social practices, etc., and/or if it was titled as cultural content by the LVA program itself. Some of the topics discussed that were categorized within the culture theme included discussions on the host community/country, customs, laws, practices, etiquette, politics, social change, cross-cultural understanding, etc. It also included discussions regarding culture shock and reverse culture shock.

Language was grouped with culture as a theme because no LVA program's pre-departure training provided significant language training. However, three LVA programs did mention the importance of language in the context of understanding the culture better and creating an easier transition into the host country through attempting to learn basic phrases in the host country language.

Culture and language themes were included in the pre-departure training of all seven programs to varying degrees. Content was primarily set up to provide students with the knowledge regarding the importance of "culture" in terms of their integration within their host country and organizations. To equip students with an understanding of their host community's culture, students were primarily taught the importance of researching their host country's political context, laws, customs, language, practices and ways of communicating, etc. The purpose of these discussions appeared to be geared towards how to best prepare students to live cross-culturally and the potential challenges; understanding social change; being respectful of the host country, such as knowing when and what to take photos of; as well as culture shock and reverse culture shock. Table 5 below provides a visual of the culture theme.

While all LVA programs' pre-departure training discussed the theme of culture to some extent, few programs discussed culture shock and reverse culture shock.

Table 5: LVA Programs Discussing Culture and Language within Pre-departure Training:

<i>Culture and Language sub-themes</i>	LVA Programs						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
<i>Knowledge of host country (customs, laws, language, etiquette, political context, etc.)</i>	X	X	X			X	X
<i>Culture shock</i>		X					X
<i>Reverse culture shock</i>		X					X
<i>Social change</i>			X	X		X	X
<i>Respecting culture</i>		X	X		X	X	X
<i>Learning the host language</i>		X	X				X
<i>Importance of communication</i>		X		X			
<i>Dynamics of language</i>				X			
<i>Living cross culturally</i>			X	X			X

4.3.4. Ethics

The topic of ethics was another common content theme discussed by five out of the seven LVA programs within the pre-departure training. It was difficult to narrow down what discussions/topics should be categorised as ethics. Generally speaking, ethics concerns understanding “right” from “wrong” and one’s ability to act a certain way in situations (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). While some programs identified certain subject matter as falling under the category of ethics, others did not. Some topics that were covered, which were included under the content theme of ethics included: a code of conduct, do no harm, respecting boundaries, self-management, informed consent, responsible travel, expectations, multiple identities, understanding and managing social inequalities, positionality, privilege, power, status, identities, etc. (see table six below for an illustration).

The ethical discussions presented within the pre-departure training examined aimed to prepare students ethically in several different ways. Firstly, many of the discussions (content) were framed around preparing students to understand that they may (will likely) encounter situations in which they will question how to respond/act in an ethical or appropriate manner. In

relation to this, discussions also aimed to prepare students to understand their actions and the potential ethical outcomes of their actions/behaviours while abroad, especially if acting in response to a situation that questions the students understanding of what is ethical. Lastly, one program discussed the importance of finding LVA experiences that were ethical in nature. For example going abroad with organizations that did not inadvertently create greater harm while trying to “do good” (i.e. orphan tourism or volunteer work that puts locals out of work).

Scenarios or examples from past participants were used by some LVA programs to assist students in thinking about types of “challenging” encounters or situations and possible responses or actions. These scenarios allowed students to understand the types of situations they may encounter while abroad and the challenges associated with understanding what may be the most ethical response or course of action. Three out of the seven LVA programs discussed the use of scenarios to help prepare students understanding of ethics.

Table 7: LVA Programs Discussing Ethics within Pre-departure Training:

<i>Ethics sub-themes</i>	LVA Programs						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
<i>Ethical questions</i>		X		X			X
<i>Code of conduct</i>		X					X
<i>Do no harm</i>		X					X
<i>Scenarios</i>			X	X			X
<i>Cross cultural communication</i>		X	X	X			X
<i>Multiple identifies and positionality and power differences</i>		X	X	X			X
<i>Boundaries</i>				X			X
<i>Self-management</i>				X			
<i>Informed consent</i>							X
<i>Responsible travel</i>		X					X
<i>Understanding and managing inequalities</i>				X			X

4.3.5. Experiential Learning and Reflection

The topic of experiential learning and reflection was another theme derived from the pre-departure training materials and interview transcripts. Experiential learning and reflection was grouped together because reflection is an important component of experiential learning. As well, the reflection discussed within the pre-departure training pertained to students' learning from their experiences abroad.

Experiential learning is a learning theory that believes learning is a “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience (Kolb, 1984, p. 41)” (McCarthy, 2010, p. 132). One of the main components of experiential learning theory is the ability of the learner to reflect on their experience of observation and create knowledge from it (McCarthy, 2010). Experiential learning and reflection are, thus, important subjects to be discussed within LVA pre-departure training where an objective of the LVA experience is for students to learn from their experiences abroad.

Within the seven LVA programs examined, four programs discussed reflection and one of those four programs discussed experiential learning. An additional two LVA programs actively encouraged or required students to reflect while abroad; these two programs had a professor travelling with students abroad and available to students throughout their experience. In these programs, reflections and debriefs were done frequently throughout the LVA experience to assist students in “making sense” of and learn from their experiences. While these two LVA programs' content for reflection and experiential learning are not captured within the data on pre-departure training, it is important to mention that some programs are set up to guide students throughout their experience, not just before they depart.

Common sub-themes within the topic of reflection included encouraging students to think about why they were participating in an LVA experience, reflect through their first impressions overseas, look back on their experiences once they return (discussed at pre-departure to prepare students for their reintegration home), understanding their positionality within their experience abroad, as well as their status in terms of privilege and power. For the LVA program that discussed experiential learning in greater detail beyond reflection, some of the sub-themes discussed included: how students can think about their experience and learn from it, teaching students to understand what comfort and discomfort feel like and to unpack and understand this experience, teaching students how to interpret their experiences, ensuring students know their learning is their own responsibility, teaching students how to ask powerful questions, and an overview of the experiential learning model (see table 7 below for an illustration).

Table 7: LVA Programs Discussing Experiential Learning and Reflection in Pre-departure Training:

<i>Experiential Learning and Reflection sub-themes</i>	LVA Programs						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
<i>Reflection on why students chose to go abroad</i>	X	X		X			X
<i>Reflections on their first impressions and after thoughts</i>		X					X
<i>Students' understanding of their status (positionality, power, privilege, etc.) and the status of those around them</i>			X	X			
<i>Understanding how to learn and thinking about and interpreting their experiences</i>			X	X			
<i>Understanding feelings of discomfort and comfort as part of the experience</i>				X			
<i>Responsibility to learn</i>				X			
<i>Asking powerful questions</i>				X			
<i>Experiential learning model</i>				X			

4.3.6. LVA Program Expectations and Requirements

Pre-departure training is where students and program leads/facilitators are able to meet and discuss the students' pending international experience, while also preparing students for what they are about to experience overseas. In six of the seven LVA programs examined, discussions regarding the expectations and requirements of the students concerning their LVA program was covered. These same six LVA programs were credit based or academically recognized LVA programs that allowed students to gain credits towards their degree at the University of Ottawa. The expectations of students were primarily in regards to their academic requirements, such as any course work or assignments, teaching methods, etc. Two LVA programs also discussed the students' responsibilities towards their host organizations and the importance of understanding their host organizations' mandate and their (students') roles within the mandate as a volunteer/intern/student. Table 8 below provides an illustration of this content theme.

Table 8: LVA Programs discussing Students' Expectations and Responsibilities in Pre-departure training:

<i>Student Expectations and Responsibilities sub-themes</i>	LVA Programs						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
<i>Course subject, work, assignments, credits</i>	X		X	X		X	
<i>Students' responsibilities during LVA</i>	X		X	X	X		X
<i>Mandate and roles</i>				X			X

4.3.7. Other

The pre-departure training material had other content that did not necessarily fit well with the other themes discussed above. This was information pertained to specific types of LVA programs and focused on the topics and subject matter of those specific LVA experiences. The

subject matter itself will not be identified as it would be identifying information for the participants. Overall, the subjects largely encompassed the numerous aspects of development work and globalization.

4.4. Importance of Content Discussed within Pre-departure Training

The above section discusses the content that is covered within the pre-departure training of seven LVA programs at the University of Ottawa. While it is important to understand what content is covered as a starting point, it is also important to understand the value of the content discussed within pre-departure training and if there is greater value placed on some content over others.

The use of semi-structured interviews within this research allowed me to inquire about what facilitators felt was the ‘most important’ content categories that they taught students prior to their departure. As well, questions were asked inquiring about whether or not students expressed interest in particular content themes or shared what content they felt was most valuable to their experience overseas. Understanding what value training facilitators and students place on pre-departure training content themes is important to understanding what information may be most important for students to have prior to going abroad, as well as how (if at all) pre-departure training can be enhanced at the University of Ottawa to better students, and host communities experiences for LVA programs.

What facilitators felt was the most important content for students to receive prior to going abroad ranged across the LVA programs. For three of the programs examined, facilitators travelled with the students and were available to students 24/7 for questions and concerns once in the country. Both program facilitators discussed the challenges in providing students with *all* the

desired information prior to departure. Some of the challenges included timing in terms of scheduling in pre-departure sessions that suited everyone's schedules. Another challenge was that participating students came from a variety of different academic backgrounds and had different levels of knowledge on the subject matter and travel experiences. And lastly, students came to pre-departure training wanting more logistical and general context information. One facilitator expressed the challenges in trying to get into deeper conversations about topics that were considered important such as: positionality, identity, privilege, status, intersectionality, etc., when students were not in the space to absorb and understand the discussion. This facilitator found that once students had their immediate concerns about logistics, and understanding the host country context addressed, then they were in a better position to think about more abstract constructs like positionality and intersectionality. Therefore, the pre-departure training was more about laying the groundwork for these types of discussions to occur overseas. This was done through getting students to start to think about cultural sensitivity and living cross-culturally. The pre-departure training was, just as importantly, about building a relationship between the facilitator and the students and among the students so that students felt comfortable among their peers to discuss some of the challenges they may encounter while abroad.

Two other programs felt all the content covered was equally important for students to learn prior to departing. However, one of the programs repetitively mentioned the importance of discussing with students the notion of "do no harm" and ethics. This participant also mentioned the importance of managing students' expectations, safety and security, culture and reflection.

Lastly, one participant felt that providing students with the skills to manage and learn from their experiences was important. In order to provide these skills for learning, discussions regarding social inequalities, understanding one's roles and mandate, self-management and risk

management, and experiential learning or making sense of one's experiences were the most crucial content to be shared with students.

Facilitators were also asked what they believed students valued most about pre-departure training (either from what students were interested in learning or based on comments provided by students). In general (three out of four programs), students were most interested in learning about where they were going in terms of country information, logistical information, and how to best prepare in terms of documents required, packing, vaccinations, health, and school requirements. Two programs discussed how students valued the importance of deeper conversations regarding how to deal with challenging situations, how to learn from their experiences, how to manage their expectations, and in exercises that had students work through scenarios based on past participants challenging situations. This feedback often came once students were overseas or upon their return.

Overall, all content was viewed as important for students to be made aware of prior to going abroad. Students and facilitators did identify certain types of content as more valuable or important than others in terms of challenging students to learn about international relations, globalization, development, inequalities, etc., while abroad. However, it was also apparent that based on experience, facilitators felt there is a need to provide students with logistical, general context type of information, and answer students' burning questions, prior to encouraging students to think more abstractly about global development, inequalities, interconnectedness, power and privilege type issues and how they will learn from this LVA experience.

4.5. Role of Pre-departure Training

Facilitators were also asked what they felt was the most important role that pre-departure training played in preparing students for their LVA experiences. Interestingly, three out of the five interview participants discussed how pre-departure training played a significant role in building relationships between facilitator/program lead and students as well as relationships among the students, especially those travelling to the same destinations. Part of the learning experience from LVA programs relies on the students making sense of what they experience. As many of the facilitators discussed, students rely on each other to interpret what is happening and what they are observing during their time abroad. It is, therefore, important that they build a relationship and understand their peers' strengths, weaknesses, experiences, etc. prior to going abroad. The other two participants discussed how pre-departure training was a place to get students to think about their upcoming LVA experience and make them aware of how to prepare. One participant explained that the knowledge/information provided to students is common information and that pre-departure training is a means of making students aware of this information.

4.6. Similarities and Differences in Pre-departure Training Across LVA Programs at the University of Ottawa

This research sought to understand pre-departure training content at the University of Ottawa and whether or not this content varied significantly between LVA programs. When organizing and reviewing the data collected it was apparent that, while most LVA programs covered similar content themes such as logistics, risk management (health and safety), culture and language, and LVA program expectations and responsibilities, there were differences in how comprehensive the content was across programs. Additionally, it was apparent that not all

programs discussed content relating to ethics, and experiential learning (reflection).

Understanding why there was diversity among the content and depth of content is discussed in greater detail below in the analysis section. One obvious reason for diversity across LVA programs is that each program has different learning objectives for students and occurs in various lengths of time and in different country contexts. As well, the LVA programs examined were designed for different academic backgrounds and knowledges. For example, a law student participating in an academic exchange to the United States is likely to have different learning objectives and motivations than an international development student participating in an international development internship in Ghana. The types of discussions within pre-departure training are also likely to be different given the different types of experiences and learning objectives as well as the different types and levels of resources available to students in the host country.

4.7. Enhancing Pre-departure Training at the University of Ottawa –

Recommendations by Participants

A final question participants were asked was what they felt the University of Ottawa (or their respective programs) could do more of to prepare students prior to going abroad. Suggestions included making pre-departure training open to everyone who goes abroad, not just the students who participate in organized LVA programs for academic credit. By “everyone” this included student associations or groups who travel to volunteer over reading weeks or summer breaks, graduate students and professors travelling for research, etc.

Most programs shared that their students have had only positive feedback regarding the pre-departure training they had received and that training had been adjusted over the course of the years based on past students’ recommendations. One program recommended more emphasis

be placed on students learning the language of their host country. However the challenges of this were also discussed in terms of timing associated with learning a language. Another program shared how it would like to discuss more scenarios with students regarding what they may encounter while abroad, but that timing associated with organizing and scheduling the pre-departure training is always limited and challenging.

A final recommendation shared, was the importance of re-entry sessions or debriefing after students return to Canada. This was highlighted as just as important, if not more important than the pre-departure training in terms of how the student learns from their experience abroad. The following analysis and discussion of the research findings provides greater detail of some of the findings and situates these findings within the broader critical literature on LVA.

5. Analysis of LVA Pre-departure Training at the University of Ottawa

5.1. LVA Pre-departure Training at the University of Ottawa

As previously mentioned, the primary aim of this research is to understand how students are prepared for LVA experiences at the University of Ottawa and how this material connects with the theoretical frameworks of critical theory and cosmopolitanism. Pre-departure training for LVA experiences is a crucial component of the students' ability to learn from their experience (Dekaney, 2008; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Highum, 2014; Holmes, Bavieri, & Ganassin, 2015; Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Schwartz, et al., 2011; Travers, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014). A gap within the literature was identified in terms of understanding what content is taught to students as part their pre-departure training and how this may vary across programs within a single academic institution – the University of Ottawa. Understanding the pre-departure training content is important for knowing how students

participating in LVA experiences, through the University of Ottawa, are prepared for their experiences. As well as, to consider this preparation in light of the broader scholarly critiques of LVA so as to both mitigate against the numerous critiques of the LVA practice discussed in the above literature review and ensure students are learning from and understanding their experiences overseas.

Various types of content are discussed as important to student preparation within the literature on LVA programs. The type of content deemed important for students to learn prior to going abroad varied across the literature. For example, Highum (2014) provides a list of important information students should receive prior to going abroad to study. The type of information she discusses included information pertaining to learning about the host country; health and safety while abroad, both physically and mentally; risk management and emergency planning; students' expectations and self-management; logistical planning and packing; cultural and historical understanding of the host country; and reflection (Highum, 2014). Other authors emphasise the importance of culture and language in preparing students for study abroad programs (Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Schwartz, et al., 2011). Preparing students with the skills or knowledge of how to understand and learn from their cross-cultural experience is also examined by several authors who emphasize the importance of ethical preparation that includes a critical understanding of power, privilege, status, gender, politics, etc. (Drolet, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Travers, 2014; Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). These types of discussions are more in-depth and reflective than the logistical preparation regarding what to pack, where to stay, etc.

The research findings section above discussed the type of content that LVA programs at the University of Ottawa cover within their pre-departure training. Therefore, the findings

section answers the initial research question: *“Do students receive pre-departure training for learn and volunteer abroad (LVA) programs at the University of Ottawa? If so, what is the content of the training”*? Overall, the findings suggest that the pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa, as a whole, does teach students the majority of the content that the literature has identified as important, namely health and safety or risk management, cross-cultural understanding and language, and ethics (Drolet, 2014; Huish, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Highum, 2014; Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Schwartz, et al., 2011; Wurtz, 2014). However, not all LVA programs examined cover all the topics, and these topics are not covered to the same degree across the programs. This leads to the other two questions of research: *how does the pre-departure training content differ across LVA programs at the University of Ottawa; and, what are the implications (if any) of the diverse training materials?*

The following analysis will aim to answer these questions through examining the research findings with the literature examined.

5.2. Similarities within the Pre-departure Training Content Across LVA Programs

Within the pre-departure training content examined, there were some similarities across all programs. All programs, for example, covered the same risk management (health and safety) information presented by the same program. All programs provided similar logistical content, although this content did vary across programs given that logistical information would be program specific. In addition, all programs also covered information pertaining to LVA program expectations in regards to what was expected of students for assignments, credit requirements, etc. Furthermore, all programs could be said to have touched on the topic of culture, language and ethics to some degree. The topics of culture, language and ethics, however, were also where

there were the greatest differences found; these differences will be discussed in greater detail below.

The similarities in content of the pre-departure training across programs are, therefore, primarily focused on the students' level of preparation to ensure they will be safe, healthy and prepared in regards to administrative logistics of the experience. Preparation that prioritizes the students and their safety is critiqued by Fizzell and Epprecht because it can often misrepresent the host country as impoverished or dangerous (2014). Furthermore, if preparation is focused on the students' needs and best interests, this can reinforce the critiques of LVA as a neocolonial activity (Heron, 2011; Sin, 2010; Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Simpson, 2004) that fails to confront students' power and privilege as citizens of the Global North (Cameron, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; Jefferess, 2008; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014). If the students' experience and safety is the focus of pre-departure training for LVA experiences then this can be understood to align with the neoliberalist ideology that is discussed by Smith and Laurie and Jefferess, namely that the industry of LVA supports the desires of the individual volunteer/student to fulfill their interests to enact goodwill while developing their credentials for employability within a globalized world (Smith & Laurie, 2011; Jefferess, 2012).

5.3. Differences within the Pre-departure Training Content Across LVA Programs

The greatest differences noted in content across LVA program's pre-departure training was in the areas of culture, ethics, and experiential learning and reflection. The following subsections examine each of these topics more closely.

5.3.1. Culture versus Cross-cultural Understanding

An understanding of the host country's culture is important for students to have prior to departing overseas (Highum, 2014; Schwartz, et al., 2011; Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Wurtz, 2014). Cultural information can include understanding the country's cultural norms, religion, political institutions, language, customs, social context, etiquette, etc. (Highum, 2014; Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Schwartz, et al., 2011). As well, cross-cultural training is essential in generating an understanding of cultural differences, cultural matters and in allowing the individual to better adjust to their host country (Wurtz, 2014). This type of cultural training could be considered background contextual information that is useful for students to understand where they are going and what they can expect to see and experience once they arrive in their host country.

In the findings, five of the seven participants' cultural preparation included raising the students' level of awareness and knowledge of their host country's (community) customs, laws, political context, etiquette, and language. This type of information was discussed in the context of preparing students for understanding where they were going with the aim of helping them transition into a different culture and to help ease anxieties over the 'unknown'. With this same objective in mind, two programs also discussed culture shock and reverse culture shock. Culture shock discussions primarily covered the phases students may experience as they acclimatise to a new cultural context and these discussions were framed in terms of ensuring students mental wellbeing overseas.

Another component to cultural preparation concerns *learning* from cross-cultural encounters. This is often an objective of many LVA programs (Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Schwartz, et al., 2011; Drolet, 2014; Roddick, 2014; Tiessen, 2014). Students participating in LVA experiences are almost always guaranteed to be in a

position where they are experiencing a culture that is different from their own. But does experiencing a different culture ensure students are learning from their cross-cultural encounters and what is meant by cross-cultural learning? In Kruse and Brubaker's article on cross-cultural learning as preparation for study abroad, they use Paige, et al.'s definition of cultural learning to mean:

“the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively” (Kruse & Brubaker, 2007, p. 148).

Holmes, Bavieri and Granassin argue that to truly learn from and understand one's cross-cultural experience requires students to also understand their own identity (2015). If students are to learn to move away from stereotypes of the “Other” via their cross-cultural living, then it is also important that students are prepared to learn about the complexities of culture (Holmes, Bavieri, & Ganassin, 2015). For students to understand their own identity they must understand the privilege and power they carry with their identity and how this is formed within Canada and abroad (Drolet, 2014; Travers, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; Cameron, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014). Moreover, students should also understand their motivations for participating in an LVA program (Tiessen, 2012).

Three programs discussed culture in terms of learning from living cross-culturally. Two of these programs participated in interviews and provided greater detail on the content related to developing students' cross-cultural understanding as an objective of the experience and the pre-departure training.

One program discussed cross-cultural dynamics as encouraging students to think about their positionality and what the students can and cannot control in terms of their privilege and

advantages within their home and host countries. One particular interview brought up how participants may carry a particular status at home as a young Canadian university student, but their status abroad will not be the same. Additionally, the students will have little control over what status locals within their host country assign them. A Canadian university student, may achieve, a higher status, be taken more seriously, and/or have greater expectations placed upon them when volunteering abroad than what they experience in their home country. The status bestowed on foreigners, and in this case, Canadian students, is directly related to privilege and perceptions of a common example I heard throughout several different interviews. In this example, students in Canada self-identify as “poor” and try to explain their poverty to host communities while abroad, noting the high cost of tuition fees, accommodation, etc. and often times large student loans owed. Yet in the communities in the Global South, these students are perceived as wealthy because of the opportunities that are afforded to youth who wish to travel abroad including the means (whether through personal funds, borrowed money, or scholarships) to travel internationally as part of their university education, an argument discussed in (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013).

A second program also included content about power and privilege; the students were given an exercise to think about the various dynamics of both power and privilege in their home country and host country context. Both programs mentioned the importance of learning about intersectionality to better understand cross-cultural dynamics. According to Drolet, an important element of pre-departure training for LVA programs is developing the students understanding of their own positionality in terms of gender, race, status, and their social location and how these intersect between identities (2014). Considerations regarding intersectionality are crucial to students understanding identities and positionality from their international experience (Drolet,

2014). As Drolet also states “it is crucial to understand how privilege is enacted abroad, how “identities that move” from the North to the South become unsettled in the process, and how post-colonial realities operate (Razack, 2012)” (2014, p. 189).

Some of the content in these pre-departure training programs examined did include explicit reference to complex cross-cultural learning including understanding of one’s positionality at home and abroad. However, the content in other programs regarding cultural learning was more superficial in how they encouraged students to understand the complexities of cross-cultural experiences. Where programs covered culture in the context of assisting students with their transition into their host community this can be referenced back to some of the critiques of LVA programs that focus primarily on the interests of the volunteer (Heron, 2011; Sin, 2010). Furthermore, where programs fail to encourage enhanced cross-cultural understanding they risk reinforcing stereotypes of “others” (Tiessen & Huish, 2014). This overlaps with similar critiques regarding the ethical implications of LVA type programs. For example, Simpson critiques LVA practices that lack in critical engagement as they allow students to “confirm rather than challenge” their understanding of “others” (2004, p. 688). Furthermore she argues that development becomes simplified and operates separate from histories of colonialism and social and economic politics when exercised through LVA (gap year) programs (Simpson, 2004). Where students may lack in cross-cultural understanding they may also create barriers within their host community/organization by trying to impose their own values and knowledges (Heron, 2011). Imposing one’s own values and knowledges is critiqued by Heron in her discussion of how international volunteering primarily benefits the volunteer and not always the host community/organization (2011). These types of critiques point back to the colonial parallels that some LVA type programs may unknowingly recreate by failing to engage

students to critically think about global power imbalances and how their positionality influences their experiences at home and abroad (MacDonald, 2014; Simpson, 2004; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Drolet, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; Travers, 2014). In addition to how the students' engagement in an LVA experience is possible due to the history of colonialism and Western dominance. Discussions that focus on the differences in culture that students are going to encounter may also reinforce a divide between "us" and "them" (Ingram, 2011; Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2010) instead of encouraging a discourse of solidarity *with* "them" (MacDonald, 2014; Kirk, 2012).

While the content of the pre-departure material offered some insights into complex cultural issues, sharing this material with students was done in a limited amount of time. As many participants commented, there is a real time constraint in regards to when pre-departure training is offered, especially, in the midst of their other courses and assignments which competes for their level of engagement. The time constraints and structure of the pre-departure training also limits the time allowed for reflection, interactions, sharing and deep learning, reading, and processing information. So, while there is evidence that some programs are preparing students with cross-cultural understanding, this only reaches a small number of students who participate in these particular programs. There is also little evidence of how students learned about this and how they understand the issues at hand. This is a clear limitation of this research. It would be of value for further research to be conducted that examines the students' experiences of pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa to understand students' perceptions of how and what they learned from the training.

5.3.2. Ethics

The discussions surrounding cross-cultural learning and one's identity and positionality at home and abroad closely relate with discussions on ethics of LVA programs/experiences.

Preparing students for LVA experiences ethically involves teaching them the concept of “do no harm”. Desrosiers and Thomson describe “do no harm” as “understanding the impact of our presence or actions abroad and deploying conscious efforts to minimize negative emotional and physical risk to the people we meet and societies we visit, including learning to avoid getting involved altogether if risks are too high” (2014, p. 143). The authors further highlight that it is important for students to think about what it means to do no harm and reflect throughout their experiences abroad and upon their return (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014). Ethical concerns with LVA programs are also described by Tiessen and Kumar, as the “positive and negative contributions”, the intended outcome of LVA programs and whether or not there are any reciprocal benefits to the host countries/communities, especially when the Global South is used as a place to educate Canadians about international development (2013, p. 418). Furthermore, the authors express concerns regarding the ethical implications of students/volunteers’ “social interactions in a cross-cultural setting” (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013, p. 418). Two LVA programs examined discuss ethics as the concept of not causing harm through their LVA experience. One program encouraged students to think about their LVA program and ask ethical questions regarding whether or not this program may have underlying ethical consequences such as undermining local employment through international volunteers, or not being sustainable within the host community and reproducing relationships of dependency. Relationships of dependency is something Huish critiques as an unethical outcome of some international health electives (Huish, 2014), but this is also likely a problem in other types of LVA programs. Ethics regarding

dependency relationships discussed by research participants was mainly concerning students finding their own LVA type experience and not going through specific LVA programs set up through the University of Ottawa.

Three other programs discussed the concept of “do not harm” in greater depth to align with Desrosiers and Thomson’s (2014) discussion regarding students’ actions abroad and their consequences. Citing Tiessen and Kumar, “ethical issues in LVA programs are generally understood in the nexus of what is and what should be, based on an individual’s perception of what is right and wrong, just or unjust” (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013, p. 418). Ethical preparation for LVA programs, therefore, involves a much deeper analysis than simply informing students to ‘do no harm’ while abroad. Like cross-cultural learning, preparation for students’ understanding of ethics within their LVA experience requires that students be aware of their own social location and positionality (Drolet, 2014; Schwartz, et al., 2011; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014). Understanding and continuously reflecting upon one’s positionality allows students to develop a “greater awareness of asymmetric power relations, and how one’s position might impose harm upon, or have undue influences over others” (Banks and Nohr, 2012, p. 65 in Drolet, 2014, p. 192; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014). Understanding ethics in relation to LVA programs/experiences requires students to reflect on themselves and their actions (Tiessen and Kumar in Drolet, 2014). This reflection should include discussions surrounding how legacies of colonialism influences one’s identity both at home and abroad (Drolet, 2014).

Two of the programs that discussed ethics in greater depth encouraged students to think about their own identities and positionality and how power is played out in various relationships. One program discussed multiple accountabilities and three programs offered a discussion on

multiple expectations at play in their LVA experiences – the students, the university, the host organization, the people they will encounter abroad, etc. Additionally, three programs provided students with ethical scenarios to deliberate the best solution.

Reflection before, during and after the LVA experience was considered crucial by the ethical discussion of four programs². The literature considers this vital to learning from one's experiences overseas, and especially in understanding how to navigate through challenging encounters (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014). Three of these programs focused reflection on students unpacking and trying to understand their (and others') positionality, privilege and power. Three programs also planned for having students reflect on their motivations for participating in an LVA experience and their intentions or what they hoped to gain from this experience. Motivations for participating in an LVA experiences is discussed by Tiessen and Kumar as important for students to benefit fully from their experience and to understand their possible impacts within the host community (2013).

While only a few of the programs examined are encouraging students to critically reflect about their positionality, status, intentions, roles, etc. there are still limitations to the ethics preparation that was examined. In Tiessen and Kumar's article the authors discuss the time involved in students developing an understanding for LVA ethics (2013). The authors further recommend that students have an understanding of ethics prior to pre-departure training or even being admitted into an LVA program (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). The challenges associated with the time constraints of pre-departure training, which was mentioned by study participants is also

² It is important to note that other programs did encourage or require students to reflect during or after their experience, but did not discuss reflection in detail during interviews or in pre-departure training materials. This is likely because the interviews were focused on information pertaining to pre-departure training and not what occurs during or after the LVA experiences.

likely a barrier to the level of ethical understanding that students gain from pre-departure training. Furthermore, this research found that very few LVA programs discuss ethics within pre-departure training sessions. Tiessen and Kumar discuss research findings which demonstrate that despite students being taught about ethics within their pre-departure training, their level of ethical understanding of their experience and encounters was primarily in regards to the ethical issues they encounter in their host country and not about the deeper issues of inequality and social injustices arising from structural inequalities between the Global North and the Global South (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Therefore, when students receive no or minimal ethics training there is a great risk of inadvertently causing harm.

Ethical training should also focus on how students can act in solidarity and in ethical ways to promote systemic changes and reduce inequality (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; MacDonald, 2014; Kirk, 2012). While a couple of programs did discuss social change and solidarity, the full extent of which this is discussed in pre-departure training is limited given the types of training material examined. Social change through LVA experiences start with the individual who must first understand their position and role within global social justice (or LVA programs) and how they may be recreating relationships that are oppressive (Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014). As Tiessen and Kumar discuss, there is more that can be done through pre-departure training or even before pre-departure training to enhance students' understanding of ethics in relation to LVA experiences and this is true for the University of Ottawa's LVA programs pre-departure training (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Some recommendations, provided by Tiessen and Kumar, include having students take a course in ethics and development; having an admission process for LVA programs that screens students in part based on their motivations; having preparatory meetings with students that include discussions of cross-cultural learning and ethical responsibilities

before pre-departure training; and perhaps most importantly ensuring students are provided a space for return orientation or debriefing following their time overseas (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Additionally, it is useful to consider one of the challenges identified earlier in this thesis pertaining to timing of pre-departure training. Students who are required to do pre-departure training generally do so very near the travel dates when they may face a number of other pressing concerns including the range of preparations required from getting vaccinations, booking tickets, finding accommodations, saying goodbye to friends and family, and often the completion of course work, among other preoccupations. It is reasonable that students may desire more specific information about their placements, travel arrangements, etc. in the pre-departure briefings rather than time spent on deep reflection, ethical consideration, power relations, etc. Universities, however, are well placed to structure these educational and reflection-orientated pre-departure opportunities through carefully designed programs that facilitate a longer lead-up to the overseas experiences, thereby ensuring more time for adequate and comprehensive preparation.

For students who may have been inadequately prepared for the ethical dilemmas they encountered overseas, return orientation/debriefing can provide a safe space for them to process and understand what they experienced (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). The notion of improved return debriefings was something a couple of participants noted was essential to students learning from their experience, but not always possible to coordinate. Making return debriefing a mandatory part of LVA programs could be one way to enhance students' learning and understanding of their experience abroad in regards to ethics and cross-cultural living. Again, universities can be spaces that can enable this return debriefing if the overseas experience is carefully situated in particular moments of the university education such that students returning to campus for one or more

semesters after the LVA experience. Ongoing access to program leads such as university professors and administrators who facilitate LVA programs can further facilitate this more deep reflection.

5.3.3. Experiential Learning and Reflection

LVA programs are a form of experiential learning as they allow students to learn from and “make meaning out of direct experience” abroad (Tiessen & Huish, 2014, p. 4). LVA programs should be designed to enhance students’ learning from their experience and to provide students with the opportunity to connect what they learn in the classroom (theory) with world realities (practice) (Drolet, 2014; Travers, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Kruse & Brubaker, 2007; Tiessen & Huish, 2014). Langdon and Agyeyomah (2014) argue that the student preparation and levels of learning from their LVA experiences depend on the material taught or presented within the pre-departure training (as well as reflection and debrief) and what the objectives of the LVA program are. An example Langdon and Agyeyomah provided was that if the objective of the LVA program is to provide students with skills to add to a résumé or with opportunities for self-improvement, then the level of emphasis placed on learning from the experience or bridging theory from the classroom with realities in the field, may be minimal compared to LVA programs that prioritize experiential learning as the main objective (2014).

Interestingly, only one LVA program discussed the concept of experiential learning. This program encouraged students to think about what experiential learning is and how they will learn through their experiences and make sense of it. In fact, the program facilitator noted that experiential learning was the overall framework for this program’s pre-departure training. This is because the objective of that particular LVA program was for students to learn from their experience abroad and understand classroom lessons through actual experience abroad. In the

pre-departure training, students were encouraged to participate in an activity that potentially took them out of their comfort zone and were asked to reflect upon this experience. Additionally this program ensured students knew that it was their responsibility to make sense of what they experienced and learned from their time overseas. Pushing students to physically feel uncomfortable and then providing the space for the students to reflect upon this experience was a method used to provide students with the tools to engage in critical reflection.

While other programs did not specifically teach students about experiential learning theory within their pre-departure training, they may have still encouraged students to engage in the stages of experiential learning such as the process of reflection and post-return debriefing. Four programs examined did encourage students to reflect before, during, and/or after their experience as a process of learning. Three of these programs asked students to reflect on understanding their motivations for participating in an LVA experience. Whereas two programs further encouraged students to reflect on their positionality in regards to their privilege and power as students coming from Canada.

While it is important to reflect on one's motivations for participating in an LVA experience (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013), many LVA programs leave this reflection up to the students to conduct on their own terms voluntarily. Fizzell and Epprecht discuss the challenges with reflection as a practice within international experiential learning if it is not truly encouraging students to critically reflect on their own positionality and power in relation to their host community and experience (2014). While reflection has been discussed by numerous authors (Drolet, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Travers, 2014) as a crucial component to LVA experiences and learning, it is not enough for programs to simply state that they encourage students to reflect before, during

and after on what they have seen and experienced without actually providing students with the skills to know *how to* and *what to* reflect upon. Leaving reflection to students to take it upon themselves to do in journal writing may not actually encourage deeper critical reflection and could risk students reinforcing stereotypes and othering instead of challenging their thinking (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014). Travers also notes that the process of reflection works best when done with others (2014). However, Desrosiers and Thomson encourage journaling as a method of students' self-reflection, but they also discuss the great lengths they go through to prepare students in terms of how to reflect and what to reflect upon (2014).

Therefore, while four programs examined did encourage reflection as a component of the pre-departure training, how students were encouraged to reflect varied. One program had a professor travelling with students and facilitating weekly/nightly reflections with students based on what they had learned/experiences throughout their time abroad. In this situation, students are able to reflect in a group setting with the advantages of having a facilitator encourage critical thinking and understanding the "stories behind the stories" as Desrosiers and Thomson discuss is important for students to understand not only what they are seeing, hearing and experiences, but also what they are not (2014, pp. 149-150).

In programs where reflection and understanding of how one may learn from their LVA experience are minimally encouraged there is a risk that students learning from their experiences overseas are reinforcing stereotypes instead of challenging them (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014). However, it is also important to note that this research focused on pre-departure training, and it is possible that some programs examined offer more in-depth reflection and debriefing than was presented in this study, but that this was not captured within the pre-departure materials or interviews that were specific to pre-departure training. Reflection

and debriefing may not have been discussed with some participants if it was viewed as an exercise done during and after the trip as opposed to before departure.

5.4. What are the Implications for Students' Learning from LVA Programs as a Result of Varying Pre-departure Training Content

A final research question was to understand what, if any, implications there may be for diversity across LVA program's pre-departure training content. It is difficult to say for certain whether or not there are any implications in one program having different pre-departure training content over another program. This is because all the LVA programs examined offer different types of LVA experiences, with different learning objectives, and to different areas of the world. Some of the pre-departure trainings are geared to students going to a particular community in a specific country and the preparations are geared to that specific context while other pre-departure trainings offer a more general overview of cultural differences or cross-cultural exposure without depth of study on any particular region, country or community. Thus, there is significant variation across pre-departure programs depending on the student constituencies the pre-departure training is trying to reach. Furthermore, when programs were asked what type of feedback students provided regarding their pre-departure training, all programs stated that they have had very positive feedback from students regarding the level of preparation they received through their pre-departure training. With high levels of student satisfaction (as indicated by the program facilitators) it can be difficult to state that one program's pre-departure training may be lacking in comparison to others. However, it should also be considered that perhaps facilitators have received mainly positive feedback regarding their pre-departure training because students may not always feel comfortable expressing their negative concerns. While some programs had student evaluations, these are normally conducted anonymously and after students complete the

course requirements. Therefore, apprehension to express negative concerns is unlikely due to students own anxiety of being graded poorly for expressing dissatisfaction. Another consideration is that students may not be aware of missed learning opportunities that may have resulted from minimal preparation. Lastly, participants may not have been forthcoming about any negative feedback they may have received by students due to anxiety over how their program may be perceived in this research. This identifies a clear limitation of this research in that students' perspectives of their pre-departure training would be of great value in better understanding the training provided at the University of Ottawa. This was something that this research could not manage given various logistics and time constraints involved.

Scholarship on LVA has offered important insights into the limitations of these programs in relation to changing and even understanding structural inequality within and between regions, countries and communities. Many scholars in the field have employed critical theory lenses to examine the ethical issues arising from LVA building on post-colonial, neo-imperial and critical race theory to examine the impacts of privilege, power, and inequality of opportunity. However, many of these same scholarly contributions have pointed to important spaces for re-orienting North-South LVA programs such that students are better prepared for their experiences abroad (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014), that pre-departure training is more inclusive of critical reflection (Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013) and that student learning moves beyond simple reflection to a deep analysis of structural inequalities as well as providing examples of ways to facilitate acts of solidarity with partner communities (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014) or become 'authentic allies' (Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014). These avenues for improved practices lends support to cosmopolitan and global citizenship aspirations as are frequently articulated by universities in their strategic mandates.

While it is difficult to identify clear implications in the differences identified between LVA program's pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa, there are important potential implications for global citizenship and hypercritical reflexivity (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014) in these differences. As the analysis above alludes to, the main differences found in pre-departure training were pertaining to the level of preparation provided to students in regards to their preparation for learning from their LVA experience. Although all programs provided information pertaining to logistics, risk management (health and safety), basic cultural and country information, and program expectations, some programs spent more time discussing more in depth understandings of certain content in efforts to enhance students' ability to learn from the complexities of their LVA experience. Beyond superficial learning opportunities, there remain immense opportunities for grounding that learning, in the literature of global citizenship education, cosmopolitanism, experiential learning, and critical reflexivity.

Many universities and academic institutions have adopted the concept of global citizenship education (Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Cameron, 2014; Andreotti, 2006). Global citizenship education has been viewed as a way in which universities can enhance students' global competencies and respond to the demand for graduates who are versed in global complexities, cross-cultural awareness and issues of social justice (Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Holmes, Bavieri, & Ganassin, 2015). The University of Ottawa is no exception and is actively promoting global citizenship through various means, including student mobility programs. The University of Ottawa's strategic plan's vision statement from their Destination 2020 states that:

“The University of Ottawa will offer an unparalleled university experience and, through outstanding teaching and research play a vital role in defining the world of tomorrow. We will instill in each of our graduates an ethic of service, a culture of

engagement and an awareness of shared responsibility that will prepare them for global citizenship.” (University of Ottawa, 2011).

While the term global citizenship education has been widely adopted by academic institutions across North America, including the University of Ottawa, to promote globally competent graduates, what it means to be a global citizen is not always clearly defined by those who promote it. As well, definitions of the concept global citizenship are highly contested (Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Tiessen & Epprecht, 2012; Jefferess, 2008).

If the University of Ottawa intends to create graduates who can identify as global citizens with an *“ethic of service, a culture of engagement and an awareness of shared responsibility”* (University of Ottawa, 2011) in part through student mobility programs, then it is important to understand how student preparation for LVA experiences (among others) is contributing to students becoming global citizens and how the diversity in pre-departure training content may have implications for students’ understanding of what it means to claim the status of a global citizen.

A critique among authors discussing global citizenship education and LVA type experiences is that global citizenship education is not always associated with global justice or a thorough understanding of what global citizenship means (Cameron, 2014; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Andreotti, 2006). Their discussions offer a valuable insight into understanding what it means to be a “global citizen” and what students must be aware of when going overseas to learn from an experience and essentially become a “global citizen”. Analysing the differences in training content discussed above through discussion of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship education demonstrates the potential implications associated with the diversity among pre-

departure training at the University of Ottawa. The implications are primarily in the level and type of learning students will gain from their LVA experience.

Cameron discusses the importance of understanding the true meaning behind the term global citizenship and its principles before it should be pushed as a practice by and claimed as a status of students (2014). In his chapter he discusses how global citizenship is rooted in the notion of cosmopolitanism, which means “world citizen” and is based on the idea that all humans have a moral obligation towards other humans (Cameron, 2014; Tiessen & Epprecht, 2012). Cameron argues that institutions promoting global citizenship education must understand what this means through grounding the concept in cosmopolitanism or understanding both the negative and positive moral obligations that are associated with global citizenship to do good, while also not causing harm (Cameron, 2014). Global citizenship education is also discussed by Jefferess (2011) and Zeddies and Millei (2015) who argue it is important that global citizenship education encourages participants to try and understand *why* there is inequality, poverty, suffering, etc. For students to understand *why* they are experiencing or encountering global injustices they must be aware for the politics, history, and international relations that create these global injustices (Zeddies & Millei, 2015; Jefferess, 2011). Similarly students must understand why they are in a privileged position to become a global citizen when others are not afforded this same privilege (Cameron, 2014; Jefferess, 2011).

If students participating in LVA experiences are to gain an understanding of global citizenship then how they are prepared will influence their level of learning and understanding from their LVA experience. Cameron states that *how* global citizenship education is presented to students directly shapes the kind of learning students develop through their LVA experience (2014). For students to learn the most from their LVA experience and about global citizenship

then attention must be given to developing the students understanding of political and economic power within the Global North and how students may be indirectly involved in the suffering of others through these systems of power (Cameron, 2014). Or furthermore, participating in neoliberal ideologies that focus on the autonomous individual who benefits from the LVA practices while perhaps recreating neocolonial relationships (Smith & Laurie, 2011; Jefferess, 2012).

Based on the literature which examines global citizenship education in relation to cosmopolitanism, the differences in content across LVA programs examined could have implications in terms of the students' level of learning gained from their LVA experience and their understanding of this experience. In particular, students who participate in LVA programs that do not adequately prepare them in terms of understanding their privilege and dilemmas associated with their status and positionality at home and abroad, are not likely to learn as much as students who are prepared to develop this understanding before, during and after their experience. Consequently, not all students are likely to learn to the full potential that the LVA experiences at the University of Ottawa have to offer. Interestingly, while two programs discussed, in greater detail, their attempt to develop students' understanding of their unequal privilege and power inherent to their status as Canadians and how this will intersect with their relationships and encounters abroad, none of the programs discussed teaching students about the concept of global citizenship within their pre-departure training. This does not mean that programs do not discuss global citizenship education, however, this was not discussed in interviews or within the training materials. An absence of global citizenship discourse within LVA programs could identify a disconnection between the University of Ottawa's vision to create global citizens and the programs that are designed to do this. If mobility programs are one

of the tools used to foster the global citizen status among graduates, then students should have an understanding of what this status entails. Cosmopolitan discourse adds value into understanding what it means to claim global citizenship status and the importance of our moral responsibilities to not only avoid causing harm, but also not benefit from harm caused onto others through LVA practices (Cameron, 2014; Andreotti, 2006; Jefferess, 2008). The inability to find references to global citizenship might also be explained by concerns for the superficiality of this term and the appropriation of this language by universities for commercial reasons rather than for truly changing the nature of interactions within and between regions, countries and communities.

The literature on global citizenship education overlaps with critical theory as it is also concerned that LVA programs risk inadvertently reinforcing paternalistic and neocolonial attitudes (Cameron, 2014), such as the idea of “us” helping “them” or the perceived need of those in the Global South (Keese, 2011; Ingram, 2011; Sin, 2010; Simpson, 2004; Heron, 2011) that are discussed above in the literature review. Furthermore, a lack of adequate understanding of what global citizenship education entails can create students who are “apathetic” allies within social justice and human rights movements (Cameron, 2014, p. 25). Apathetic allies acknowledge colonialism and its legacies, however they do not acknowledge how they personally may be benefitting from it and how it influences their own privilege and positionality at home and abroad (Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014). How one benefits from the colonial legacies is something that other authors speak to in terms of the importance in understanding of the history and current political and economic global frameworks that continue to divide those who are privileged to become global citizens and those who are not (Jefferess, 2011; Jefferess, 2008; Zeddies & Millei, 2015; Cameron, 2014). Two programs examined did attempt to teach students about understanding and recognizing their privilege and positionality and understand

how their perceived positions of power are the results of history and colonialism. One other program discussed power and positionality, but without going into details about the history behind why students carry their particular status. Thus the critical theory scholarship, which employs post-colonialism, neoliberalism, critical race theory, etc. remains a useful framework for considering the limitations of pre-departure training, but also some of the possibilities for building deep engagement, critical thinking and reflection within students.

Students who received the pre-departure training that provided more in-depth discussions regarding privilege, power, positionality, identities and understanding of intersectionality are likely to foster a greater level of learning and be better equipped to connect their classroom learning with their experience abroad. On the other hand, students who received pre-departure training that primarily focused on the wellbeing and integration of the student, are less likely to achieve the same level of learning and understanding from their experiences.

The level of learning and degree to which students make sense of their LVA experience can also be understood through Kolb's experiential learning model. If learning through experiences is dependent upon the student reflecting upon their observations overseas, understanding the abstract concepts of their reflections and testing these abstract concepts (Tiessen & Huish, 2014; McCarthy, 2010; Zijdemans-Boudreau, Moss, & Lee, 2013) then once again students' level of learning may be an implication of differing preparation content. Student who participated in an LVA program that prepared students to think about reflection or better yet taught students about experiential learning and how one learns through experiences, are likely to develop a more comprehensive understanding of their experience overseas. As Travers discusses, students do not automatically learn from their experiences (2014). Students need to reflect on what they are experiencing and extract from these experiences new understandings (Travers,

2014). For the LVA programs that did not encourage critical reflection and analysis of the experience, it could be argued that students are not engaging in experiential learning (Lutterman-Aguilar and Ginerich 2002 in Travers, 2014), but are rather just participating in an experience overseas and potentially reinforcing stereotypes and neocolonial practices as is argued by many authors (Ingram, 2011; Heron, 2011; Sin, 2010; MacDonald, 2014).

While the level of learning may be different for students participating in one LVA program over another given the content of the pre-departure training, it is important to note that pre-departure training in itself is not the only component for encouraging student's learning. Some programs may focus on some of the content highlighted above as encouraging a greater sense of learning in students within other elements of the LVA program (during or after the experience). Furthermore, the LVA programs examined have different learning objectives for the students. It would have been useful to understand how pre-departure training complements learning objectives of each LVA program. Future research could explore this relationship in order to make more solid connections between training material and outcomes in terms of student learning.

5.5. Challenges Associated with Enhancing LVA Program Pre-departure Training at the University of Ottawa

While there may be implications associated with the differences identified in the pre-departure training content across LVA programs at the University of Ottawa it is also important to understand that there were several challenges noted by training facilitators which could limit options for improvement. Based on student feedback to facilitators, students have been overwhelmingly satisfied with the training received in terms of how well it has prepared them for their LVA experiences.

As briefly discussed within the research findings, there are challenges associated with pre-departure training for students embarking on an LVA experience as part of their studies at the University of Ottawa. All programs had stated that there is room at the University of Ottawa to improve pre-departure training for students; however, this improvement was along the lines of ensuring all students received some level of pre-departure training prior to going abroad for any kind of international experience – research, workshops, volunteer groups, student associations, etc. Currently, pre-departure training is only mandatory for students participating in an organized LVA experience through one of the faculties or university offices/centres such as the International Office. During interviews, it was brought to my attention that there are a significant number of students going abroad to volunteer, research, and learn independently. This could be through student associations or groups that organize reading week volunteer trips or graduate students and professors travelling abroad to conduct research in the field. Some level of pre-departure training would benefit all individuals travelling abroad as part of their work or studies at the University of Ottawa. Funding was raised as a concern in regards to expanding pre-departure training to students and staff going abroad outside of organized and accredited LVA programs and providing the necessary resources is essential to actualizing improved pre-departure training.

Timing of pre-departure training is also an important consideration. It is one thing to provide more pre-departure training or cover a greater amount of content; however as several programs discussed, students have a heavy workload in their semesters leading up to their LVA experience. Finding additional time to bring students together for more pre-departure training is a real challenge. Furthermore, students are not always in a reflective

and receptive frame of mind to be thinking of their upcoming LVA experience when they are in the midst of exams and assignments for other courses. Some participants commented that students are unlikely to make sense of the content critical for developing their ability to learn from their experience abroad if it is presented to them months or even weeks in advance of their departure. However, content that broadly discusses issues of inequality, privilege, ethics, etc. could be valuable at any stage in the students' academic career. Early preparation in ethics and global issues of inequality is something that Tiessen and Kumar recommend occur early on and prior to pre-departure training (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Two programs specifically mention that students often do not fully grasp conversations about intersectionality or some of the challenging scenarios based on the experience of past LVA participants -- until they are in the field and confronted with the reality of it all. Therefore, enhancing pre-departure training must be reviewed to balance the enhancement of students' reflection processes during and after their LVA experience.

Reflection and return orientations were also mentioned by four participants during interviews as equally important, if not more important than pre-departure training in terms of encouraging students to make sense of their experiences abroad. However, one participant mentioned that the timing of return orientations is extremely challenging as students do not necessarily return home together at the same time. Interestingly, two programs have made return orientations mandatory for students by making it a requirement in earning the course credits. In both of these programs, students are required to travel back by a certain date in order to participate in the LVA experience. Therefore, mandatory return orientation is attainable, however, it does not allow for flexibility in students' continued travel following their LVA.

Students' reflection before, during and after was encouraged by most programs, but only four specifically discussed how they encourage/require students to reflect. A challenge to student reflection, however, is that students' critical analysis through reflection is more successful when done with others (Travers, 2014, pp. 204-205). Three programs discussed the importance of pre-departure training as building group dynamics and trust where students were travelling together as a group or in pairs. As Travers discusses, the level of comfort students have with each other is crucial to how well they engage in informal reflection and discussions (2014, p. 205). The challenge can arise when students participate in LVA programs that do not require them to travel in a group or as pairs. The following subsection provides recommendations based on the findings, analysis and challenges discussed.

5.6. Recommendations

Based on the research findings and discussion above, there are several recommendations identified for the University of Ottawa in terms of ways in which student preparation for LVA programs can be enhanced.

- 1.) The University of Ottawa should define their concept of global citizenship and how student mobility programs will create global citizen graduates. If the University of Ottawa as an entity, can outline clearly their objectives in their mission statement of creating graduates who are global citizens, then LVA programs can better prepare students in terms of how they can develop their understanding of what it means to become a global citizen. Furthermore, the University of Ottawa could go a step further and develop courses specific to teaching students about global citizenship

education and make these courses pre-requisites for students wishing to participate in LVA programs (Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Jefferess, 2008).

- 2.) The University of Ottawa should ensure that student preparation for LVA or other international experiences are made available to all students and staff regardless of whether or not they are going abroad through a recognized program. This is a recommendation provided by all LVA programs interviewed. Preparation that is open to all students and staff does not have to be in the form of pre-departure training sessions, but could include a published handbook, ongoing workshops, or an online tool kit with information and resources.
- 3.) The University of Ottawa could offer a first or second year undergraduate level course that is a prerequisite for any student who wishes to participate in a LVA type or mobility experience. This course could provide students with a basic level of understanding in regards to global citizenship, global inequalities, poverty, power, intersectionality, ethics, experiential learning, critical analysis, and more (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Given that one of the challenges raised by participants was that students participating in LVA experiences have come with various levels and backgrounds of understanding of global issues. Students with limited knowledge in global issues are challenged by a greater learning curve and can limit what is discussed within pre-departure training sessions.

All of these recommendations require structured programming, careful planning and consideration for appropriate timing of the experiential learning placement.

6. Conclusion

At a time when student mobility through LVA programs is expanding within educational institutions as part of their mandate for internationalization, it is critical to understand how students are prepared for these types of experiences and how their preparation contributes to their learning and understanding from their experiences overseas. This thesis has contributed to filling a knowledge gap that was identified in regards to understanding what type of content is taught to students through pre-departure training; how this content varies across programs at the University of Ottawa; and what the implications may be for the differences identified. The research was situated within the frameworks of critical theory and cosmopolitanism drawing on the large and growing body of scholarship on LVA, international volunteerism, study abroad and student mobility. The literature highlights important structural challenges and ethical considerations for planning international experiential learning programs and also insights into improving programs through deep reflection and critical reflexivity in order to facilitate cosmopolitanism and move from thin global citizenship to thick global citizenship.

In general this research found that the majority of students participating in LVA programs at the University of Ottawa are provided with optional, if not mandatory, pre-departure training. The type of content that is covered in pre-departure training at the University of Ottawa included the topics of risk management (health and safety), logistics, culture and language, ethics, reflection and experiential learning. This research also identified areas for improvement in expanding pre-departure training to students and staff who travel abroad for learning/volunteering/work outside of the examined LVA programs. There are currently still an unidentified number of students and staff who travel abroad as part of their studies or work at the university, but who do not receive pre-departure training or other means of preparation.

This research also found that there are great differences across the LVA programs pre-departure training in regards to the depth in which certain content themes are discussed. The findings, thus, support the hypothesis that the pre-departure training content varied across LVA programs at the University of Ottawa. The greatest differences were found in the topics of culture/cross-cultural understanding, ethics, and experiential learning/reflection. These are also the topics that the literature has discussed as crucial discussions for students to have prior to participating in LVA type experiences if students are to develop a critical understanding of international development, solidarity and social justice and what it means to be a global citizen (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013; MacDonald, 2014; Cameron, 2014). Furthermore, a lack of critical analysis regarding cross-cultural understanding, ethics and critical reflection can lead to students reinforcing stereotypes instead of challenging them (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Fizzell & Epprecht, 2014; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Tiessen & Huish, 2014).

A few LVA programs examined were designed to encourage students to think critically about their motivations, identity, privilege, power, intersectionality and solidarity, and encourage students to reflect individually and among their peers. These programs can be said to provide a more in-depth preparation for students and are likely to generate in students a greater understanding of global issues in regards to development, inequality, poverty, etc. from their learning experience abroad. Given that not all LVA programs provided this level of preparation, the second element to the research hypothesis – that LVA programs generally provide limited preparation to students in regards to ethical issues and dimensions of social justice – is minimally supported by the research findings, as three out of seven LVA programs did provide training that attempted to prepare students in regards to ethical issues and dimensions of social justice. That

said, through analysing the pre-departure training content among the critical literature on LVA, it was also identified that there is room for improvement in student preparation for LVA experiences at the University of Ottawa. Improvements identified largely consisted of greater time for preparation, access to more students and staff, and more emphasis on debriefing sessions following students' return home. This thesis also provides several limitations to this study and recommendations for further research below.

6.1. Limitations

Several limitations to this study were noted in earlier sections of the thesis. First, this study focused on the facilitators of the pre-departure training and did not include the students' perspective regarding what they learned, how well they felt they were prepared, where they recommended improvements, how they would assess their level of understanding of some of the more critically discussed aspects of pre-departure training such as positionality, power, ethics, cross-cultural understanding, etc. Without understanding what students understood from their pre-departure training and how it influenced their learning from their LVA experiences, this study could not provide a holistic understanding of student preparation for LVA programs offered through the University of Ottawa. Furthermore, the pre-departure training materials provided and examined as part of this study did not capture the full extent of the content that is likely covered during pre-departure training sessions. This is also true of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with training facilitators. It is likely that facilitators may have forgotten to mention some of the content they teach students during their pre-departure training and therefore a comprehensive summary of the pre-departure content is not possible. Another limitation to this study was that not all LVA programs chose to participate in the study. Consequently, the findings presented only represent that of the participating LVA programs and

cannot be said to be an entire picture of LVA preparation across the University of Ottawa. Lastly, this study was also limited in its ability to assess whether or not any of the pre-departure training affected the development outcomes of the LVA experiences. While this research did acquire original data and contributed to an understanding of how students at the University of Ottawa are prepared for LVA experiences there are several recommendations for further research that have been identified from the limitations of this study.

6.2. Recommendations for Further Research

There is benefit to further research regarding student preparation for LVA experiences at the University of Ottawa and across other Canadian universities. One recommendation if further research is to be pursued using the case study of the University of Ottawa would be to conduct participant observation and attend the pre-departure training sessions for the LVA programs. This was not possible for this research given the schedule of pre-departure training and the time limits to complete my degree. This type of research would need to be well planned in advance as to be able to attend sessions which occur at various times of the year. Participant observation would allow for a more holistic understanding of not only the content of pre-departure training, but also how it is taught, the dynamics of the training sessions, how it is received by students, and the challenges associated with preparing students for an important experience in a limited amount of time. A second recommendation would be to conduct research that understands the students' perspective of the pre-departure training they received at the University of Ottawa. This study also generated recommendations for further research that stems beyond this particular cases study of the University of Ottawa. It would be important to also understand how students are prepared and likewise, how such preparation compares for LVA type experiences through other academic institutions.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Semi-structured Interview Guide

Background Questions:

What pre-departure training do you facilitate?

Through which Office/Faculty is this LVA program offered? _____.

How many hours of pre-departure training is required of students?

Do students receive any additional training/debriefing prior to going abroad or upon their return?
If yes please explain

Guide Questions:

1. What type of content do you cover in the pre-departure training you/your program provide(s)?
2. What do you consider the most important categories of information to be shared with students in pre-departure training?
3. In your professional opinion what are the most important roles that pre-departure plays in the preparation of students?
4. In your experience as a facilitator of pre-departure training, what topics, issues or subjects have you found the most valuable for preparing students for their placements?
5. In your professional experience what type of discussions have been most valuable for students to have/learn prior to departure, and why?
6. What feedback have you received from students, if any, on the value they place on pre-departure training?
7. In your experience, what do students seem most interested in learning in pre-departure training?
8. Of all the categories, subjects, issues you have identified as important to pre-departure training, what do you think we need to do more of to prepare students before going abroad?

Annex 2 – Semi-Structured Interview Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

My name is Jennifer Oberhammer and I am a Master student in the School of International Development and Global Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences here at the University of Ottawa. My thesis research involves understanding the content of the pre-departure training provided to students who participate in LVA programs through the University of Ottawa.

According to _____ (*website/office/admin*), you have facilitated the pre-departure training for _____ (*LVA*) program. I am interested in interviewing you to gain a better understanding of the content of the pre-departure training you provide to students as part of my thesis research. The semi-structured interview is expected to last approximately 30-60 minutes.

Please indicate in a response email if you are willing to participate in my study. Once I have your agreement for participation, we can schedule a day, time and location to meet at your convenience.

I will provide a consent form prior to our interview (and bring extra copies to the interview) for you to sign.

Thank you,

Jennifer Oberhammer

Master Student at the School of International Development and Global Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa

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