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EQUALIZING COMMUNITY VOICE IN AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING  
PROJECT: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL  
PERUVIAN WOMEN'S GROUP

by

MONICA D. HERNANDEZ

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

August 2023

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research and work to the following:

The brave and resilient women of Pushaq Warmi, and the women, children, and families of Chimbote, Peru, and the surrounding rural areas. Your voices should be heard, and the daily issues you confront should be acknowledged, understood, and remedied.

My mother, Evangelina Louise, and my grandmother Mary Louise. Thank you for passing along to me your strength, determination, and spirit. You both have empowered me to stand firm and maintain a positive attitude. Thank you for everything you've done to raise me and teach me.

My husband, Chris. I will always be grateful for your continuous encouragement, support, and sacrifice over the last 30 years in putting me and my hopes and achievements first. Thank you for believing in me.

My sisters and brothers, Jennifer, Valerie, John, Christopher, and Joshua. As your sister, I wanted to be someone you could look up to. With your individual talents, abilities, and gifts, you all make me very proud!

My niece Carol Eve and baby niece Ellie Rose and nephews, Chuck and Joie. You give me hope and constantly motivate me to look ahead at the future and what's possible. I want to show you that anything is possible if you work hard at it!

EQUALIZING COMMUNITY VOICE IN AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING  
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Monica D Hernandez

University of the Incarnate Word

Traditionally, international service-learning (ISL) programs are created and led by host groups, which frequently overlook the international communities' learning process and perspectives and the long-term impact of service missions on the community. Fundamentally, ISL is meant to address community needs. With the principal focus being on enriching students' learning, community voice is often eclipsed. The research aim was to investigate the empowerment and efficacy of an ISL project to strengthen relationships between engaged scholars and international communities and improve future service-learning trips. Using a qualitative narrative research design, I investigated a 2021-2022 ISL Based Photovoice Project applying Kolb's Experiential Learning (EL) Cycle and Dr. Dorothy Ettling's Process of Empowerment Model as my principal frameworks. Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) is a participatory research method designed to allow often marginalized groups to document their realities, create a narrative, and heighten public awareness on a social concern. According to Buck et al. (2019), Ettling's model was used to create capacity in disadvantaged communities globally and at UIW, to align professors' and students' talents and abilities with the challenges of those vulnerable communities. This study's sample consisted of a Chimbote-native RA and six Peruvian women, ages 55 to 75, who are all members of the same social entrepreneurship organization. Data collected for the study included

seven individual, semi-structured interviews, photographs, and research journal/notes. In vivo and holistic coding were used to extract codes from the data for analysis, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach assisted in the identification of themes. To document and construct a narrative of my study participants' journeys through the course of the project, Dan Harmon's Story Circle was used. Six members of the Peruvian social entrepreneurial group, Pushaq Warmi, led workshops in three surrounding communities of Chimbote, Peru, including rural areas, providing education and awareness on coping and management of mental health issues brought on or exacerbated by the COVID pandemic in addition to domestic abuse in the home, demonstrating ways to motivate and inspire their female workshop participants. Pushaq Warmi used the Photovoice method to document their workshop experiences. A public exhibition of their work in Nuevo Chimbote raised awareness of leading mental health concerns women face in Peru and reinforced their group's mission, as stated by one Pushaq Warmi member, "to bring development and well-being to women through training to strengthen organizational and leadership capacities" (personal communication, March 8, 2020). The findings explored the transformative experiences of the participants in an ISL project. The study revealed that Ettlign's Process of Empowerment together with Kolb's theory of EL could be integrated effectively into community directed ISL projects. The study's qualitative methodology shows how Dan Harmon's Story Circle may be applied to document and analyze individual and collective growth. In this ISL Photovoice project, study participants underwent a transformative change fostered by the development of five components that promote individual and group empowerment: 1. Capacity building based on professional goals and community motives; 2. Purpose through motivation, inspiration, and knowledge-sharing; 3. Self-development and awareness through exposure to service oriented projects; 4. Collaboration stemming from group

work; and 5. Building self-esteem and reinvigorating a commitment to social advocacy by community impact through service work. The study demonstrated the potential of international communities as co-developers of service-learning initiatives. As co-collaborators, students and faculty of ISL projects can empower international communities by providing them with knowledge and skills on self-directed participatory methods, with the understanding that the communities may employ these techniques in a manner that makes sense to them. This was Dr. Dorothy Ettling's true vision. My work with the study participants in an ISL project underscored their ownership and control allowing community voice to flourish. The project introduced the group to a participatory method the women then tailored to their motives/agenda. Additionally, the project's focus on the women's capacity development demonstrated its sustainability potential. The instruction on Photovoice will continue to be drawn from and adapted by the women of Pushaq Warmi to educate and train different communities. The women they train will then be able to train other women. It is recommended that the traditional approach of student-centered learning in ISL projects shift to one of community-based learning. Faculty should also invest in establishing long-term relationships with groups, organizations, or members of the community at service sites. New projects must also involve local authorities, community agents, leaders of social organizations, and the general population. The results of this study will assist in the development of a UIW faculty service-learning handbook, which will focus on ISL projects based on long-term relationships/partnerships, community needs, a reflective process, and sustainability potential.



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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem

The University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) is dedicated to cross-cultural education, with a mission “Inspired by Judeo-Christian values, the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, and Catholic Social Teaching, UIW aims to educate men and women who will become concerned and enlightened citizens within the global community” (UIW Mission Statement). In 1989, as the core curriculum was being developed, UIW mandated the completion of 20 hours of service-learning and 25 hours of community service for undergraduates before receiving their degree.

Sister Dorothy Ettlting, also known as Sister Dot, assumed leadership of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word prior to her appointment as a faculty member at UIW. Women’s Global Connection (WGC) was established in 2001 by Ettlting and Sister Neomi Hayes, with the assistance of UIW faculty members and other Sisters of the Incarnate Word, because of their profound concern for social justice. WGC, which has recently ceased operations, provided students with opportunities to engage in collaborative efforts with marginalized groups of women residing in underprivileged regions, particularly in Africa and South America. This was achieved through immersive trips that involved international service-learning (ISL) activities. The objectives of the service were focused on the community, with an emphasis on identifying the benchmarks of community development, the different actors within the community, and the immediate and long-term results of the service; on the other hand, the learning objectives were primarily centered on the students, with a focus on identifying the outcomes related to academic goals, the creation of a worldview, and personal improvement (“Service learning center: international service learning,” n.d.). As an educator, Ettlting instilled a love for learning in her students and the need for them to connect with communities in other parts of the world.

Ettling (2001) once said:

Creating the environment for mutual learning can be troublesome and time consuming. It raises questions of ethics and power relationships that must be faced in order to preserve integrity in the education or research process. When we recognize the bonds between theory, research and experience, we have to abandon the conventional attitudes of disinterest and disembodiment. We find that we are unceasingly formed as well as informed by our engagement. (p. 6)

The fundamental problem is that typical service programs are created and led by host groups, which frequently disregard the international group's learning process and perspectives, as well as the impact of service missions on the community. A focus group study conducted with leaders of short-term ISL and other study abroad programs revealed the program designers and organizers did not consider the potential effects of their programs on local communities when planning or executing their programs (Wood et al., 2013). This is a concern, since service missions are frequently designed and executed without regard for the knowledge, abilities, and experiences of international groups, who then use what they learn from service projects to empower their groups and organizations and affect the surrounding communities. Documenting how an international community such as Pushaq Warmi, a women's group and long-time partner of WGC, introduced what they learned from a service project into their community can demonstrate the empowerment process the members of the group underwent and how this led to the sustainability of the service project and the potential impact it had on the community long after the researcher returned to the United States. Such an investigation is necessary to further equalize the community's voice in global service-learning programs.

Pushaq Warmi is an all-female Peruvian group based in Chimbote, Peru. The group consists of ten to twelve women with different vocations, educational backgrounds, and family units. Pushaq Warmi was founded in November 2012 by ten members of a leadership program with Nuevo Chimbote's Casa de la Mujer, a refuge for women who have suffered domestic

abuse and a place where women and their families receive education, resources, and aid to combat family violence within their homes. Pushaq Warmi is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to educate and empower vulnerable women and families in the Ancash region of Peru. The group invests its own time and energy and utilizes its expertise, training, and skills, as well as its resources, to provide rural communities mostly lacking access and assistance with the means to empower, encourage, and inspire women to combat violence against them and their families.

Working with vulnerable populations in other countries is a challenge, for one must consider a host of cultural, political, economic, and linguistic differences and the barriers that come with those differences. Grusky (2000) states that, because service-learning brings the relatively affluent together with those living in extreme poverty, topics such as privilege, economic inequality, and cultural stereotypes need to be part of the conversation. According to Hayward & Li (2017), when working with other cultural groups as collaborators and outsiders, we must learn to “balance power with respect” and commit to a long-term process built on trust and relationships of reciprocity (p. 476). This power balance is achieved when international partners are not only seen but also heard.

WGC is a non-profit organization devoted to the education and leadership of girls and women in underserved areas locally and globally. As a former volunteer of WGC, I have witnessed the difficulties and benefits associated with ensuring that the community’s perspective plays a more central role in international partnerships. The lack of importance placed on the perspective of multinational communities within service-learning programs is a significant obstacle for host countries. In service-learning programs, an open, equitable, and symbiotic connection must be formed between those who provide service and those who are reached

(Baker-Boosamra et al., 2006). My research aimed to identify methods for emphasizing the voice of community partners. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2000) identified the community's role in ISL as a crucial component missing from the service-learning literature; since the purpose of such programs is to improve students' civic duty, the community's role should be considered more. The host community's perspective on service-learning experiences has not been adequately explored in the current literature (Bloomgarden, 2017; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Chapa-Cortés, 2019; Crabtree, 2013; d'Arlach et al., 2009; Miron & Moely, 2006; Mogford & Lyons, 2019; Schroeder et al., 2009; Tryon et. al., 2008). In institutions of higher education, opportunities are provided to students, faculty, and staff to travel abroad, both in short-term and semester-long trips. According to Grain et al. (2019), "relationships in the literature are framed as key to international service-learning [ISL] from the perspectives of researchers and practitioners, but rarely do host community members weigh in as coauthors of those conceptualizations" (p. 33). Because service-learning is student-centered, international partnerships may believe such programs are ineffective for the development of their own community, which left me wondering how service-learning projects can be more inclusive of international communities' perceptions and voices.

Rather than simply providing an academic opportunity, UIW offered students immersion trips to developing countries such as Kenya and Peru to work directly with women's groups, in collaboration with WGC. During my PhD studies, I participated in WGC immersion trips to Chimbote, Peru, as a student volunteer, collaborating with the Pushaq Warmi group to increase their community presence. In this study, I investigated the experiences of community members as well as the impact of a WGC service-learning project on Pushaq Warmi. The purpose of investigating a WGC service-learning project was to examine the process of a Photovoice project

designed and carried out solely by the women's group, as well as to investigate how they used what was initially taught about Photovoice in an earlier service-learning project to make it their own. Photovoice is an action research method that allows participants to express their concerns about important community issues. As a volunteer on the service-learning trips, I led a training workshop in the summer of 2018 to introduce the women to Photovoice, and then assisted the group in organizing and executing a Photovoice community exhibition the following year.

Following this, the women's group decided to continue using Photovoice to support their own mission in the community. In this study, I investigated Pushaq Warmi's more recent Photovoice project, their personal perspectives, and what this meant for them and their community, as well as how it may have led to further group empowerment. I examined an ISL-Based Photovoice Project using Ettlting's Process of Empowerment model as the conceptual foundation for this study. To investigate the participants' perceptions, a qualitative narrative inquiry design was chosen, with EL serving as the study's theoretical framework.

### **Pushaq Warmi's Origin Story**

I wanted my research to be as rich and transparent as possible, so I looked at the history of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word (CCVI) in Peru. Since the 1960s, the Incarnate Word Sisters have lived and served in Chimbote, Peru. Sr. Juanita Albracht is a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word who has lived and worked in Chimbote since the 1960s. She has subsequently retired and returned to the United States. In 2009, Sr. Dorothy Ettlting traveled to Peru (Figure 1) with two PhD students from UIW, Dr. Ada Gonzalez and Dr. Elaine Talarski. Dr. Ettlting hoped to emulate the success of WGC's Africa programs in Peru. Dr. Ettlting created a Circular Empowerment Model based on the experiences in Africa that included the concepts of service-learning development. These principles include being people centered, responsive and

participatory, multi-level (personal and community), conducted in partnership, sustainable, and dynamic. Sr. Juanita introduced Dr. Ettlting to local women’s organizations such as Casa de la Mujer. Sr. Dot was interested in working with recent Casa de la Mujer graduates. Training and workshops on entrepreneurship skills began on the next service trip to Chimbote. Some of the attendees chose to start their own women’s group in Chimbote, Peru, during these trainings. Pushaq Warmi was the name given to this group. Multiple immersion trips to Peru were conducted in the period 2009 to 2019. The continuity of service-learning projects was maintained through coordination with the Incarnate Word Missionaries and WGC staff during the intervals between trips.

### **Figure 1**

*Sr. Dorothy “Dot” Ettlting on a 2009 Scouting Trip in Chimbote, Peru*



## **Problem Statement**

In the United States, many service-learning programs are designed and implemented by academic institutions without community input. Historically, research on international volunteerism has concentrated primarily on the learning experiences of the student, with little consideration paid to the implications for the community. According to Halim and Anggono (2018), “To be true to the twofold responsibility of service-learning to both university and community, research must include both university and community perspectives” (p. 2). The principle of service-learning is tied to mutuality and not to the production of charity work. Sandmann et. al (2012) point out that, “as the theory and scholarship in this area develop, partners are learning more about the critical need to address power issues in developing and sustaining reciprocally engaged partnerships” (p. 26). The “rich helping the poor” approach is progressively giving way to a more collaborative relationship between service communities and students, creating greater opportunities for both groups to have rich, transforming experiences (Bertaux et al., 2012). Appe et al. (2016) found that the perspectives and learning benefits for student volunteers have been well-articulated, but more and more scholars are recognizing the ethical significance in exploring the effects of ISL on the community. The efficacy of ISL trips rely on an immersive experience that engages all stakeholders. To understand the impact and relevance of the trips’ inherent viability, it is necessary to investigate and document the community members’ ISL-related experiences. One of the cornerstones of international service is responding to the needs of local communities, the success of which hinges on the perceptions and experiences of locals. According to May (2017):

Service learning is a form of experiential education that incorporates meaningful instruction and reflection with a service experience that benefits a community. The concepts of civic responsibility, altruism, strengthening communities and working for the common good are some of the fundamental principles. (p. 2)

Mitchell (2008) contends that without care and awareness, addressing underlying causes of social issues, and involving students in activities and projects, service-learning may have no influence beyond nice sentiments; a service-learning engagement that ignores these problems may perpetuate inequality and foster an “us-them” mentality. Schroeder et al. (2009) emphasized that trip preparation includes an understanding of the community, rigorous examination of how outsiders influence the community, and a common resolve to respect and share with the host community in the spirit of mutual learning and equitable exchange.

With respect to ISL, student volunteers and the international groups with which they work often have multiple competing goals. Holland (2001) emphasized that, for service-learning to be perpetuated, the institution, professors, students, and community partners must recognize the benefits of collaborative work. Each of the stakeholders has objectives and expectations for the project, enters with diverse experiences, assets, and anxieties, and works from a unique position of power and influence. To overcome disparities, it is necessary to cultivate a relationship based on the sharing of knowledge. Students frequently participate to gain international experience, which is not always related to educational outcomes. The service communities, on the other hand, seek knowledge and skills that are needed to sustain and secure economic and other livelihoods. Grusky (2000) asserted that, while students might desire to enhance their world perspective and faculty have interests tied to education and research, the communities perhaps seek to increase their organization’s presence, image, or economic situation. Service-learning has typically met the needs of students, but the partnerships are less than reciprocal concerning the community partners’ needs, with little research on international organizational benefits (Geller & Seidel, 2016). Added to this is an ongoing critical debate as to whether short-term immersion trips achieve the learning goals and relationship-building



outcomes that are the purpose of the trips (Jones et al., 2012). Researchers question the viability of short-term trips and what kind of statement they make if international communities are not recognized as working partners: Haubert and Williams (2015) affirmed that projects of a shorter duration can have a disparaging effect when the act of service is seen as charity and lacks a relationship of reciprocity between the community and service institutions. Searle and Larsen (2016) revealed that the significant time constraints prevented individuals from being capable to form meaningful, trustworthy connections with one another. According to Crabtree (2013), the role of accountability does not end at the closing of the trip; it is crucial to explore and assess all trip results. Regardless of the duration, the significance of a service-learning program resides in its community impact, which is intimately related to community engagement. Preparatory work behind an ISL program involves defining community and student expectations, goals, and objectives, identifying community needs, and maintaining a long-term connection (Crabtree, 2013; Gates et al., 2014; Haubert & Williams, 2015; Irie et al., 2010; Kraeker & Chandler, 2013; Schroeder et al., 2009; Searle & Larsen, 2016; Shields et al., 2016). Consequently, there is a need for research on the stories and experiences of the community, as well as how they use what they have learned from service initiatives.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The goal of my research was to investigate the empowerment and efficacy of an international service project in the hopes of strengthening relationships between engaged scholars and international communities. My research focused on demonstrating that when we engage in ISL trips, they are not only beneficial to students as scholars and concerned and enlightened citizens, but also that the community is heard and responded to in such a way that people take what they learn forward to build capacity in a sustainable way. The study examined

the perspectives of an international women's group, examining how they learned from a service-learning experience as individuals and as an organization, and to what extent this led to additional community action, thus empowering them in the process. According to the European Institute of Gender Equality, the empowerment of women is the "process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices" (Silvestre & Royo, 1970). The five pillars of women's empowerment are their sense of self-worth; their right to make and exercise choices; their access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the authority to manage their own lives; and their capabilities to direct social reform. This research also aimed to increase understanding among academic institutions, students, and international communities about the path to women's empowerment through ISL and drew from members of an international community's experiences with an ISL project. I studied my participants' learned experiences using David Kolb's EL theory. American psychologist, professor, and educational theorist, Kolb (1984) is best known for his EL model. Influenced by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, Kolb defined learning as the "process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). In the learning cycle, learners get information through actual experiences, transform it through reflection and thought, and then transform it once more through their actions to alter the environment. They are both recipients and producers of knowledge (Kolb & Kolb, 2018).

As the study researcher, I evaluated a Photovoice project I designed and carried out with Pushaq Warmi from May of 2018 to June of 2019 to determine the extent to which community needs were heard and addressed (Figure 2). Identifying and understanding the women's group's participatory role and experiences was critical to learning how service-learning programs could incorporate more of the perspectives of international partners. The study looked into the process

and perspectives involved in my engagement with Pushaq Warmi from 2018 to 2019, as well as the women's group's planning and execution of an 8-month Photovoice Project from June 2021 to January 2022.

The current project's purpose and query were to look at how the previous researcher-implemented project affected the group and how it influenced a second initiative begun by Pushaq Warmi. The study aimed to involve the community more in the long-term viability of service projects. The investigation recorded the evolution of the community's voice.

### **Research Questions**

The following are the central and supporting research questions addressed in the study: What is the process of empowerment that the women's group, Pushaq Warmi, underwent following an ISL Photovoice project in Chimbote, Peru? What were their perceptions of the project?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study was important for developing a better understanding of how international partners can better engage and collaborate to foster empowerment and learning among immersion trip participants and communities. Ibrahim (2012) noted:

The world is rapidly globalizing, with impact on the way students want to receive information and learn. Their orientation toward mobility, blended identities and desire to serve have all given credence to the emergence of global citizenship as a meaningful way to conceptualize cross border identities and behaviors. It has also created increased demand for international service-learning opportunities." (pp. 19-20)

By listening to the members' experiences, documenting their stories, and investigating how empowerment manifested itself through the service-learning process of a Photovoice

project, I learned about the international community partner's experiences and perceptions, as well as their own learning processes. This type of investigation could demonstrate how a group of women from a developing country achieves empowerment, and future developers of ISL programs may be more mindful of their project goals and carry out initiatives that would revolve around ways for students to improve their community by implementing more sustainable and worthwhile projects/research in which global communities have a direct stake. For students to understand the broader implications of what it means to truly help those in need, they must immerse themselves in project investments set forth by and deemed worthwhile by the international communities responsible for sustaining the life of these programs. By conducting this research, I hoped to contribute towards the body of knowledge on strengthening collaborations between student travelers and international communities, increasing the efficacy of ISL. Holland (2001) maintains that service-learning programs and community-university collaborations depend on strong assessment procedures to sustain internal and external support and record impacts. Effective assessment may assure constant effort and experience, produce knowledge about best practices, develop evidence for extra resources, drive others to engage by recording outcomes, and develop ideas and lessons to share. This requires a more in-depth examination of how international communities respond to service programs. This study illustrated how an international partner adapted a service project to meet the needs and interests of their organization in order to have a positive impact on their community. Failure to investigate how international communities learn from service-learning projects and contextualize them to address community concerns undermines the purpose of such programs.

## **Historical Context and Positionality of the Researcher**

Within this study, I was aiming to improve the interactions and partnerships between student travelers and international communities, so that each group would recognize the significance of the other as teachers and students with diverse skill sets, expertise, and resources. I wanted to know how community members perceived a service-learning project and how they became empowered, as well as what happened behind the scenes of their Photovoice group project. I hoped to convey the story of the women's accomplishments. The study also highlighted how a reciprocal relationship between an international group and a researcher develops. This knowledge and comprehension could alter the way we engage with and respond to international women's groups during future service-learning travels. Prior on-the-ground collaborations between me and Pushaq Warmi, a former WGC global partner, contributed to the strength of this work. Through my previous interactions with this group, I became aware that, with each narrative they created, their stories were recorded and preserved to educate the next generation of young men and women on how to be socially responsible and full of humanity and compassion towards one another, and that this was a unique way of being that needed to be noted and respected. Collaboration with Pushaq Warmi illuminated the challenges inherent in implementing a global service initiative with the stated objective of promoting empowerment. Figure 2 provides a timeline of my pre-engagement work with the women's group on the first Photovoice project.

**Figure 2***Preliminary Engagement and Project Development With WGC*

My previous work and experience with Pushaq Warmi on three separate immersion trips to Chimbote, Peru, prepared me well for this investigation. While I didn't start formally working with the women until my second trip, the first excursion allowed me to get to know them socially and bond with them, which is important for Peruvians, even when carrying out business. In the summer of 2018, I returned to Chimbote, Peru, for the second time and began a pilot Photovoice study with Pushaq Warmi, which I went on to complete in the summer of 2019 on my third immersion trip to Chimbote (Figure 3).

Dr. Alfredo Ortiz-Aragòn, one of my UIW professors, joined the trip. He and I collaborated on a series of workshops with Pushaq Warmi to increase the organization's sustainability. Getting acquainted with the women was crucial to understanding their group's mission and values. Understanding this, we believed, would help Pushaq Warmi and WGC strengthen their partnership. During the first day of the workshop, Professor Ortiz-Aragòn and one of his Peruvian colleagues, Juan Carlos Macedo, focused on enhancing communication among the members of the group. A River of Life exercise was used to create a timeline of the

**Figure 3**

*Me (in Black Clothing) With Other Travelers During the 2019 Peru Immersion Trip*



organization's significant moments. Following that, a tree was drawn to represent what the women perceived to be the group's fruits and spoils. In another activity, the women utilized photographs they had taken of themselves to represent the many hats they wore (or roles they played) in their personal, professional, and social lives. The purpose of these activities was to gauge the women's commitment to the group. On the same trip, I conducted a 2-hour workshop introducing the group of women to Photovoice and demonstrating how it might assist them in more effectively voicing the concerns in their community on a variety of issues relevant to their organization. Self-esteem, women's empowerment, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship were among these issues. The women chose to focus on sexual abuse of children. Under my direction, the group was then tasked with executing Photovoice effectively.

**Table 1***Timeline of First Photovoice Project*

Photovoice Pilot Study	May 2018-August 2019
Learn about Photovoice and start to design your project	Spring 2018
Recruit participants	Spring 2018
Arrange a meeting with potential participants	(Peru Immersion Trip) May 2018
Schedule and conduct participant training session(s):	(Peru Immersion Trip) May 2018
Take photographs/Allow participants enough time to capture a meaningful photograph	Summer 2018
Schedule and facilitate Photovoice discussion meetings/sharing session(s)	Fall 2018
Decide on a target audience	Spring 2019
Develop a plan for social action	(Peru Immersion Trip) May 2019
Exhibit the Photovoice project	(Peru Immersion Trip) May 2019
Evaluate the Photovoice project	Summer 2019

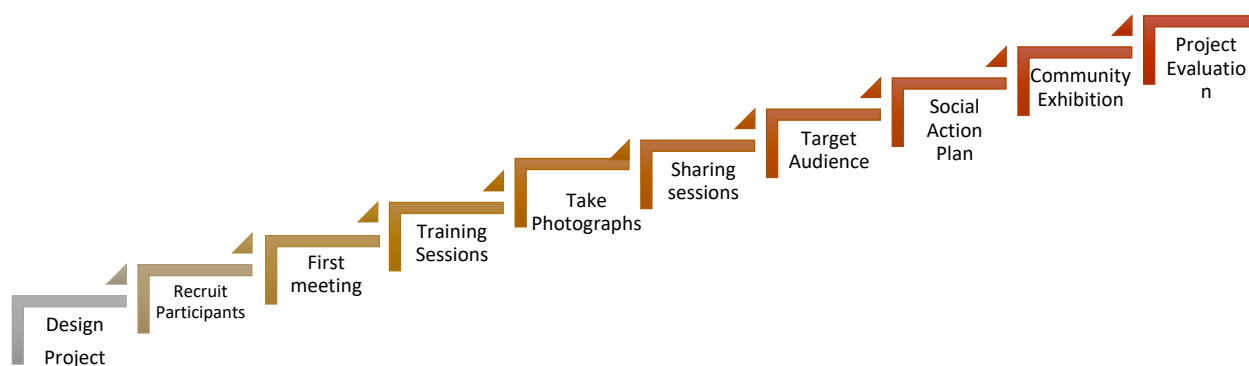
From May 2018 to June 2019, (Table 1) I worked with the group on a Photovoice project to better understand how they collaborate and to learn how the method might be useful in helping the organization vocalize their mission and purpose. I chose this method because it allows marginalized groups to express their concerns, and the process is visually documented and communicated in a way that is meaningful to its participants. I led a Photovoice workshop with the women on my second trip to Chimbote, introducing them to the method and outlining the steps they would take as a group. When I returned to the United States, I kept in touch with the women and kept track of their progress on the project. The women then organized and held a Photovoice community exhibit with my assistance during my third trip to Peru the following year. Several insights were gleaned through the group interview and my own observations. The method served its purpose by depicting the reality of a vulnerable population's situation. The



photographs and exhibits depicted children who had been subjected to violence and abuse in a poor, rural area on the outskirts of Chimbote. Pushaq Warmi led workshops on child sexual abuse prevention, which the group saw as a useful tool for raising awareness and familiarizing public entities with their work.

#### Figure 4

##### *Process of Photovoice Method*



For this study, the group continued using the Photovoice method. The women hosted another Photovoice community exhibition in the Nuevo Chimbote Plaza in November 2021, with the public in attendance. The project has provided the women with an opportunity to further strengthen and unite as a group. Although this work has extended beyond the scope of a 2-week service trip, such a trip planted the seeds for this type of engagement and exposed me to the possibilities of such a project. Furthermore, as a workshop coordinator for student and trip participants, I witnessed the shared learning that occurred between the travelers and the communities with which they interacted. I realized how much I wanted to be a part of future immersion trips as a trip leader and project coordinator, and I see its value as part of my professional pursuits in higher education. This brought me face to face with a real issue at the heart of short-term immersion trips: the real service impact in international communities.

**Figure 5**

*PW Interacting With Community During 2019 Photovoice Exhibit*



The first project proved to be a learning experience for all involved. The women in the group provide education and raise awareness about sexualized violence against children (Figure 5). They lead workshops in surrounding schools and communities, where the women teach women and their families how to respond to and prevent such abuse in their homes through a series of lectures, group discussions, activities, and performances. During my third trip to Chimbote, my goal was to create a community exhibit with the group and then conduct interviews with the women to get their impressions and feedback on the Photovoice method and the resulting exhibit. The exhibition was held in the gallery of the Centenario, a community center for Chimbote residents. Pushaq Warmi also took advantage of the opportunity to sell their

crafts, which they use to supplement funding for their projects and cover the costs of transportation, supplies, and refreshments. The gallery was quite large, but we were only allowed to use a portion of it for public photo displays. This was unimportant since the photos were small because they were taken with camera phones, which were the only camera equipment available to the women. In their ingenuity, the women creatively displayed the photos and corresponding captions on two large standing whiteboards, creating a story of young children in impoverished communities facing the threat of sexual abuse alone and misunderstood. Children frequently lack a voice, and the problem becomes even more insurmountable when their mothers face the same oppression and mistreatment. Many countries are patriarchal, with machismo ingrained in their culture, with Peru being one of them. The exhibit drew many women, revealing the growing movement of women demanding to be heard and seeking social justice for those who are not.

Following the community exhibit, I conducted a focus group interview with the Pushaq Warmi women. As a result, several insights emerged, which acted as a catalyst for the current inquiry. Pushaq Warmi used images to depict the truth of the situation in Chimbote, capturing a defenseless community victimized by violence and abuse. Their use of Photovoice made the public aware of their dedication to child abuse prevention. The women's group conveyed their wish to continue to use and share this strategy, which would benefit both the group and those in the community who have expressed interest in and gained understanding about Pushaq Warmi's work. Going forward, the women wanted to build on their training and take more responsibility for the initiative. The group desires increased responsibility as well as improved communication and access to better resources. Pushaq Warmi anticipated that the exhibit would help WGC appreciate the quality of the work they have committed to performing in favor of noble causes. Finally, Pushaq Warmi hopes to pique the curiosity and attention of university students who are

engaged in campaigning for violence prevention but have not been exposed to more international communities where such violence occurs.

My initial collaboration with Pushaq Warmi and the Photovoice approach remained a driving factor behind the present inquiry. The women's organization has a great dedication to the areas surrounding them, and their efforts should be supported and sustained. Photovoice, as a practice, gives voice to those who often go unheard or receive little attention. As a UIW student of international service and scholarship, it is my civic duty and obligation to continue carrying out the mission of the institution and of WGC.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

To provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of why it is necessary to understand community perspectives within ISL projects in relation to this study, it is necessary to investigate the major issue of domestic violence, a major source of oppression that women in Peru, my study participants included, face daily. The first few sections look at the women in Peru and review Peru's history, background, and current situation of domestic violence and mental health. The next sections review EL, Ettlting's Circular Empowerment Model (2008), and the Photovoice Method (1997), which all function as tools to foster community participation and highlight the project participants' voices and perspectives. Immersion programs can improve women's education and opportunities in developing countries by strengthening women's partnerships, assisting in sustainable projects, and working to meet a community's real-life needs.

### **ISL Community Impact**

The question that motivated my research was, "Does ISL encourage community empowerment?" The learning and/or transformative processes students go through while serving as volunteers and participants on these trips are extensively researched in literature on ISL. Bringle et al. (2011) found that ISL has the ability to raise students' academic achievement, promote their personal development, and foster civic engagement on a global scale. Service-learning can improve attendance, academic performance, values, self-efficacy, personal and social responsibility, peer group and institution belonging, preference of leadership in a service career, and plans to serve after college (Astin et al., 2000; Deeley, 2010; Kuh, et al., 2005; Soria et al., 2013; Yeh, 2010; "What is Service-Learning," n.d.). However, more research needs to focus on the interactions and mutual learning that take place between students and global service partners, as well as that of their communities. Eyler et al. (2001) conducted a review of the

empirical research on the impacts of service-learning on various stakeholders between 1993 and 2000 and found that the topic of community is the least studied phenomenon in service-learning. More recently, in the last decade, criticism against service-learning has emerged (Asghar & Rowe, 2017; Blanton, 2016; Sykes et al., 2017).

With the primary benefit of service-learning focused on students, ISL projects can be considered oppressive towards the populations they serve, as they have the propensity to be devalued as charity work. This can be counterproductive, in that students may not gain a deep understanding of the social justice issues relative to power and inequality entrenched in disadvantaged communities (Asghar & Rowe, 2017). Asghar and Rowe (2017) contend that, if the basis of service-learning is for communities to work together, a relational approach is necessary, underscored by critical reflection and a relationship of authenticity and reciprocity. Blanton (2016) reaffirms that more and more literature and research are being provided on the impact that short-term international volunteerism has on the students participating in service projects; however, there is little attention focused on how the schools have benefited by the students' involvement in these projects. Blanton's (2016) research points to the existing problem of how to gauge the effect that student volunteers have on the communities they serve, and the hope that his study and subsequent findings can benefit partnerships between schools and host organizations in terms of developing their capacity and increasing the learning experience of all those involved. Sykes et al.'s (2017) case study on a Native-American service-learning project at a research university examined a tribal-initiated service-learning project in an effort to show how such a project responds to a tribal-based community's needs in connection with academic learning. An area of concern for tribal nations is being taught according to Westernized models and not those grounded in their own knowledge and beliefs. It was the investigators' belief that

higher learning institutions ought to address this problem by modifying educational methods, in this case service-learning, to work with Native American populations. In raising their shared awareness and creating a space for discourse, the service-learning project cultivated shifts in the tribal members' belief systems, essential for transformation to take place. Because the project was a community-based participatory research (CBPR) collaboration and was led by the tribal nation, it reaffirmed the notion that service-learning has a more successful outcome when community members and educators work together.

Plumb et al. (2013) illustrated that the demand for students with cultural competence and relevant service experience is increasing, in large part due to a need in international health education. Plumb et al. highlighted in their research article two service-learning immersion programs in Rwanda and Mexico implemented by two U.S. universities, both with existing health and social outreach missions. The two case studies showed the effectiveness of service-learning immersion projects that are strong, and move and evolve with the course of relationships. It was vital that student participants understand the historical-cultural context of the communities in which they intend to serve. Each project illustrated a dynamic collaboration in which both parties benefit. The U.S. participants were given an international experience based on health education, and the communities and partners in Rwanda and Mexico were provided practical solutions to community concerns (Plumb et al., 2013).

There were some studies that focused directly on international service partners and their communities. Toms (2015) examined the view of communities towards international volunteerism and service programs in relation to their impact on community development, a focus not prevalent in literature on such programs. It was the aim of the researcher's dissertation to increase an overall understanding of the connections between international volunteers, service-

learning actors, and active development. Using a case study, the impact of student volunteers and higher education development within communities was examined and directed by three main research questions revolving around ISL's impact on developing communities, their enabling restraints, and how their presence has helped organizations serve community beneficiaries.

There is little empirical research on how higher education service programs benefit the communities they serve; thus, this study's objective has been to draw connections between service-learning outcomes in relation to development theory, in order to lay the groundwork for assessment tools to appropriately measure community impact (Toms, 2015). Doing so would also enable universities to better prepare students for service and community development. A significant finding was that the relationship between volunteers and the host organization was important in creating successful development partnerships. The community felt they were impacted economically, culturally, and relationally. However, there was little report of cultural and relational reciprocity (Toms, 2015). Research with a focus on communities (Asghar & Rowe, 2017; Blanton, 2016; Sykes et al., 2017; Toms, 2015) found that cultural reciprocity and responding to populations' needs through a real-world context made a significant impact. Examining ISL initiatives through a more critical lens is necessary because it determines whether international communities have a say in how their various needs are addressed. Competing perspectives, cultural awareness, and participant relationships were critical in developing and implementing such programs rooted in helping and serving others.

In the Spring of 2019, Dr. Ortiz-Aragòn had a special guest lecturer in his qualitative research methods class, Mr. Adam Stieglitz. Mr. Stieglitz is co-founder and director of the Andean Alliance for Sustainable Development (AASD) and a recent PhD graduate of the University of Louisville. Facilitating service-learning research initiatives between students and



communities has prompted him to criticize service-learning models, as he has personally experienced the challenges of developing authentic win-win student community partnerships. The mission of Stieglitz's organization is to harness collective intelligence to support community-led development in the highlands of Peru. I learned from Mr. Stieglitz that students have transformational experiences, but in the process unintentionally exploit the communities; there is a huge difference between helping and meeting a need; the real needs being met during ISL are typically those of the students; a transactional approach is more pragmatic than one of transformation; and international communities should be looked at in terms of their assets and not their deficits. ISL hosts tend to look at the needs and deficiencies of service sites and not what contributions in terms of knowledge, skills, and resources these international communities do have.

### **Female Health Crisis in Peru**

Peru, a country riven by political strife, is known for having the highest rate of domestic violence against women in South America (Organización Mundial de la Salud, 2005). According to "Women in Peru" (2021), "Women represent just over half of the population of Peru, but they do not have equal access to resources or power" (p. 1). Among those living in poverty in Peru, women make up the majority. Peru's traditional views and customs make it difficult for women to hold positions of power and, despite contributing greatly to their household income by working in agricultural labor and livestock in addition to their roles as caregivers, rural women are unequal to men (Philipp, 2020). Peruvian men have a sense of pride and ownership over women, often resulting in domestic abuse and violence against women. According to Martinez (2017), "in 2017 alone, the country has registered 94 feminicides, over 2,100 underage rape victims and nearly 28,000 cases of male violence, making it among the most dangerous and

unequal countries for women in the Americas” (p. 1). Because they do not have many opportunities outside of the home or the financial means to support themselves, many women in Peru do not have the ability to prioritize education or career over family or to separate from abusive partners. According to Weitzman’s (2018) research, there is a significant correlation between women’s level of education and their likelihood of engaging in teenage marriage and parenthood. Many women in Peru have little access to school, despite the fact that education appears to be the key to escaping troubling personal circumstances. Peru’s machismo culture significantly contributes to the disenfranchisement of Peruvian women. In Peru, divorce or separation is frowned upon and carries shame and disgrace to the spouse and family; hence, many women are forced to remain in abusive relationships. Pushaq Warmi’s aim is to educate and provide support and direction to women in regions that lack access to education and resources, in order to provide a voice to the rural Peruvian women who are frequently silenced. Machismo culture affects the Peruvian individual, family, and community. Women are submissive to men. Men, the traditional breadwinners, are the family’s head, while women care for the children and the home. Men in Peru frequently turn to violence to maintain their position in the household. Although there has been more of a movement towards equality in recent decades this shift is witnessed more in the bigger cities in Peru, while in rural areas traditional views remain the same (Olivia, 2020). Violence against women in this country has only increased with the pandemic. In 2020, during the height of the COVID pandemic, 16,500 cases of violence against females were reported, with Peru’s sexual violence hotline receiving twice as many calls as the previous year (Dupraz-Dobias et al, 2021). Due to government shutdowns, the closing of businesses and schools, Peruvian women were further cut off from the rest of the world and were forced to remain at home with their abusers. Even further restrictions were

placed on the women's ability to leave their homes, and any help or services they did receive were temporarily discontinued. Women's shelters for victims of domestic violence were among the places that closed. The COVID pandemic was dire and all physical and mental health services shifted towards treating COVID patients for, according to John Hopkins University research, Peru had one of the highest coronavirus fatality rates per capita in the world during the height of the epidemic (Godoy, 2020). Peru's health treatments were exhausted and in high demand. A third of Peruvian children and adolescents experienced socioemotional difficulties during the pandemic, according to an online survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF in 2020 ("Community-based mental health care in Peru," n.d.). Many adults were temporarily unemployed during the 106-day national lockdown, which lasted from March 16 to June 30, 2020. The anxiety, isolation, and stress that men faced in the wake of job loss and financial uncertainty further increased the level of violence their female spouses or partners were subjected to.

Having been brought up in society with patriarchal attitudes, values, and standards, women have mostly learned to tolerate the violence their husbands conduct against them, which means that this mentality is handed down to their children, who then become victims of abuse. This is essential to understand, given that many of the participants in my study were educated and had established homes and careers, yet had a history of domestic abuse. As a social entrepreneurial group, one of their primary goals is to empower other women by educating and training them on themes that improve the well-being of women and their families. According to Godoy (2020):

Peru lacks an up-to-date, national database for tracking missing women, even though a law requiring the creation of such a database has been on the books since 2003. That means there's no way to track information like the circumstances under which they

disappeared or whether they were later found alive or dead, women's rights advocates say. (p.1)

When the United States was already on its way to recovery in the first half of 2021, with the vaccine made available to the entire public, there was still a short supply in Peru. In June of 2021, only 40% of Peru had been vaccinated (F. Encinas, personal communication, June 8, 2021). During this period, businesses in many of the United States had reopened, but in Chimbote they remained closed. The Peruvian government's response time was delayed. Many believe that this was mostly attributable to the election runoff between two candidates. Due to the economic upheaval, the dollar's value increased. Chimbote and its environs, already impoverished and lacking in basic amenities, were severely affected. Many homes lack electricity and running water, making it difficult to prioritize hygiene and safety. Government restrictions and shutdowns prevented individuals from receiving healthcare when it was most necessary. A government-imposed quarantine was put in place in Peru from March 16th to May 24th of 2020 (Hernández-Vásquez & Azañedo, 2020). Despite this effort, social distancing and the wearing of masks and washing of hands were not much of a focus to most of the public, especially the youth. According to Hernández-Vásquez and Azañedo (2020):

Even under quarantine, it has been possible to observe scenarios in which disorder, crowding and non-compliance with the social distance between the population prevail in places such as markets, public transport and groups of people returning from the cities to the countryside. (p. 640)

Like the United States, the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions were most affected. In April of 2020, at the height of the pandemic, the Chimbote Foundation (2020) reported:

the COS (Center of Social Works) director was required to close all facilities except the maternity hospital, emergency clinic, orphanage, lab, and pharmacy. No home visits are taking place during the shut-down. The municipal government has instituted a daily

curfew from 6 pm to 5 am with no mobilization at all on Sundays unless you are a health care worker or emergency responder. (par. 3)

Testing for COVID was expensive and restricted to those with symptoms, so asymptomatic individuals and those who wished to be careful were not permitted to be tested.

Like their neighbors and the surrounding community, the women of Pushaq Warmi were adversely affected personally and professionally by the pandemic. Some of the women endured unemployment and the passing of loved ones. Five of the six participants in this study contracted the coronavirus, as did their friends and relatives. At the time of the study, the husband of one of my study participants, the president of Pushaq Warmi, died from the terrible virus. As a precaution for the safety of the women and the rural populations they served, the group ceased all workshops in Chimbote and the surrounding areas. When the Photovoice project could restart in a safe manner, the group decided to focus the workshops on mental health during the pandemic and how their female attendees coped with difficulties such as economic uncertainty, stress, and anxiety, in addition to domestic violence. According to Godoy (2020):

Evidence from past pandemics and humanitarian crises has shown that the stress from economic hardship, social isolation and restricted movement can exacerbate the problem, with many victims trapped at home with their abusers, with limited access to services that could help them. (p. 1)

Pushaq Warmi's goal with the project was to encourage female resilience and empowerment in the aftermath of the pandemic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

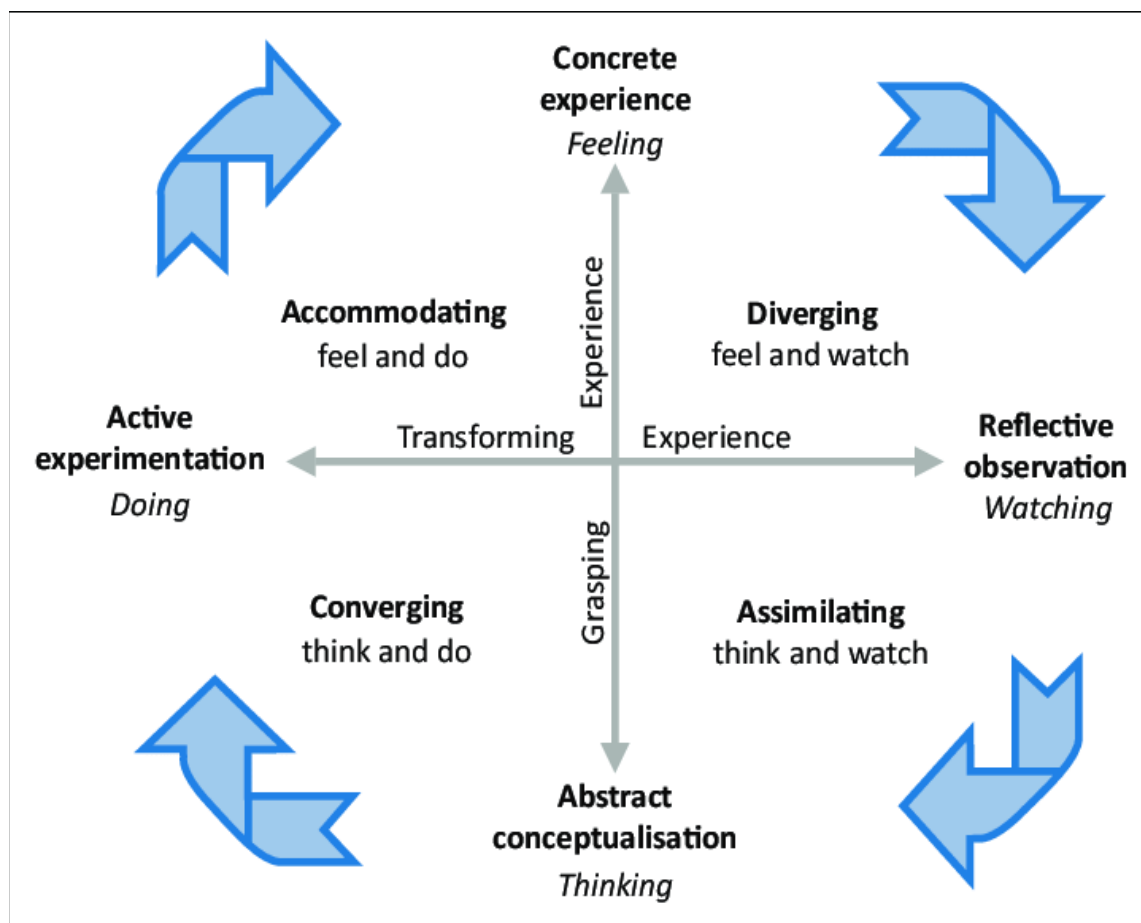
The current study draws on Kolb's (1984) EL theory to understand the process behind the growth and empowerment of an international women's group. EL focuses on knowledge created through experience. The study of the women's narratives provides a deeper understanding and awareness of the dynamics that underpin a women's group and an ISL project. This study, which

incorporated service-learning and EL and placed women's voices at the center of the narrative, moves beyond simply looking at the student scholar as practitioner to examine the community as practitioner. It was my hope that this would shed light on how service-learning can benefit both students and communities while also recognizing that capacity building is at the forefront of social change. According to Lewis (2004):

Service learning based on charity provides students with an opportunity to serve less privileged individuals and reflect on their experiences in relation to their coursework. Service learning based on social justice engages students in academic experiences that attempt to empower communities and create more equitable institutional structures.  
(p. 94)

This study was an investigation into community experiences and the learning derived from a service project, as well as how a group of female social entrepreneurs took what they learned and applied it in the community to address local concerns and foster social change.

EL involves learning through experience, and, most importantly, reflecting on that experience. Kolb (1984) defines EL theory as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p. 41). David Kolb, an American educator and theorist, specializes in EL and is known for developing the Kolb's EL Cycle. A repetitive cycle, EL serves as a foundation for new emergent experiences. These new experiences emerge out of reflecting upon an experience and following up on this reflection with specific courses of action. Kolb's four stage learning cycle begins with the learner having a concrete experience, followed by reflective observation that promotes abstract conceptualization, or learning from the experience, and finally leading to active experimentation, or acting out what has been learned (McLeod, 2017).

**Figure 6***Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle*

*Note:* Van der Horst & Albertyn (2018). Copyright 2018.

WGC expected students and travelers on their immersion trips to engage in a learning process that would result in growth and leadership within themselves and with WGC's partnering organizations. EL allows teachers and students to combine theory and experience, which improves our understanding of how cross-cultural learning is shaped and consistently reshaped by encounters. As Chakravorty and Hale (2017) point out it is a cyclical process in which the learner 'touches all the bases' - experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting - in

response to the learning circumstance and what is being learnt. During this process, we discover that our studies are about more than just ourselves and our individual intellectual pursuits. The voices of those who live in the communities where service is coordinated must also be heard and validated. Their life experiences and knowledge could inform and improve professional service-learning practices, as well as potentially redefine the ISL environment, transforming how service-learning is delivered. Crabtree (2013) suggests that reflective practices between students and international host communities should be developed to safeguard that program activities and projects are compatible and comprehensible to the goals of all participants. Allowing the community to reflect on their program experiences may allow them to absorb what has been most meaningful for them and what they wish to share with the community. As the principal investigator, EL as a research tool allowed me to learn and reflect on the Pushaq Warmi women's shared community experiences to understand how the women become empowered.

### **Ettling's Circular Empowerment Model**

Based on her personal experience with women's organizations in Tanzania and Zambia, Dr. Ettling (2013) outlined the Process of Empowerment Model, a sequence of steps students and volunteers would take while working with groups in underdeveloped nations to find sustainable answers to real-world problems. As a graduate assistant at the Ettling Center for Civic Leadership, I was introduced to Ettling's work—prior to working with WGC, I had no experience of an immersion trip that mixed education and service, so I was curious about how this worked. My first excursion was a scouting trip. During my first visit to Chimbote, I began to question the viability of the projects and programs being executed on the ground. I realized that certain workshops were successful because they educated and enlightened the women with whom we collaborated. What was unknown to me, at the time, was how capacity was formed in



developing communities. How did the education continue after the workshop? How did the women apply what they had learned to their community? What were the women's experiences? How, if at all, was this empowering for them?

In my study, I used Ettlting's model as a lens through which to examine the women's journey and my own, and the nine-step cyclical empowerment process Ettlting felt that student volunteers and multinational groups undergo when working together to build sustainable solutions to satisfy community needs. WGC outlined three fundamental principles for engaging with international communities in cross-cultural education and research. These principles, described in the book, *Reach Out Africa* (Ettlting, 2014) serve as the cornerstone for capacity development, and encompass local ownership, social empowerment, and sustainability. The first principle emphasizes the importance of enabling women to access resources and become active partners in the process. The second principle highlights the significance of empowering participants to replicate their learning with others. The third principle underscores the need for all projects to be self-sustaining and viable in the long run, without external assistance (Ettlting, 2014).

As Buck et al. (2019) said, "This process model was used to build capacity in marginalized communities abroad and with those in more fortunate circumstances at UIW with the goal of matching faculty and students' talents and skills with the needs of those marginalized communities" (pp. 2-3). At the center of the former partnership between WGC and their global partners was Ettlting's (2014) Process of Empowerment Model and capacity development. In *Reach Out Africa*, Ettlting and Vichcales (2014) use the following definition of capacity to illustrate its complexity:

Capacity has to do with collective ability, i. e. that combination of attributes that enables a system to perform, deliver value, establish relationships and to renew itself. Put another

way, the abilities that allow systems—individuals, groups, organizations, groups of organizations—to be able to do something with some sort of intention and with some sort of effectiveness and at some sort of scale over time. (p. 24)

Ettling's (2014) circular model of empowerment includes the following: building relationships, which involves visiting an area to interact with a local group who is interested in partnering; collaborative planning with those partners determine approaches to leadership and capacity building; implementation of the projects, which includes planning and active partnership; networking, both through local and online channels; evaluation of the project and its usefulness and ability to reach sustainability; integration, which looks at whether learning and mutual empowerment have taken place; and, finally, transferability of learning to another site. Sustainability was the goal of the partnership between WGC and their global partners. Ettling's model includes sustainability, which "necessitates joint commitment to the partnership over a period of time; efforts that create collaboration and interdependence, rather than dependence upon outside resources; and strategic planning for sustaining efforts over time" (Ettling & Vichcales, 2014, p. 31). The viability of the model depends on time, resources, and human effort. My work with Pushaq Warmi was a living example of Ettling's model from the ground up. I have come to learn that to truly sustain programs and have their purpose carried forth, community members must resonate and engage deeply with the project method and content and observe how it can work for them. For this to occur, the project experience must be rich and immersive and allow opportunity for community-participant reflection.

As an educator and a student and practitioner of transformative learning, Ettling (2006) explored how learning takes places within an ethical context, and described

transformative learning as characterized by evolving habits of mind as well as by new structures for engaging one's identity . . . that recognize the interconnected web within the universe and accept the responsibility we share for one another and the earth within that web. (p. 63)

Through her global work, Ettlting sought to empower others by helping them recognize their own capacity and how they themselves could be the vehicles of their own change (Buck et al., 2019). She believed that through reflection and awareness, we could develop a set of competencies that would allow us to be more attuned and receptive to the people with whom we interact; that those emanating from her own reflection include “openness to cosmic awareness, an attitude of attunement, the art of conversation, and the practice of contemplation” (Ettlting, 2006, p. 65). As educators and practitioners, we must engage in the process of guiding students’ learning with issues such as identity, race, class, and culture as part of their larger worldview and not separate from how they learn. Ettlting’s research and work influenced how I interacted with the Peruvian women’s group. I was committed to capturing the women’s real-life human experiences, to listening to each of them without reservation, to developing a reciprocal relationship of openness and sincerity, and to understanding how they learn and interact with one another in order to serve and meet the needs of their community. Incorporating Ettlting’s Process of Empowerment Model into my research revealed the process of empowerment that both I and my study participants went through in my ISL project.

### **The Photovoice Method**

Photovoice is a visual qualitative methodology developed by Wang and Burris (1997) for community-based research, in which photos depicting people’s lives attract attention to issues and concerns within their community, ultimately generating a discourse that leads to action and resolution. In this approach, participants are frequently exposed to the methodology through a workshop or training before being provided with cameras to photograph community-related scenes. After collecting and printing the photographs, participants compose a narrative describing the scenario the images convey. The researcher and participants then engage in a

discussion regarding how the images and narrative convey their impressions of their everyday lives. Photovoice can elicit the views of its subjects in response to their environment (Belon et al., 2014, Wang & Burris, 1997). Kelly (2017) points out the method's benefit of allowing decision makers to visualize an issue from an insider's perspective. The audience for this method includes policymakers, and presents a space for community members, often marginalized, and researchers to engage in dialogue with officials and those in power (Kelly, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). The motivation for using this technique in my research has been the capacity building that it has provided to the women's group—the public exhibition of photos offered community participants a means to vocalize their concerns to individuals in power (Chonody et. al., 2013; Wang & Burris, 1997). Another advantage of the method was its design with the participation of the community in mind, turning them from subjects to participants (Chonody et. al., 2013). When participants become collaborators in research, it “validates and privileges the experiences of participants, making them experts and therefore co-researchers and collaborators in the process of gathering and interpreting data” (Given, 2008, p. 599). The Pushaq Warmi organization engages and reaches out to female populations alienated by abuse in the home and by mental health crises. Using Photovoice as a vehicle to discuss and draw attention to often silenced and sensitive topics with the people directly affected, “may help to reduce violence in the community” (Chonody et al., 2013, p. 98). Photovoice weaves striking visuals with powerful narrative where “the resulting photo stories become a potentially rich platform from which researchers can offer a nuanced understanding of community issues to the scientific community – an advance that can inform appropriate intervention or action on health and social problems” (Nykiforuk et al., 2011, p. 103).

Due to the nature of Photovoice in exposing delicate and private matters into the public realm, various ethical concerns must be considered throughout training and implementation. As a researcher, one also carries an ethical obligation toward study participants. In addition to a mutually trusting and communicative relationship between the researcher and study participants, the safety and well-being of the subjects should be considered of the utmost importance. The investigator's human subjects must be fully informed of the project and provide informed consent before participating in the research. It is essential that the participants are made aware of any potential project dangers. When going out into the neighborhood to collect images, the investigator and participants should have a dialogue about safety and any potential dangers they may encounter. If at any point during the project a participant feels intimidated or uneasy, they have the option to withdraw from the project entirely and have their images and stories deleted. The Photovoice participant must understand that their voice and experiences are at the forefront of this type of project; hence, the subject has more rights and freedoms than with more conventional qualitative research methodologies. The images taken by the participants remain their property, and they are free to choose which ones to make accessible for use in the project. The images of participants may not be used for commercial or monetary gain without their permission. All interactions in meetings and interviews for the study must also be kept private and confidential, and participants must be made aware that they can engage in open and honest dialogue in a safe environment.

Respect and concern should extend beyond the Photovoice participants to the public and all community members. Participants in a Photovoice project are documenting their community as both photographers and community members. In addition to learning how to approach and photograph private property, they must establish a rapport of trust and understanding with the

human subjects of their images. When filming the community on location, volunteers must respect the privacy of its residents. Participants in Photovoice are required to seek formal permission from individuals before photographing them or their property, both indoors and outdoors. When a subject's face is unrecognizable, participants do not need permission to photograph him or her. It is essential that the human subjects of images, as well as their appearance, ideas, and emotions, are not misrepresented by the photographer. The Photovoice process is meant to empower its participants and legitimize their voices, allowing them to be a significant part of social change within their communities and, as Paulo Freire has remarked, enable the researcher to work with the participants rather than on the participants to create such social transformation (Wang et al., 2000). Paulo Freire is widely regarded as a highly influential Brazilian educational philosopher of the 20th century. His educational approach centers around critical pedagogy, wherein the role of the teacher is not to impart knowledge but rather to engage in a reciprocal learning process with the students through dialogue.

### **Summary**

For an ISL project to be effective and transformative for community partners, the project's focus should be on a topic or issue in which community members have a vested interest and in which they have something at stake. The mental health of women in Peru and concerns with domestic violence receive little attention; therefore, any effort to alter the victim mindset must be grassroots. The COVID pandemic has exacerbated domestic violence in Peru, inflicting a debilitating blow to the mental health of rural women, the nurturers and primary caretakers of families with limited means and little help. As a result, women, in this case Pushaq Warmi, desire to lead and manage their own initiatives and projects advocating and increasing awareness about abuse in the households that make up the rural towns in which they reside and other rural areas.

Research surrounding the active involvement between researchers and the individuals they are working with is a useful tool in assessing a community problem and working towards practical and sustainable solutions. Ettlting made a point in saying that “living as a global citizen means something different in each culture and country. But at its core is the recognition of our interdependence across boundaries and of our need to collaboratively create safe and humane living spaces for all” (Ettlting & Vichcales, 2014, p. 27). This was Ettlting’s objective behind her development of WGC. Her philosophy enabled us to see service-learning as a collaborative endeavor between students and communities to pursue education and empowerment via collective action. As this study’s researcher, it made the most sense for me to examine and document how Pushaq Warmi entered neighboring communities and participated in learning workshops teaching rural Peruvian women how to change long-held perceptions of spousal oppression, female victimhood, and domestic violence embedded in their culture, beginning with the self. The investigation was centered on EL, or learning by doing, and active reflection, which connects the Photovoice methodology with narrative inquiry, as discussed later. Photovoice, a visual method for documenting change in often marginalized and vulnerable communities, was used in this study to document the transformation and empowerment of Pushaq Warmi and the women and families who participated in their workshops. As the investigator, I used Ettlting’s Process of Empowerment Model to gain insight into the development and course of action I and the study participants took during an ISL project with the goal of building capacity and mutual relationships working toward social change.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

This qualitative study utilized narrative inquiry and the Photovoice research method, drawing on narratives, photographs, notes, and previous work, as well as interviews. I intended to reflect the women's viewpoints in a Photovoice project, through their experiences, which was the motivation for my research. The research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the empowering process of a group of community members to generate significant social change. The study augmented the scant research on the viewpoints of community participants in global service-learning projects. As a qualitative researcher, I pursued and interpreted participants' perspectives, hearing their multiple intersecting voices, which then contributed to the many ways of knowing and understanding their social condition (Glesne, 2011). Narrative inquiry, as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) is

a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

This approach worked best for my study, which sought to investigate the experiences and stories of members of an international community involved in a service-learning project, as well as how they used what they learned to empower themselves. Many Pushaq Warmi women work to empower the women in their community who are economically disadvantaged and frequently face domestic abuse because they, too, have been victims of domestic abuse. The service-learning project was only a small part of a larger story that began much earlier. With this insight, and after researching the women's experiences, I wrote a narrative about their empowerment process and showed how learning and utilizing the Photovoice approach in their community has aided their efforts.



My strong connection and direct collaboration with WGC on their immersion trips to Peru over the summers of 2017, 2018, and 2019 helped me select my target population. Pushaq Warmi, Chimbote, and the bordering territories with whom the group collaborated made access easier. The topic of child sexualized violence, which has been the subject of the women's group's workshops since 2018, prompted my decision to focus on the children and families with whom the women could gain access. With the outbreak of the COVID pandemic in 2020 and the impact it has had on women and families already devastated by domestic abuse, the women of Pushaq Warmi made a collective decision to refocus the workshops on the mental health of women and invest their energy on training workshop participants to better cope with depression, stress, and anxiety related to domestic violence and the pandemic. The previous immersion excursions underlined the necessity to provide education, support, and training to the women's group so that they could return to their community with the learned information and tools, laying the groundwork for the current study. The existing nurtured relationships, prior Photovoice project, and previous trip service influenced the study's research questions: What is the process of empowerment that the women's group, Pushaq Warmi, underwent following an ISL Photovoice project in Chimbote, Peru? What were their perceptions of the project? I wanted to learn to what extent transformational learning occurred during the international service project, as well as why and how it occurred.

There is a clear need to understand community perspectives on ISL trips and whether community members see a tangible benefit to projects implemented during these trips. Another component of this research is to increase community participation in the design of ISL projects in which they play a role. As previously stated, my research focused on the Pushaq Warmi women's group in Chimbote, Peru, to better understand their individual and collective

empowerment, as well as how a service-learning project prompted further group action and responded to community needs. Little attention has been paid in academia to how international communities take what they learn from service-learning projects and apply it to their own communities through self-directed projects in which women can rightfully claim accountability and ownership. I interpreted the experiences of the study participants through informal interviews. In vivo coding and thematic analysis through storytelling were used to examine the data. This investigation, using narrative inquiry to reveal the empowerment process within Pushaq Warmi, may also have an impact on future research in the development of a program for sharing the group's work with other learning communities.

### **Research Design**

With the purpose of my research being to investigate how a service project impacted a women's group in a developing country, the goal of my research design was to better understand the study participants' perceptions. I investigated the women's individual stories and experiences in order to understand how they had empowered the group holistically. These questions were addressed using a qualitative approach that included observation, interviews, and reflection. This design was inspired by a narrative inquiry approach.

My research explored the different voices, experiences, and unique sets of values and beliefs of my study participants. There is not one single, finite reality but multiple realities under investigation. Because these diverse realities exist in the embodied experiences of the participants, epistemologically speaking, it is fitting to explore them in the way that makes the most sense to us as humans, through story—where “living and telling about our lives are interwoven with one another in a complex movement of reciprocal determination” (Meretoja, 2014, p. 96). By sharing our experiences through stories, we not only make sense of our lives,

but also construct and re-construct our identities and the reasons for our actions. This means that via storytelling and sharing our experiences, we are always discovering who we are and why we act as we do. Pushaq Warmi, a group of Peruvian women whose aim is to promote the organizational and leadership capacities of other women in their town and adjacent areas, achieves this through conducting training in the community to improve the well-being of other women. Each woman's desire to do so can be linked back to her experiences and convictions. The women's takeaways from the ISL project depended on their voices and narratives.

To investigate multiple realities, I used observation, interviews, an assessment of images, captions, and other writings from the women's 2021 Photovoice project, and a review of focus group interview data and other data gathered from the previous Photovoice project. The data were used to compose the study's narrative. Having the women reflect on their experiences and how the projects had affected them over time highlighted not only their development and future goals, but also my role in their narratives as the researcher:

By being narrative inquirers, we have come to see understanding from an intimate place of experiences. Experience in our world is grounded in a relational in-between space where we attend to the multiple dimensions of looking backward and forward, inward and outward, and pay attention to places simultaneously as spaces of being, becoming, and possibility. (Caine et al., 2013, p. 582)

Each woman responded differently to this growing experience. The lives and views of women, as well as how these have shaped how they respond to the world, can be best expressed through storytelling's profound depths and delicate nuances.

### **Context for Study: First Photovoice Project**

The purpose of this section is to provide some background and context to how the present study emerged. It is important to understand that service-learning involves engaging in a dialogue with communities in need, and actively listening and responding in a way that

oftentimes requires further action and investment of a collaborative nature. In 2019, I participated in an internship with WGC under the direction of UIW professor and advisor, Dr. Alfredo Ortiz-Aragòn, in which I conducted research on the group sustainability of Pushaq Warmi. This internship led to the idea to work more closely with the women, using the Photovoice method, during WGC's Peru Immersion Trip in the summer of 2018. As stated in an earlier chapter, I facilitated a Photovoice project with the Peruvian women's group, exploring the topic of sexualized violence of children in the city of Chimbote and its neighboring communities. The final phase of the project included a community exhibit held during WGC's 2019 Peru Immersion Trip, where the women's group showcased their work using the Photovoice method. After the Photovoice exhibit, I held a focus group session interviewing the members of Pushaq Warmi, in Spanish. Yesenia Alcala, a UIW doctoral student who also went on the trip, translated the interviewees' responses to my questions, since I was not fluent in Spanish. The focus group interview was recorded and stored on my mobile phone. The women's group responded to the following six questions regarding their impressions of the Photovoice activity they conducted during the 2018 WGC immersion trip to Peru, where I also led a workshop instructing the group on how to use Photovoice in their work:

1. Do you feel the Photovoice project and photos accurately show what you are doing as a group towards the social issue it is addressing?
2. How do you feel this action research method helps to fulfill your mission?
3. What do you hope this project and community exhibit will accomplish?
4. What steps will you take as a group to use this activity or method in your training and workshops to come?
5. What are your expectations for further collaboration with WGC and how does using Photovoice help support this?

6. What further knowledge, skills, or resources do you need WGC to assist you in for the sharing or training of Photovoice out in your community?

Based on the women's responses and their observations of how Photovoice was used to highlight and promote their work and foster engagement with the community, I decided to ask the women if they were willing to participate in another Photovoice project to which the group favorably responded with the caveat that Pushaq Warmi would have more influence over how their work was shown to the community in the future project. This was the impetus behind the dissertation study. As the primary investigator for the new Photovoice project, I was solely responsible for its planning, design, analysis, and recommendations. During the focus group interview, the Pushaq Warmi women made it very clear that they wanted direct involvement and to assume more of a leadership position with the new project. The key participants' more hands-on approach and active participation tie into the method's purpose and concept, Photovoice is a participatory research methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997) which provides a process for individuals to "identify, represent, and enhance their community" (p. 369) through photography. The participants photographically captured representations of their everyday lives and their roles as part of Pushaq Warmi. The activity was designed to provide insights into how the group internally operated and served to better help the community population engage in critical discourse about their problems and/or challenges. This methodology is intended to be used in a positive and illuminating way to encourage and foster individual understanding by the members as a group so they can become more aware of any organizational problems or concerns emerging out of their own stories and/or what they have captured through a lens. After my study participants were selected and I received IRB approval, I reacquainted the women with Photovoice and provided any necessary training on the method so that the participants were fully aware of process. I then explained the purpose of the project and made it clear that the photos

will not be used or made public in any way without the approval of Pushaq Warmi, and the individual photographer. As a researcher and especially during the interviewing stage, I wanted to provide each participant with a supportive environment to show and share their photos. These pictures were put on display at a community exhibition Pushaq Warmi hosted during the fall of 2021.

### **Research Method**

The research design consisted of a qualitative research methodology, narrative inquiry, to gather and evaluate data, with the women's group participating and being kept informed throughout the entire process. The obtained data recorded and documented the experiences and empowering process of the women. In a study on Hispanic immigrant women, Baird et al. (2015) revealed that the more community involvement in all aspects of the study the more ownership, and hence, empowerment the women's group experienced. From July to December 2021, the Photovoice project was carried out in several phases that occurred sequentially. Reviewing the relevant Photovoice literature and speaking with the women of Pushaq Warmi and my research associate (RA) about the project's logistics and how to carry it out safely during the pandemic in Chimbote, a high-risk location, led to the development of the project's methods and protocols. Due to the research questions behind the project, individual, one-on-one interviews with participants were the major technique of data collection to enable a more in-depth examination of individual experiences and mental health issues within the community. A community Photovoice exhibition allowed the Pushaq Warmi group to share and discuss their initiative with residents. As the project's primary facilitator and decision-maker, Pushaq Warmi selected which community members to invite to the exhibition, designed the content and format for sharing their

images, and coordinated the community exhibition. Throughout the duration of the project, Pushaq Warmi was apprised of any challenges or complaints.

### **Research Procedure**

The procedure consisted of three steps, with each phase containing its own moments of participant interaction. The phases of the study included planning, primary research, and data gathering.

#### ***Planning***

In the initial phase, a series of planning meetings were held with members of Pushaq Warmi who consented to participate in the study to discuss the Photovoice approach and identify best practices for the project's execution. These meetings also provided an opportunity for the women to discuss any potential issues and barriers associated with the project, including, but not limited to, concerns regarding the COVID pandemic, the sensitivity of the Photovoice project, the political and economic climate in a constant state of flux, and the evolving state of Pushaq Warmi and the work and relationships among its members. Through preliminary conversations, I gained insight into the women's thoughts and ideas regarding the Photovoice approach and how to best personalize and adapt it to correspond with the personality, style, and expectations of the women's group. The preparatory meetings concluded in a workshop where the Photovoice approach was reviewed and reintroduced to the study participants.

#### ***Primary Research***

After the training, the women were instructed to apply what they had learned to document their three planned workshops. This was done so that the instructional approach might become self-sustaining and contribute to the women's social and economic growth, which is the guiding principle of Ettlign's Process of Empowerment framework and the emphasis of WGC's

work. After completing training, participants in the study were provided with high-quality cameras and a time limit to photograph the workshops and the communities where they were held. The women were briefed on the purpose of the photographic endeavor. During the planning phase, the participants came to a consensus on a topic for the project and were instructed to take photographs of people, places, or objects that they believed symbolized their ideas, feelings, and experiences with mental health issues in their town and surrounding areas. The participants felt comfortable and supported in seeing and interpreting their own community in their own way, and their visual recording reflected this. Participants were instructed to contact the project's female leaders if they had any queries or concerns during this time. Participants in the study were encouraged to take as many images as they desired, but they were told they could only select and discuss a small number for the Photovoice project. Due to the pandemic and travel restrictions, I chose to relocate all aspects of the research to a virtual platform and to supplement direct observation of the Photovoice community exhibition presented by Pushaq Warmi during the Fall of 2021 with images and video recordings.

### ***Data Gathering***

The final phase, the period of data collecting, consisted of semi-structured interviews with members of Pushaq Warmi and my RA, who also functioned as a Spanish translator. As the investigator, I gathered the individual group members' experiences and anecdotes in order to understand how the women made sense of the Photovoice approach, their perceptions of the previous project, and how this influenced their second and more internally led Photovoice project. During December 2021 and January 2022, I used Zoom to conduct the interviews virtually. Throughout each interview, my RA was present and engaged. I asked each woman about her involvement with the project. Then I invited each to tell me the story behind her



images. Throughout the interviews, the women were invited to present two or three images they had taken during the workshops and discuss the circumstances and experiences that inspired them. By doing so, I hoped to illustrate what each woman desired to convey to the public regarding their workshops and what had the most significance for them. I also enquired as to how the second project differed from the first, a pertinent inquiry given that I had no direct participation with the second project, which emphasized the voices of the women. I ensured that each inquiry elicited more anecdotes and/or critical and illuminating inquiries. Post-exhibition documentation shed light on the women's experiences and was therefore incorporated in this study. The data gathered throughout the investigation inspired further research. Using the initial research questions, Table 2 depicts the fluid nature of the interview process.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry focuses on storytelling and on peoples' lived experiences. Through the stories of the women, I wanted to illustrate how they were communicated and understood within a three-dimensional space of interaction, continuity, and situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Drawn from philosopher John Dewey's theory, the three-dimensional space allowed me to examine the participants' experiences in relation to their interactions with others, to analyze stories with considerations towards the past, present, and potential future actions of the storyteller and, finally, to explore how time and place, the story's setting, added meaning to the story (Wang & Geale, 2015). Such a metaphor "provides a way to attend to the inner emotions, to the aesthetic reactions woven across time, place, and events" (Clandinin & Huber, 2002, p. 167).

**Table 2***Interview Questions and Sub-Questions*

Primary Interview Questions	Rationale	Related Secondary Interview Questions
1. What were your experiences like with the project?	To get a better idea of how community members perceive and utilize ISL projects.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What were your investments/ties to this project?</li> <li>2. Was this a worthy project? How and why?</li> <li>3. How has this project motivated you as a member of the group? Member of the community?</li> </ol>
2. Can you share with me the photos you took and the stories behind them?	To understand the important issues of children and parents and concerned citizens in the local community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What specific challenges did you have in taking the photos?</li> <li>2. How did you choose the subjects/nature of the photographs?</li> <li>3. How are the photographs expressing the stories you want to share?</li> </ol>
3. How was the second project different from the first?	To understand the level of awareness and satisfaction of the Photovoice method used by the researcher and community members.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How satisfied were you with the first project?</li> <li>2. What steps did you take differently to increase the satisfaction of the second project?</li> <li>3. How, if at all, do you see the Photovoice method being successful at raising and addressing community concerns?</li> </ol>

This method accounts for relationships and the meaning-making that occurs between people. As Lacy (2017) points out, “Narrative inquiry is about how the participant tells and understands their experiences AND how society, culture, and institutions shape those experiences” (p. 1). It also features the relationship between researcher and practitioner. In narrative inquiry, the practitioner must first share their story and the researcher must listen. Narrative inquiry does not mute the researcher. It means that the practitioner, who has

traditionally been suppressed in the research partnership, is given the opportunity and time to tell their story so that it has the legitimacy and weight that the research account has had (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). Stories are consistently being redesigned according to new knowledge and new experiences. One's stories do not independently exist on a single plane but are grounded in the ideas and beliefs upheld by "lifelong personal and community narrative" (Bell, 2002, p. 208). Narrative inquiry is a vehicle to capture not the stories per se but explore what these illustrate. The stories may change over time, but the ideas, values, and beliefs behind them largely remain the same. Bell's (2002) work with adult learners learning English as a second language, used narrative inquiry as her research approach as it offered her a way to focus on the experience of her participants, whereas other forms of research tend to examine the outcomes of a study. The narrative method helped her understand herself more as a researcher and it also led her to recognize the temporality of experience in "that one's understanding of people and events changes" (p. 209). As a researcher, I must be conscious of my involvement in molding stories while being ethical and genuine regarding the beliefs and assumptions of my participants and the way the women have shaped their experiences. Due to the nature of my research, which examined the experiences of an international group of women in a disadvantaged area, their narratives provided me with a greater knowledge of how meaning was produced for them.

Narrative research gives a voice to the voiceless. The participants' experiences were the core of my research. Moreover, Hendry (2010) points out that "narrative as inquiry is not just a method, but rather a process of meaning making that encompasses what [the author] suggests are three major spheres of inquiry: the scientific (physical), the symbolic (human experience), and the sacred (metaphysical)" (p. 73). Questions pertaining to the participants' ideas of empowerment, what it means to be empowered, and how such empowerment occurred for them

individually and as a group are necessary to understanding how to strengthen the foundation of service-learning projects with an emphasis on sustainability. This is noteworthy because the women desired to move forward with another community project and were direct witnesses to how they have been a part of the community's transformation. The interview questions were molded and guided by the conversations between myself and the study participants, as well as by what I wished to understand. Accounts of the participants' experiences prompted me to conduct additional research on how to co-design a program with the women that would capitalize on their group's future learning and empowerment by utilizing the group's knowledge, feedback, and suggestions.

### **The Hero's Journey**

In examining my data, I found many striking parallels between the journey of my study participants and the hero's journey, the circular narrative process developed by American writer, literature professor, and editor Joseph Campbell. Campbell (2008) established a monomyth, an overarching, encompassing myth that comprised features of analogous myths from many cultures and centuries. Myths are a ubiquitous phenomenon that can be found across cultures and societies:

Campbell's thinking runs parallel to that of the Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung, who wrote about the archetypes: constantly repeating characters or energies which occur in the dreams of all people and the myths of all cultures. Jung suggested that these archetypes reflect different aspects of the human mind - that our personalities divide themselves into these characters to play out the drama of our lives. He noticed a strong correspondence between his patients' dream figures and the common archetypes of mythology. He suggested that both were coming from a deeper source, in the collective unconscious of the human race. (Vogler, 2007, p. 4)

Decades of study and investigation led Campbell (2008) to identify 17 stages (Figure 7) that nearly every hero-quest goes through, regardless of culture. He referred to this shared structure as the monomyth. The classic hero's journey in mythology is an enlarged version of the cycle

used in rites of passage, separation-initiation-return, which is sometimes referred to as the monomyth's nuclear unit. Campbell (2008) outlines this as:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder (x): fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won (y): the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (z). (p. 23)

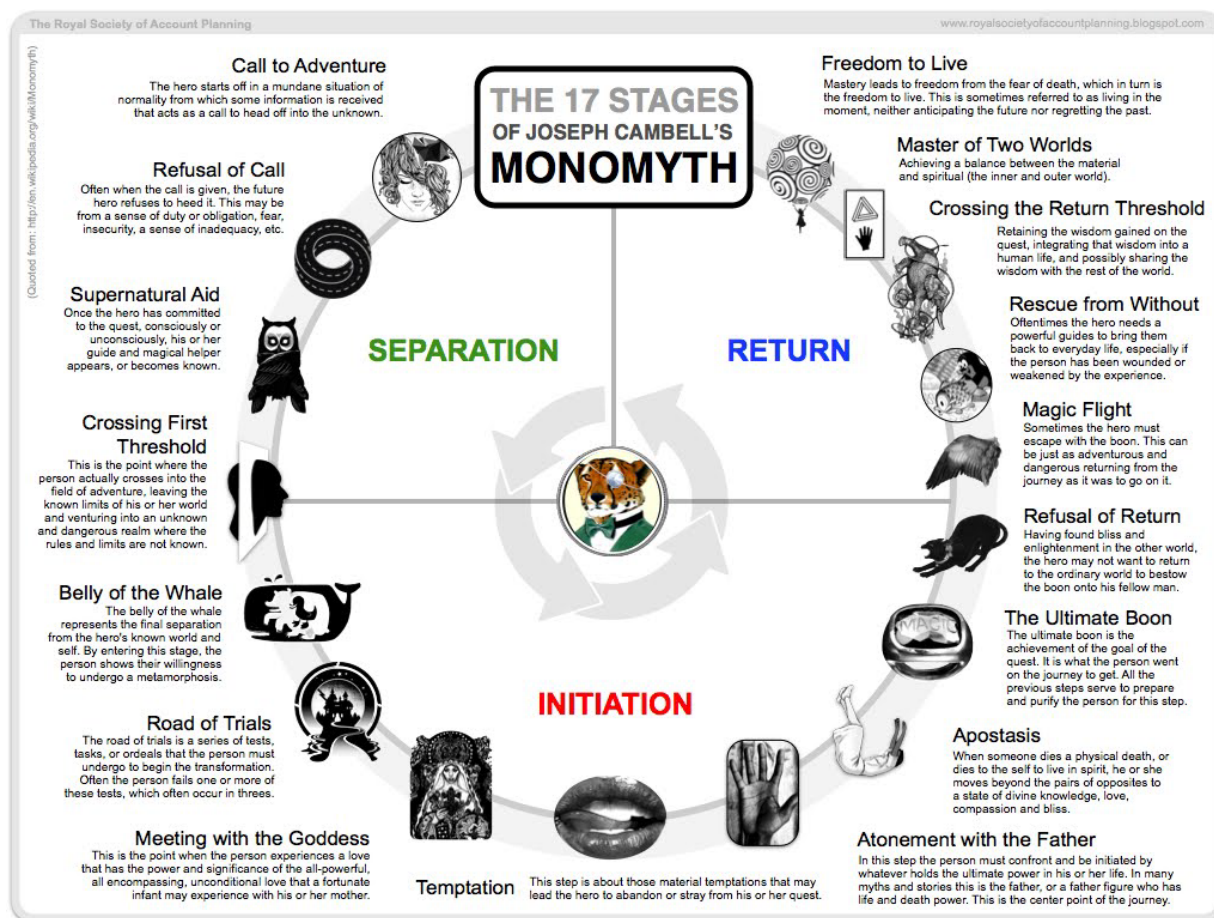
Separation requires leaving behind one's family, community, and daily surroundings. This implies intentionally and deliberately crossing a boundary, after which the protagonist may not be returned to his/her previous state after it has been crossed. The transition occurs during an ordeal, during which the initiate is led further and further into the otherworld and is severely battered along the way. This is done in preparation for an encounter with death, which may be real or symbolic, that relativizes the psyche and integrates conscious and unconscious being. After the initiated has had a rebirth, the next step in the process is the return, which involves the individual's societal reintegration as a transformed person who contributes to the masses what he or she has gained (Campbell, 2008).

Today, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID outbreak, we use the term hero to characterize essential workers such as healthcare workers, firemen, military members, and even our thankless grocery store employees. These persons exemplify heroism or have heroic qualities. When I think of my mother, an honest, compassionate, and hardworking single mother of six and devoted pharmacy technician, I think of the term hero. While she may not be on some grand heroic quest, battling mythological beasts and figures from folklore, every day she navigates the obstacles and realities of life, caring for my sisters, both of whom are mentally ill, but also making time for everyone else in our family and treating her customers with the individualized attention, care, and respect they deserve. She survives and perseveres despite adversity, and she does so with optimism and grace. I draw comparisons between her and my

research participants, who are also women, mothers, professionals, and who go through life every day, encountering and enduring its harsh realities. These women are the true heroes. They are not written about in books, they are not exalted, and they do not frequently get the chance to go on fantastic adventures or incredible mythical quests.

**Figure 7**

*The 17 Stages of Joseph Campbell's Monomyth*



*Note:* This visual graphic illustrates the 17 stages of Joseph Campbell's monomyth, a traditional heroic narrative in which the protagonist journeys to another world, experiences transformational experiences, and returns home.

Despite this, there are several notable similarities between the framework of the hero's journey that Campbell describes and my participants' personal experiences over the life of the

project. I believe that using the hero's journey as a model and tool, although it will be adapted as discussed later, clearly illustrates the Pushaq Warmi ladies' transformational experiences as empowered leaders and pillars of their community. The women are the real driving force behind this project; we need to document their voices, their experiences, and their quest of improving their communities so that we may learn from them and pass that knowledge on to others. This is the importance of passing on stories and storytelling.

For my study, I drew from the twelve steps of the hero's journey that Hollywood development executive, screenwriter, and educator Christopher Vogler (1992) highlighted in his book *The Writer's Journey* to better understand the different phases that the women underwent while working on the project, which has been simplified even more by producer and screenwriter, Dan Harmon, who is further discussed in the next chapter.

Christopher Vogler's (2007) hero's journey has 12 steps (Figure 8):

1. The Ordinary World. Most stories eventually transport us to a unique realm, one that is foreign and unfamiliar to the protagonist. If you're trying to tell a narrative about someone who is out of his environment, you must first establish a contrast by presenting him in his normal, everyday life—his ordinary world.
2. The Call to Adventure. The protagonist encounters some sort of difficulty, test, or quest.
3. The Refusal of The Call. The hero is reluctant at first. This is the time that many heroes start to waver. Admittedly, he or she is dealing with the ultimate human terror: uncertainty.

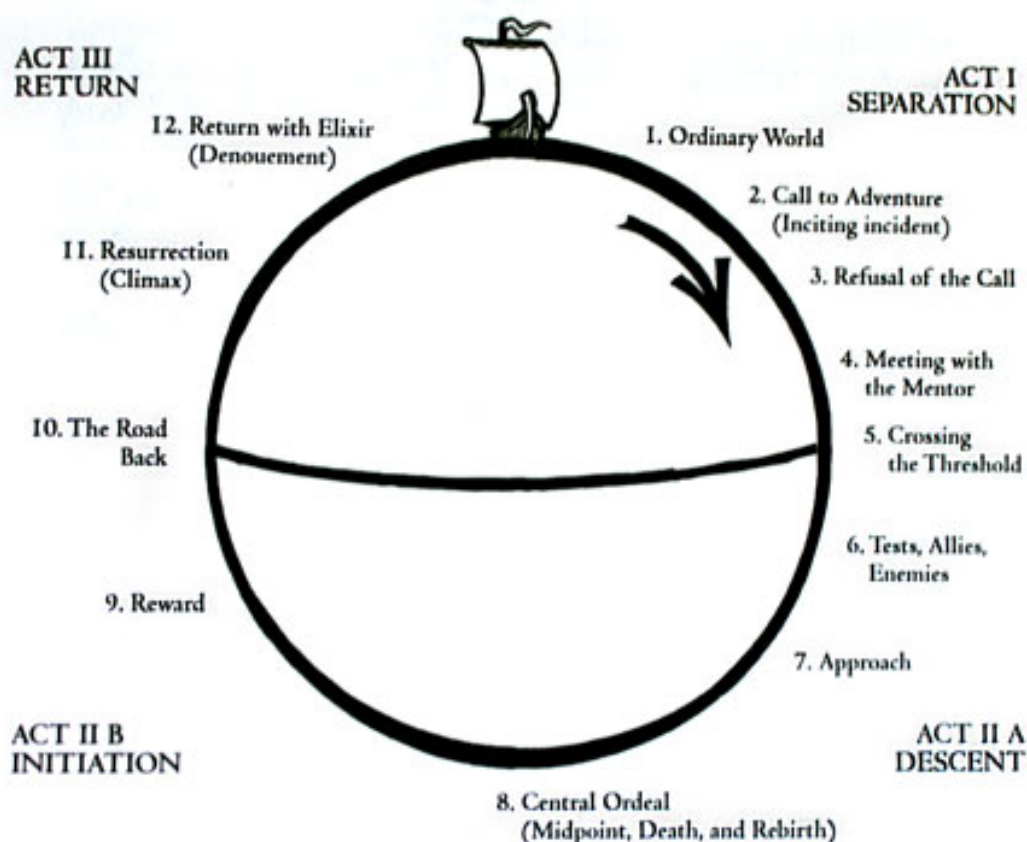
4. Meeting With The Mentor. The hero is encouraged by the Wise Old Man or Woman. Many narratives will have presented a Merlin-like character as the hero's mentor by this juncture. The mentor provides guidance and, on occasion, magical weaponry.
5. Crossing The Threshold. The hero passes the first threshold. For the first time, our hero is immersed in the extraordinary setting of the story. The action and excitement of the narrative truly begin at this point. There is no going back now; the hero has completely dedicated himself to the mission.
6. Test, Allies, Enemies. The hero encounters tests and helpers. As part of his or her training, the hero must make friends and foes in the unique world and overcome several obstacles.
7. Approach The Innermost Cave. The hero reaches the innermost cave. The hero makes his way to the perilous location, which is frequently located deep below, where the objective of the mission is concealed. There are times when the hero needs to do nothing more than enter his or her own dream world to face and conquer their anxieties.
8. Ordeal. The hero endures the supreme ordeal. This is when the hero reaches his or her lowest point. He or she is on the edge of death because of a fight with a mythical beast. The initiate has to know what it's like to die and come back to life.
9. Seizing The Sword, Reward. The hero seizes the sword. The treasure that the hero has been looking for is now his to keep now that he has made it through the ordeal unscathed.
10. The Road Back. The hero is still in trouble. At this point, the hero is being chased by the indignant forces from whom he stole the elixir or the treasure.



11. Resurrection. The hero returns from the extraordinary world, changed by his or her experience.
12. Return With The Elixir. The hero returns to the regular world, but the journey is pointless unless he or she returns with the antidote, riches, or some insight from the special realm. It's sometimes only wisdom or experience, but until he returns with the elixir or some benefit to mankind, he'll be forced to repeat the quest until he does. Sometimes it's as simple as returning home with a great story to share.

**Figure 8**

*Christopher Vogler's 12-Step Hero's Journey*



*Note:* Based on Campbell's "monomyth," this figure depicts Christopher Vogler's 12-step hero's journey, a method of creating stories that may be applied to cinema and television.

## Study Participants

The participants of the study were the members of the Peruvian women's group known as Pushaq Warmi, who were long-time international partners of WGC. Pushaq Warmi, translated in the Quechua language, means "woman who guides another woman." As previously noted, the 10- to 12-member group first formed in 2012, and the earliest members were acquainted with each other from an organization in Chimbote named Casa de la Mujer, a haven for women and children subjected to violence and abuse. Pushaq Warmi aims to empower women in their community by providing learning opportunities and being sources of inspiration. Edith Olga Oliva Flores, former president of Pushaq Warmi and teacher in an elementary school on the outskirts of Chimbote, notes, "Pushaq Warmi's mission is to bring development and well-being to women through training to strengthen organizational and leadership capacities" (personal communication, March 8, 2020). As former partners with WGC, Pushaq Warmi has developed as an entrepreneurial organization, creating a radio show and selling baked products and artisan crafts over the course of the group's existence. Pushaq Warmi goes across the Chimbote village and nearby areas, delivering workshops on a variety of themes of concern to women, such as self-esteem and domestic violence, and engaging women and children with dance, crafts, and theater. The group members are well-educated community leaders.

The women devote their time, energy, and private resources to reaching out to women in neighboring and rural areas. My decision to collaborate with Pushaq Warmi stems from my existing relationships with the participants and WGC. WGC led immersion missions to Chimbote, Peru, for years, due in great part to the presence of the Incarnate Word Sisters. WGC had a preexisting arrangement with Pushaq Warmi, and the six women's group members agreed to participate in the study. Working under an earlier WGC Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Protocol (Appendix C) allowed me to work directly with Pushaq Warmi and create a rapport with the women prior to my investigation. Initial research was conducted with Pushaq Warmi, acting as the study's baseline. Consultation, a pilot study, an internship, and the first Photovoice project were components of my early studies.

### **Setting Site**

The study site of Chimbote, Peru is a coastal fishing town located in the Ancash region of Peru, lying 250 miles north of Lima. With approximately 400,000 residents, many who live in extreme poverty, the city lacks infrastructure despite its modernization (Kirk, 2016). No electricity, no running water, and inadequate sanitation and sewage have led those living in the poorest areas of Chimbote to struggle daily; overfishing and environmental pollution are crushing factors to Chimbote's economy (Kirk, 2016). The strong presence of the Incarnate Word Sisters in Peru can be traced back to the 1960s. The religious order also opened the only residential hospice in Peru, in Chimbote, which unfortunately has since closed its doors (Kirk, 2016). Nonetheless, the people working with the hospice program still conduct home visits. Through my ongoing relationship with Pushaq Warmi and my association with WGC, I have indirect access to the communities with which Pushaq Warmi works. WGC endorsed and helped sponsor the immersion trips to Peru to work with the women's group. The three workshops took place in the nearby towns of Cascajal, Isla Blanca, and Samanco. The Photovoice Community Exhibit was held on November 26th, 2021, in La Plaza De Armas in Nuevo Chimbote.

### **Data Gathering Methods**

Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research with individual in-depth interviews being a principal form of gathering data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). As the researcher, I "understand that our interviewees will tell stories based on their narrative schema that reflects personal knowledge and experiences arranged by their cognitive strategies" (Kim, 2016, p. 4).

Notes, writing samples, and interviews were the primary tools used for collecting data. Visual data included photographs and video recordings. All interviews were conducted in the months of December 2021 and January 2022. For data collection, interviews utilized a semi-structured questioning method (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This style of questioning provided for a more fluid and engaging discourse, allowing for a more comfortable interchange characterized by direct and open communication. Key features of semi-structured interviews are that the interviewer comes prepared with a pre-determined set of questions allowing other questions to surface or come about based on the responses (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Rather than an extensive list of predetermined questions, the interview process began with probing questions, followed by questions that were developed in real time to explore the research issue further as I uncovered more information (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). For the former Photovoice project with Pushaq Warmi, I conducted a group interview, but for this study individual interviews were carried out, as this format gave me the opportunity to make the interview richer and more meaningful by probing more personally (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006).

Between June and August of 2021, my RA, my six study participants and I met to arrange the project. The nature of the project, a review of the Photovoice approach, workshop coordination, time management, team-building exercises, and project logistics and finances were discussed. In addition to taking notes, I recorded every meeting. The women organized and conducted three workshops in Cascajal, Isla Blanca, and Samanco, three rural regions near Chimbote. During the pandemic, the purpose of each workshop was to provide methods and tools to promote the mental health of women and their families. Twenty women from the rural region of Cascajal and 15 women from the asentamiento humano attended the first workshop (invasions). I learned from Sr. Martha that invasions are not uncommon in Peru:

Socioeconomically marginalized individuals commence inhabiting unoccupied land. Typically, it is a big group that takes over the territory in a single day or night. In the Chimbote region, individuals from the Highlands have been observed migrating to the coastal areas with the perception that greater opportunities exist there. (personal communication, June 30, 2023)

The second training was attended by members of Nuevo Paraiso in Isla Blanca, while the third workshop was attended by 15 women from the District of Samanco. All six participants in my study attended the workshops and served as facilitators or monitors. Each workshop lasted 3 hours, was scheduled from 9:00 am to noon, and consisted of both lectures and team-based exercises. The lectures included information on how to prevent COVID and the spread of the virus, as well as an introduction to the women's group, where the president of Pushaq Warmi greeted and briefed the workshop attendees on the group's identity and objective. The participants were also given a presentation on mental health. The group's activities included breathing exercises, relaxation techniques, and dancing therapy. Three cameras were available to Pushaq Warmi to document the Photovoice project. In June of 2019, Pushaq Warmi was awarded funds for a high-quality camera in recognition of their involvement in the inaugural Photovoice project. The subsequent study funded and provided Pushaq Warmi with two extra high-quality cameras so that the group could shoot images during the workshops. I was responsible for overseeing all procedures and strategies implemented in the study. The dissertation employs pseudonyms to identify the research subjects, rather than using their actual names. All documents and data have been stored in a password-secured directory.

## **Data Collection**

### ***The Interview Process***

The data collection process employed three primary methodologies: interviews, photographs taken by the participants during the workshops, and journal/notes. A total of seven

interviews were conducted, with six participants serving as the subjects of the study and the seventh interviewee being the RA, who was interviewed last. The first Photovoice project included my six research participants. Understanding this is significant, because during the interviews, I asked the participants for their opinions on the first Photovoice project and what set the second one apart from the first. The interviews provided valuable insights into the procedural aspects involved in the initiation of an ISL project, as well as the viewpoints of the participants regarding the first and second projects.

After the interviews with the Pushaq Warimi members were completed, I conducted an interview with the RA. This was done to gain additional insights into the empowerment of the group and the overall process of the ISL project, considering his thoughts, perspectives, and close involvement with the project. My RA, who has opted to maintain anonymity, is a bilingual male in his mid-20s with a high level of proficiency in both English and his native language, Spanish. He is a Chimbote native who currently lives there with his family and is actively finishing his college degree while working digitally for a U.S. business. Due to his lengthy employment as a translator at WGC events, he developed a connection with my research subjects, who displayed a sense of comfort and familiarity in his presence. Even though I have known the women professionally for the past 6 years, I am still an outsider in Peruvian culture and am not familiar with many of its spoken and nonverbal cues. The RA, possessing an insider's perspective, provided me with the deeply embedded cultural viewpoint necessary for crafting a more comprehensive and genuine narrative of the collective experience of the women's group of social entrepreneurs. Due to the cultural differences between myself and the study participants, the decision to have the RA participate in the interview process and translate for the women was a huge benefit to the study. According to Brinkman and Kvale (2015),

“When doing cross-cultural interviewing it is difficult to become aware of the multitude of cultural factors (habits, practices, positions, narrative resources) that affect the relationship between interviewer and interviewee” (p. 168).

The interviews were carried out utilizing the Zoom video communications platform within the timeframe of December 2021 to January 2022. The scheduling of all interviews was conducted via the messaging application Whatsapp, with coordination being facilitated by the RA and the participants. The interviews followed a semi-structured format. By employing a more organic and flexible technique during the interview sessions, the typically rigid and structured nature of the process was alleviated, thereby facilitating a seamless flow of dialogue and fostering the opportunity for the sharing of personal anecdotes. Each interview had a duration of approximately 75 minutes and consisted of three individuals: myself as the principal investigator, the study participant, and my RA, who served as an English/Spanish translator. The exchanges between my RA and the women, as well as the exchanges between myself and my RA, were translated in the appropriate language.

Throughout the course of each interview, I diligently documented the participants’ responses to each interview question, ensuring a comprehensive record of their key insights. Field notes are defined as a method of data collection which provides an opportunity to record what the researcher sees and hears through the process of interviewing, including thoughts about the dynamics of the encounter and generation of ideas to inform future field work (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003). The field notes were recorded in the form of preliminary notes within a journal notebook. I took notes to make it easier to analyze patterns and major themes, allowing for the identification of the most notable thoughts and ideas offered by each research participant, as well

as their impressions of the project. The interviews were recorded using the Zoom application and subsequently stored on a password-protected folder located on my personal computer.

### *Use of Photographs*

During the interviews, I requested that each participant share two or three photos from the workshops, along with any anecdotes or experiences they had while taking the photographs. Because a single research participant assumed responsibility for the collection and safekeeping of the photographs, a significant number of participants did not possess a tangible copy of the photos. Instead, they opted to share them digitally through their mobile devices.

During the initial phase of the project, a virtual meeting was conducted via Zoom with the participants to provide additional training to the women regarding the concept of Photovoice. The purpose of this session was to elucidate the instructions pertaining to photography, specifically delineating what subjects were deemed appropriate and inappropriate for capture. I instructed the female participants to document any noteworthy observations within the communities. Throughout the workshops, the participants were provided with the opportunity to work with three cameras of high-quality. The responsibility for determining the allocation of a camera within the group, as well as the timing of its usage, rested upon their discretion. The duration of the workshops determined the timeframe within which participants were afforded the opportunity to capture photographs. Subsequently, I communicated to the individuals involved that it was imperative for each participant to use and present their respective photographs in the public community exhibition, accompanied by the composition of descriptive captions. The group was to get together with the collection of selected photographs and create a narrative to better express what they wanted to communicate with the community about their effort. The photographs enriched the interviews by allowing the ladies to reflect on their experiences and



what they learned. I took notes throughout the conversations and wrote a brief explanation of each picture for future reference.

### ***Research Journal and Notes***

Field notes that I made during and after each interview, as well as a journal of notes and observations from the pilot research and the present inquiry, provided extra data for this project. Taking notes and journaling along the way illuminated and enhanced the investigative process. The fieldnotes and research notebook were both quite useful for reflecting on developments and changes that occurred during my research.

Reflecting on the original Photovoice project assisted me in determining how I might better the present investigation. After completing the first project, taking notes on the group interview assisted me in identifying key factors that contributed to the women of Pushaq Warmi's negative impression of their experience. I was able to understand that they were dissatisfied with the quality of the deliverables and that if I had included them in the process earlier in the project and trusted them more, their contributions may have increased their feelings of satisfaction. The group was dissatisfied with how their work was perceived and portrayed since, due to their usage of low-quality camera phones, it was impossible for the images to be large enough for display or reproduced in high resolution. The organization's 10-12 members each preferred their own disposable camera to use in the initial Photovoice project, but WGC did not have funding in their budget to cover this expenditure. What's more, some members of Pushaq Warmi and I had different ideas about the best way to present and exhibit Pushaq Warmi's work, and as the facilitator and leader of the first project, I felt that my vision dominated that of the women who were engaged. Because there was no one correct way to conduct or carry out a Photovoice study, I should have taken a step back and learned to be more

flexible and adjust to the members of the community I was working with. Participants in a Photovoice project should be able to modify it as they see appropriate. I was hesitant to surrender control of the Photovoice exhibit because I felt responsible for its success and outcome. I gradually realized that the Photovoice project was intended for them, and that I was only acting as a catalyst to have their voices heard and their interests reflected. I understood that to improve the current research, I needed to provide the women with the materials, information, and abilities they required to complete the Photovoice project, and needed to believe in what they accomplished with it.

### ***Collecting Photovoice Data***

For the Pushaq Warmi Photovoice Project, six long-standing members of the group collectively organized and participated in three workshops in the rural sites of Cascajal, Samanco, and Nuevo Chimbote over the course of 4 months in 2021. The topic of the workshops was Woman Empowerment During the Pandemic, with the focus being on mental health and how women can deal with issues brought about by the pandemic, such as stress, anxiety, and depression. The women's group had three digital cameras to use between them and were asked to visually document their experiences during the workshops. This put the participants at the forefront of the project, giving them control over the documentation of their experiences and what they found worthy of recording during their observations. The perspectives of the women were the focus, shifting power onto them and thus taking the attention away from the researcher. Each participant was responsible for taking a set of photographs and writing captions describing each photo, to go along with them. The participants' perspectives were illustrated using Aristotle's three-act structure and The Story Circle.

### *Photovoice Training and Workshops*

The workshops were coordinated by the women during a series of meetings conducted by the researcher with the study participants and her RA. Regular virtual meetings took place between the months of June 2021 and August 2021 to discuss the project and its logistics. The initial meeting was between the investigator and the RA to assess the COVID situation and organize the subsequent meetings with the women in the group who consented to participate in the project. During the meeting it was mentioned that the response time by the Peruvian government was slow in getting people vaccinated, with only 40% of Chimbote vaccinated (RA, personal communication, June 8, 2021). This was in large part due to the elections process, where there was a run-off between two candidates. Many businesses and entities remained closed. Moreover, the economy was unstable, and the value of the dollar was increasing. The political and economic state of Peru at the time, along with the COVID pandemic, had a direct effect on the pace of the project and the workshop procedures and in-person meetings between the members of Pushaq Warmi. Because of the pandemic restrictions put in place at the time, the work and engagement of the group momentarily ceased. There was also a setback with the Pushaq Warmi president. At first, she expressed her disinterest in participating in the project and this caused a delay in beginning the talks with the group on the workshops and any training that needed to take place before the workshops. Fortunately, the group functions democratically and five of the women had already agreed to participate. After a conversation with another member, who was the former president of the group, the current president agreed to participate. A retraining on Photovoice was also decided upon by the investigator, since a couple of years had

elapsed since the first project introduction and training during the 2018 and 2019 WGC immersion trips to Peru.

### **Data Analysis**

The objective of this investigation was to gain a comprehensive understanding of how a global service-learning initiative could amplify the voices of community members and foster empowerment within international communities through the utilization of Photovoice. The research was qualitative in nature. In qualitative research, the context of the data collected from participants is considered in three dimensions: place, time, and the context of the study itself (Merriam, 2009). All narrative inquiry is founded on the conceptual assumption that storytelling is intrinsic to the human experience, and it is by the construction of narratives that individuals draw events together and analyze them in a way that generates something meaningful (Willig, 2014). This is consistent with my study because I was attempting to weave the experiences of the women who participated in the Photovoice project into a story that underlined the aspects of the experience that were significant to them. I accomplished this through conducting interviews with the women who took part in the study, in which they described their involvement in the project and how it affected them.

According to Roulston (2014), there are three distinct steps to the analytic process for data: “(1) data reduction or ‘meaning condensation’ . . . , (2) data reorganization, and (3) interpretation and representation” (pg. 304). Firstly, narrative researchers who wish to present the experiences of participants condense interviews to emphasize the important ideas communicated. The process of condensation involves summarizing the meanings conveyed by the interviewees into more concise statements. In my case, I engaged in meaning condensation during the interviews by taking notes of the participants observations and writing down what they chose to highlight or emphasize. This helped me to piece together the main takeaways of

each interview. Secondly, to achieve data reorganization, researchers create narratives that communicate the key concepts discovered through analysis of data, and they use data evidence or anecdotes to support claims. In this case, I undertook the task of reorganizing data by employing elements of the Hero's Journey and Story Circle frameworks to illustrate the personal transformations experienced by the women throughout the project. Additionally, I used the photographs captured by the participants during the workshops to visually represent the important aspects of their experiences that encouraged a shift in their perspective. Finally, interpretation and representation consist of communicating data using themes backed by direct quotations from transcriptions, descriptions, and models containing graphical information of central ideas, and stories that capture participants' experiences and viewpoints. In my research, I employed methods like in vivo coding and holistic coding, as well as Photovoice and its use of photographs with captions and the two narrative frameworks previously mentioned, to acquire a full understanding of the experiences of the women.

### ***Transcription***

I hired an experienced Spanish translator/transcriber in March of 2022. She has been a professional translator/transcriber for 16 years in Portuguese, French, and Spanish into English and vice-versa. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) noted that “transcripts are impoverished, decontextualized renderings of live interview conversations” (pg. 204). Written materials cannot replace real, active dialogues in which nonverbal communication is equally as significant as verbal communication. The use of a transcriber who is unfamiliar with the research can present several issues when attempting to translate interviews from one language to another. The use of video recording rather than audio recording, on the other hand, allows the transcriber/translator to also observe the interview. Although this mode takes a lot of time because of the large volume

of data, video recordings provide a distinct ability to examine the interpersonal dynamics in an interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The transcripts were sent to me one at a time and as they were completed. This proved to be an asset as I was able to spend a couple of weeks reading and coding each interview transcript before receiving the next. Each interview transcript was delivered through email, and the RA then gave it to the study participant so they could read it over and verify the information. A concise follow-up interview was arranged for the purpose of member checking. The scheduling of the second interview was conducted by the RA and myself, taking into consideration the availability of each study participant. To ensure that the interview transcriptions were as accurate as possible, the interview questions relied on throughout the member-checking process centered on evaluating correctness.

### ***Coding***

Saldana (2013) asserts “a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Because my research design was narrative inquiry, I wanted to select the technique that would allow me to focus on what my study participants were directly sharing in their interviews. The meanings of experiences, their intricacies, and their situatedness were all communicated via storytelling (Gordon et al., 2007) and so I needed to stay true to the spoken words of my participants. Coding is an essential analytical process that helps to make sense of large amounts of unstructured textual material (Basit, 2003). In qualitative data analysis, a code is a construct made by the researcher that stands for each individual datum and gives it a meaning based on how it is interpreted; this is done so that patterns can be found, categories made, theories built, and other analytic tasks can be carried out (Saldana, 2013). According to Saldana (2013), managing qualitative data on paper

and writing codes by hand confers greater control and ownership over the work. While coding, Charmaz (2014) reminds us to pay attention to the language; in vivo codes allow us to maintain the significance of participants' views and actions in the coding process. I read all seven personal interview transcripts, manually coded them, and conducted multiple types of data analysis to address the research questions. As my translator/transcriber emailed me the interview transcripts, I printed them and organized them in a binder in chronological order, based on the dates of the interviews. Each interview transcript was labeled "Peru Interview" and included the interview number in sequential order, as well as the word count and name of my transcriber. Each interview transcript was bilingual, containing text in both English and Spanish, as well as the month and year of the interview. I made a note under each interview question indicating whether it led to another question. Then, using different-colored highlighters, I began the in vivo coding process. In vivo coding is a method of qualitative data analysis that focuses on the actual words that were said by the participants who took part in the study (Manning, 2017). Using this strategy, I was able to meticulously examine and sift through the interviews to extract raw language and data encapsulating the participants' honest and genuine replies to the interview questions. The first interview transcript served as a reference for hand coding and highlighting the rest. I began highlighting words, sentences, and entire sections that stood out in the transcript of Participant One (P1) with different colors to signify different ideas. I only marked responses from my research participants, not my own opinions, ideas, or questions, or those of my RA. My RA had translated the participants' responses back to me during the interviews, which I read for clarity of thoughts and to ascertain whether I understood them correctly, but I did not highlight these since I did not want to lose the translation of their experiences. Table 3 is an extract from

one of the interviews that demonstrates how a narrative of the women's experiences in the study has been created using the precise words and phrases expressed by the participants.

I used thematic content analysis to examine the interview data to determine the answers to the research questions. My objective was to identify themes that captured the core of the experiences of the women's group and to develop, in collaboration with my research participants, the significance of their experiences utilizing Photovoice. Five emergent themes from the interview data were developed using thematic content analysis.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Themes are derived from both the material (inductive method) and the researcher's preconceived knowledge of the subject matter being examined (an *a priori* approach) (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Ryan and Bernard (2003) state that the qualities of the phenomenon being examined; already agreed upon professional definitions discovered in literature studies; local, common-sense constructions; and researchers' values, theoretical orientations, and personal experiences all contribute to a priori themes. I began categorizing codes into themes as I highlighted the first interview transcript.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for evaluating qualitative data that comprises searching throughout a data set to detect, interpret, and report repeating patterns. This approach was used to report on the findings of the study. To better refine the themes, I used my own background knowledge of service-learning literature and earlier experiences with the women's group, as well as a conceptual understanding of what women's empowerment looks like according to WGC and Dr. Ettling. During the reading and coding of each transcript, I wrote notes to myself about what stood out about each interview and should be emphasized in the investigation's findings section. These included a description of the



**Table 3***Example of In Vivo Coding*

Excerpt from Interview #5 Transcript	Codes
<p>For me, yes, it was worth it, because when we went to Cascajal we were moved because even the women... Sure, it's a community, right? We have gone to the College, and people from far away came! I have seen a lady with traditional skirts and everything. I took her picture, she came from a farther corner, under the hill, I think she came, and she enthusiastically wanted to listen; and apart from that, the day we made the final presentation, in the Plaza Mayor, there was a good one, what can I tell you, a good number of people who came and shared with us. They have asked questions and congratulated us at the same time, saying that there are few groups that work like this, suddenly taking to the Plaza Mayor or another place where the group can show their work. Because there are groups that are very introverted, right? They just do the work for their group and don't show it like we do. I was moved, it has been very beautiful, and I have learned and every day we learn more. And other than that, it's a good experience.</p>	<p>"It was worth it"</p> <p>"We were moved"</p> <p>"People from far away came"</p> <p>"seen a lady with traditional skirts"</p> <p>"I took her picture"</p> <p>"She enthusiastically wanted to listen"</p> <p>"made the final presentation"</p> <p>"a good number of people came and shared"</p> <p>"congratulated us"</p> <p>"few groups"</p> <p>"work"</p> <p>"show their work"</p> <p>"are very introverted"</p> <p>"just do the work"</p> <p>"don't show like we do"</p> <p>"has been very beautiful" "I have learned"</p> <p>"every day we learn more"</p> <p>"good experience"</p>

**Table 4***Example of Holistic Coding*

Excerpt from Interview #1 Transcript	Codes
Look, my experiences have been very good,	
because we have trained women who may	“Goals & Motives”
never have been... How to perform in the	
pandemic, like... The jobs we have done during	
this pandemic... Ruth has been a very good	
woman, reaching out to so many women... We	
too, we have all been a team, a team that has	“Work as a Team”
joined forces, right? And, above all, the project	
that she sent us had a motto, which I invented:	
“Women, cry for freedom”, right? I hope that	“Motivate, Inspire, and Share Knowledge”
that, that, that appointment or, or that prayer... I	
don't know how to explain, that name that we	
have given it, to the motto that Ruy and all six	“Work as a Team”
of us have made, the “Cry for Freedom”, I think	
it was a cry to tell Mónica that Peruvian women	
are warriors, that Peruvian women can get out	“Motivate, Inspire, and Share Knowledge”
of... this evil conglomerate that we have had to	
live in all over the world, right? That we can	“Motivate, Inspire, and Share Knowledge”
too, that we don't need a husband, a man,	
someone to go out in our needs, that we walk	
beautiful pathways to reach for more women, to	“Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness”
teach them, to tell them that they are not alone,	
that there are women with a lot of	
understanding so that they, stand out in this	
pandemic and also know what their duties are,	
their rights as far as they want, where to turn...	“Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness”
That they are not alone here in Peru.	

photographs and corresponding stories that appeared to have had the greatest impact on the women, as well as the women's various roles and responsibilities in the workshops and what stood out for me the most about each woman's interview. I identified five primary themes from the data based on my own experience with the research and the premise for ISL: goals and motives; motivate, inspire, and share knowledge; expand learning and cultural awareness; work as a team; and impact on community. I applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process to my study to assist me in interpreting the data and establishing themes (Table 5).

The first phase was familiarizing myself with the data, in which I looked over the data several times, took notes, and marked ideas I wanted to return to. I was looking for connections in the interviews and what the different women were receiving out of the project. I was particularly struck by the stories featured in each of their interviews, as well as the participants' respective contributions to the workshops. I also made a note of where each interview question was asked and answered to ensure that they were addressed.

The second phase involved generating initial codes. In this phase, I circled the words or phrases that were interesting to me that would help me find commonalities among the interviews and that best reflected my participants' experiences.

To begin the third phase, searching for themes, I created a coding table and categorized the different codes according to the interview questions and under each study participant. I had three main questions and three sub-questions under each initial question. I then began looking at the relationships between the different codes and sorting these into distinct overarching themes.

At that point, I entered the fourth phase of reviewing the themes. To create connections and patterns concerning the ideas that participants shared throughout their experiences, I reviewed the numerous codes within each theme to determine if they were all relevant and

appropriately categorized. After this, I reviewed the entire data set to see if the data adequately captured the meanings behind the women’s ideas and experiences with the project. It is expected that at the end of this stage, the researcher will have a solid grasp on the many themes identified, their interrelationships, and the larger narrative they convey about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Upon careful examination of the data, I effectively recognized five prominent themes (which will be discussed later), analyzed their interconnections, and began the process of creating a unified narrative that described the collective experience of the women’s group.

**Table 5**

*Braun and Clarke’s Six-Phase Process for Interpreting Data and Establishing Themes*

Phase	Data Interpretation/Establishment of Theme
Become familiar with the data	An immersive study of the data through repeated reading and analysis of textual information.
Generate initial codes	Systematically analyzing data by means of coding
Search for themes	Examining the coded data to determine the existence of commonalities and intersections among the various codes.
Review themes	An iterative process in which the emerging themes are critically examined in relation to the coded data and the entirety of the dataset.
Define themes	Choosing excerpts to present/analyze and then outlining the story of each theme with or around these.
Producing the report	The last stage of analysis is the drafting of a report.

The fifth phase entailed defining and naming the themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that “define and refine” means identifying the “essence” of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall) and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures (p. 22). At this

point, I returned to the data for each theme and arranged it into a cohesive and internally consistent story, complete with narrative.

The sixth phase was the final analysis and write-up of the report using the themes and data extracts. I highlighted the parts of the data that directly illustrated how my study participants felt empowered by their work in the project, and their motivations for continuing this effort. In doing so, I sought to demonstrate how this specific ISL initiative captured the voice and spirit of Pushaq Warmi's commitment to empowering themselves and others through the spread of awareness and education. As Braun and Clarke (2006) point out excerpts must be placed in an analytic narrative that compellingly demonstrates your data story and makes an argument about your research topic.

### **Member Checking**

The research investigation featured in this dissertation has been reviewed and approved by UIW's IRB as of June 2021, with renewal in June 2022. I used Creswell's (2013) recommended strategy to ensure the validity of the study: the sharing of interview transcripts with my RA and the study participants to confirm that they have been accurately represented. Saldana (2016) observes member checking or other methods of meaning-oriented validity should be used to make sure the researcher grasps both the significance as well as the specifics of words or phrases used by participants as the significance of words or phrases noted through in vivo coding can be unique to a particular culture. This offered me a better understanding of the study participants and their perspectives on the Photovoice project(s).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study followed the UIW IRB directions and adhered to ethical standards. During the 2019 immersion trip, a Photovoice project under a WGC IRB was conducted in Chimbote, Peru;

hence, I was aware of ethics and processes. In July of 2021, I submitted an IRB application for the current study, which was approved (Appendix D). When dealing with human subjects, especially those from underprivileged populations, ethical considerations arise. Since my research participants were a vulnerable group of women residing in a city that is largely impoverished, has limited resources, and has a muddled political infrastructure, I ensured that the women of Pushaq Warmi fully understood the purpose of my research and any potential consequences of their voluntary participation. The nature of the Photovoice project, women's mental health, is a sensitive topic that Peruvian society and culture have shown little interest in and consideration for. As a researcher, I must consider if it is appropriate to highlight this issue in a predominantly masculine and conventional society and culture. Is the research and work I'm conducting with women for the greater good? This may raise community understanding of mental health issues and minimize the likelihood of women and families enduring stress, anxiety, and depression due to domestic violence and financial hardship. There is a possibility that women may be vulnerable to harassment if, for instance, they are more vocal in the community against the war on female and child violence. The women recognized the dangers and have made it their goal to speak out against injustice.

From January to December 2019, Pushaq Warmi delivered education and training seminars on the topic of child sexual abuse in their community, and they unanimously agreed to cover this issue in the Photovoice project I conducted with them that summer. They were involved in every choice regarding the workshops and exhibition of the subsequent study. As a group of strong, intelligent, and resourceful female leaders, they have been working independently. I am only attesting to and documenting the empowerment of the Pushaq Warmi women through the study and ISL efforts, as well as the way in which this has inspired

the organization to conduct more community action for the empowerment of women and children, which is their primary goal. The achievement of this goal necessitated the active engagement in listening to and carefully contemplating the experiences of women.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation

This qualitative narrative research aimed to investigate the perceptions of an international women's group following an ISL Photovoice project. This chapter presents the results of the research undertaken to address the research questions: What is the process of empowerment that the women's group, Pushaq Warmi, underwent following an ISL Photovoice project in Chimbote, Peru? What were their perceptions of the project?

Individual interview transcripts, images with captions, field notes, and materials from pilot research make up the given data. This chapter also contains a synopsis of the initial Photovoice project, participant profiles, and a description of Photovoice training and workshops for context. The methods used to extract codes and themes from the interviews are also covered. In vivo coding and theme coding were the primary levels of analysis. At each stage of data analysis, I conducted a cross-comparison of the interviews, until recurring patterns and themes appeared. This chapter contains tables and visuals to explain code and topic data, as well as photographs and quotations from individual interviews to stress major themes and construct a narrative framework using Dan Harmon's Story Circle.

Through the process of analysis, I found parallels between the lived experiences of the participants and the hero's journey (Campbell, 2008). A total of seven participants provided interviews, including teachers, a psychologist, a nurse, and my RA. Individual participant information included participant role identities, video recordings through Zoom meetings, notes, and the signed consent forms. The roles of the participants and the demographic information were valuable to the study. I also recorded gender, age, level of education, ethnicity, nationality, and years participants have been members of Pushaq Warmi and Casa de la Mujer, as they were of significance to the investigation. The Pushaq Warmi group was formed on November 9,



2012. The six group participants are Peruvian in nationality and identify their ethnicity as being Latina. Four of the women live in Nuevo Chimbote and two live in Chimbote. It is important to note that one of the participants, since the time of her interview, has moved to the United States indefinitely to live with her daughter, but will continue to support and contribute to Pushaq Warmi virtually. Table 6 records the differences in demographic data among the participants.

**Table 6**

*Participant Profiles*

Name	Age	Occupation	Education Level	Years in Casa de la Mujer	Years in Pushaq Warmi
Participant 1	72	Handcraft work	High school	?	11
Participant 2	58	Kindergarten teacher	College	7	11
Participant 3	72	Family business; retired teacher	High school	4	11
Participant 4	55	Seamstress	Fashion institute	n/a	7
Participant 5	61	Nurse	College	4	11
Participant 6	55	Psychologist	College	3	11
Participant 7	29	Student	Some college	n/a	n/a

Six of the seven study participants have been members of Pushaq Warmi since the group was formed. These six members of Pushaq Warmi have been actively involved with WGC and have participated in workshops during prior immersion trips. The seventh participant was my RA.

**Research Associate Profile**

For this study, a male Chimbote resident in his late 20s was recruited as my RA. I had a quick introduction to him on a summer 2018 immersion trip to Peru, and we started working

together in the spring of 2019. He shares a home with his grandparents and parents, balances work and school, and helps at the grocery shop owned by his family. He worked alongside me on the initial Photovoice project because I required someone local in Chimbote, Peru, to manage practicalities like running errands, getting supplies, and interacting with the women. The RA demonstrated exceptional interpersonal skills and established a positive and harmonious relationship with the female members of Pushaq Warmi, resulting in their genuine enjoyment of his presence. In addition to being highly enthusiastic and passionate about the project, he has been responsible, dependable, honest, and trustworthy in his work on it. He has additionally served as my translator and primary contact for the study project, fulfilling the role of intermediary between myself and the women's organization. My RA possesses a level of insight and comprehension that surpasses my own, owing to his Peruvian background. Throughout the project, his heightened understanding of diverse cultural nuances enabled him to enlighten me regarding these matters. One area that requires improvement in Peru is time management as a business practice. A significant number of the participants in my study exhibited tardiness in attending our scheduled meetings. My RA informed me that punctuality is not strictly adhered to in Peru. This topic was discussed during our meetings with the female participants, requiring me to demonstrate adaptability and flexibility.

### **Theme 1: Goals and Motives**

Participant One (P1), the group's eldest, was self-employed, selling her own handicrafts from home. She stated in her interview that her experiences with the initiative were extremely positive, since Pushaq Warmi was able to train women who had never been exposed to training. Overall, Participant Two (P2) felt more involved in the second Photovoice project, whereas the first was viewed as a learning experience by her. Her objective for the second initiative was to reach out to places where women might be empowered and educated where they could get

assistance and training. Participant Three (P3) was the president of Pushaq Warmi at the time of this research. P3 stated in her interview that it was beneficial that they had this second Photovoice project since it increased her knowledge and served to extend their group purpose of women's education and empowerment to new places. Participant Four (P4) wanted the group to continue working in remote areas and training people on topics that were prevalent in their community, such as sexual education for children in Cascajal, which was specifically requested, or child abuse, which was also prevalent in their region. Participant Five (P5) stated in the interview that her profession as a nurse played a significant role in her involvement in the training sessions, which included performing breathing exercises and stress and relaxation treatment for mental health, all of which are critical factors for rehabilitation after the pandemic. P5, a full-time nurse, was exhausted from juggling the demands of her job and her project commitments, but she stated her unwavering dedication to both. She regarded everything she accomplished as vital since each location had unique problems. P5 felt fulfillment in her contributions to her group and to each of the different communities. As a nurse, she worked 12-hour shifts directly with women on everything maternity-related, and she has been glad to teach other women how to breathe and recover from COVID, as well as show the importance drinking water and walking 30 minutes a day has in the healing process. P5 stated that her job and passion as a health professional was to communicate with and educate people (Figure 9).

Participant Six (P6), the psychologist, was the final interview of the Pushaq Warmi research participants. In late December 2021, she fell ill with a respiratory illness and went into a coma. My RA and I eventually interviewed her through Zoom in January 2022, after she was released and had recovered at home. P6's outgoing demeanor was attributed to her work as a

psychologist. Her goal was to reach out to individuals and have an influence on their families and society.

### Figure 9

*Parents Participating in Post COVID 19 Therapy*



P6 admired the people she engaged with during the project, and captured in the photos that, despite the pandemic, women have been able to “get ahead and face the situation.” Her objective with the workshops was for its attendees to not only be educated, but also to absorb what they had learned. P6 wished to demonstrate to the community what they were capable of and to have them leave training sessions with the knowledge and understanding that they were capable of great things, that they had value, and that they could contribute to society. It was

critical for her that people understand their own strengths so that, with the resources Pushaq Warmi presented to them on education and pandemic methods and approaches, they could continue to tackle the problems and progress forward. P6 felt that the objectives and motives behind the project were reached; that is, raising awareness and providing education to empower women to “effectively balance all their lives” and rely more on themselves for their livelihood and that of their families. She instructed the workshop participants on how to better manage their stress, anxiety, and depression through relaxation techniques (Figure 10).

**Figure 10**

*Relaxation Exercises Necessary for Health*



## **Theme 2: Motivate, Inspire, and Share Knowledge**

P1 came up with the group motto for the project, “Women, cry for freedom.” For her, it was necessary to impart to other women that they did not need to depend on a man, that women could “pick up a lamp, we can pick up a hammer, lay a tile, do things that perhaps we have never experienced.” P2 remarked that she admired the tenacity of the women she encountered in the rural communities. This was an observation she made upon witnessing a woman selling food on the border from Valparaiso on the Costa Blanca:

She expressed the courage that a woman must leave the house to sell, right? This is her small business. And she is really getting to little corners there, she is getting to places that you don’t even think there are stores there...

P2 expressed pride in seeing other women, Andean women, being entrepreneurs, workers, and interested in training. As a former Philosophy and Social Sciences teacher who has been retired for 15 years, P3 felt that she had never stopped educating and teaching others. She viewed the world as a classroom and believed that as much as others can learn from her, she can support and learn from others.

## **Theme 3: Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness**

In her encounter with a woman selling breakfast near one of the workshops, P1 learned that the woman’s husband had recently abandoned her with five children (Figure 11). She mentioned the difficulties and daily challenges that women in Peru confront.

P1 realized that “we women must be brave, we must be communicative, we must listen to people who selflessly want to help us.” People walking for half an hour or traveling from neighboring areas to participate in the training sessions because they wanted to learn impressed and gained the admiration of P2 (Figure 12).

**Figure 11**

*Enterprising Woman Selling Breakfast From Her Cart*



During the sessions, P2 saw how much significance one of the attendees placed on education, despite being a mother of two little children. P4, the group's seamstress, considered her experience with the initiative interesting since she realized that women not only wanted to learn but also needed to learn. She discovered that many people wanted to know how to deal with a pandemic and other crises. P4 recognized the lack of resources available to rural communities, saying "there are very few institutions to train them." She shared similar experiences with her coworkers, women who attended the training sessions despite the challenges of having to bring their children since they had no one to care for them at home (Figure 13).

**Figure 12**

*Andean Woman Interested in Learning Participates in the Training*



While she admitted having forgotten much of the first project, P4 now understood Photovoice as “the capacity of capturing what you want, everything you want to express, what you represent in training.” P4 indicated a need for greater training for her group because child and family violence were difficult issues that must be addressed. Taking pictures for the project assisted in bringing to light other significant challenges in the areas where the workshops were held. Not only did P5 recognize the strength of women and their need for additional assistance and educational possibilities to achieve economic independence, but she also recognized the necessity for good sanitation services, as well as the attention and action of appropriate



**Figure 13**

*Women and Mothers who Participated in Mental Health Training*



authorities and governing officials. She was concerned that individuals living in human settlements had to wash their clothing in filthy streams and irrigation water. A photo that strongly affected my participants was of a girl washing clothes in the street (Figure 14). P6 found upsetting the stark contrast between rural and urban areas, with lack of services and opportunities in the more remote communities.

Obtaining clean water is a daily issue. Many remote areas lack clean, accessible water sources. Figure 14 shows a woman washing clothes in a creek. In her interview, P5 noted:

This lady, for example, lives in a slum, a human settlement; she does not have sanitation services that is water and drainage and this lady has to go wash clothes for herself and for her whole family in a stream where the water is not proper, it is not, pure, rather.

Water tankers must be delivered, and the water paid for by families if they want to have clean water (Figure 15).

**Figure 14**

*The Lack of Water Does not Impede Domestic Chores*



**LA FALTA DE AGUA NO ES IMPEDIMENTO  
PARA REALIZAR SUS LABORES DOMÉSTICAS.**

**Figure 15**

*Water Vendors in Nuevo Paraiso*



According to my RA, one of the most important advantages of the project was learning about the realities of Chimbote's surrounding areas and connecting with individuals—particularly men—to better understand who the people in the communities are and how to best serve them. My RA understood that teaching helps communities learn so that they may improve their lives, and that this generated a win-win scenario because both the communities and the Pushaq Warmi women learned throughout the workshops. According to him, my research

participants were able to see life from a different perspective. His initial concern about the project was that it could be difficult to reach rural locations and that there might not be many people interested in learning there. However, most of the participants agreed that the communities were open to learning and participation. Nonetheless, the fact that women in rural areas remained strong and powerful in the face of adversity was extraordinary. When questioned about the difficulties the group had while traveling, P6 said that people were quite approachable if Pushaq Warmi was friendly and kind towards those in the community.

#### **Theme 4: Work as a Team**

P1 stated that individuals who attended the workshops were invited by word of mouth, and she credited P2 with being a very excellent organizer who invited everyone she knew as well as everyone they came across. She felt that the project was coordinated very well and described the way Pushaq Warmi worked as being “all happiness, all enthusiasm with encouragement, with experience.” P2, an elementary school teacher and the project’s primary organizer, thought it was a successful experience and felt a responsibility for ensuring that everyone worked at the same pace. During the first Photovoice project, she was president of Pushaq Warmi and was helpful in organizing the workshops. During the second project’s training, she was frequently enlisted to assist my RA on the back end with logistics and the exchange of money for workshop materials. Regarding the second round of training sessions, she felt certain that if she were ever asked for assistance, she would be able to do it. Her job in the project was to organize the workshops. P2 was also in charge of allocating roles and coordinating matters, and she pointed out that each team member had a particular role to carry out. Because the issue of mental health differed from the original Photovoice project’s topic, they learned more about it to guide/teach other women and answer any questions they may be asked. P2 believed that the group had a better knowledge

of working together and that, at some point, any of them would be expected to step up and lead while the others took direction, which was a challenging concept for the women to accept because they had all been trained as leaders.

P3 mentioned that she worked on her photography abilities during the classes and that she was sometimes pleased with the results and other times she was not. There were discrepancies between the first and second initiatives, and P3 recognized they made mistakes and were disappointed with the content in the first initiative, but this second experience allowed them to better display their work and motivated them to undertake more public events. P3 stated in her interview that the group went through an evaluation process on their work in order to learn how to improve in the future.

P4's workshop responsibilities included ensuring that everybody who attended, and the facilitators, followed all COVID safety measures. She appreciated her part in the group as well as the other members' performance and contributions. The group's solidarity was strong at its core, with P4 recognizing that, despite minor disagreements among the individual members, they knew how to resolve them and proceed ahead. For P4, Pushaq Warmi's strength was their unwavering unity, which benefited their ability to connect with people and gain their trust.

Regarding P5's experiences with both Photovoice projects, she thought they had learned how to improve the presentation of their work and valued the autonomy of handling the second project directly. P5 also mentioned that the group needed to adapt to fit the various populations and find ways to reach out to them whenever and wherever feasible. P6's lectures on depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as various coping methods for each, were among her contributions to the workshops. P6 believed that her group knew what they were doing with the second project and made autonomous judgments. P6 noted that she and the group

were disappointed with the first project's exhibit in terms of the quality of photographs and presentation of their work, but that they were able to make the presentation they envisioned with the second exhibit.

Working with the women has been challenging for my RA since they are Latinas with strong personalities; but, because of his Peruvian origin, he felt more connected to the project and could relate to the women's experiences. He said that the women's sense of responsibility and project ownership was what separated the first endeavor from the second. He believed they were performing more of the work on their own and that accountability had been transferred to them. He thought that their autonomy and ability to administer or lead the workshops and execute the exhibit as they thought appropriate resulted in a better outcome for them. My RA also emphasized the women's strong sense of camaraderie, unwavering cooperation, and positive attitudes. Effective communication was crucial in this. Photovoice, in his opinion, was an excellent medium for conveying stories since it allowed the revelation of people's realities through pictures. The interviews were his favorite part of the project, since it allowed him to hear how the women felt about the overall initiative and the various training sessions they provided to different areas. He was also surprised by how much more they carried out after each workshop than he expected. For example, they would meet on their own and discuss the positive aspects of the workshops, how well they went, and how they could improve the next time. He noticed that the women had a wealth of information and expertise. He stated that when one acquired experience, they became more aware and began to explore or attempt to discover alternate answers to problems. He saw that by conducting meetings after every workshop, the women demonstrated a desire to develop and learn, which bolstered the organization's reputation.



### Theme 5: Impact on Community

P3 acknowledged that it was difficult to acquire the trust of a community to which you did not belong. However, for the most part, the group witnessed others' curiosity and eagerness to learn and engage in the workshops. Many people in the community approached the group with questions about how they could manage the pandemic, particularly with children, and asked them to return for another workshop. P2 learned that more distant communities “hope that you will get there with help.” One thing P3 also recognized was the interest and participation of men at the workshops, which she was delighted to see, for “the trainings could change them in dealing with their partners at home.” With their workshops, Pushaq Warmi educated entire families, as shown in Figure 16.

#### Figure 16

*Pushaq Warmi Members With Parents of the Cascajal Bajo School*



P4 found her participation in the project valuable largely because of the receptiveness of the communities: “They make us understand that we are worth a lot here.” P5, a nurse with a little more than 40 years of experience, appreciated working with the community and thought the Photovoice project was an excellent opportunity, since people wanted to learn from them. She liked the concept that people who attended the training and workshops could take what they learned home and share it with their friends and family, which expanded their teaching even farther. P5 was passionate about rallying the community; she intended for the public to rise and exercise their leadership, combat corruption, pursue economic independence, and demand better living circumstances. When questioned about her experiences with the initiative, P5 stated that she believed it was worthwhile since she was affected by the community’s positive response and enthusiasm to participate. She stated that many people came to the exhibit, expressed their feelings, and praised them for the job her group was doing in communities, noting that it was not something seen every day. P5 pointed out that Pushaq Warmi was praised at the public exhibit since charitable work is typically done behind the scenes and is not exposed or made public. “They just do the work for their group and don’t show it like we do. I was moved, it has been very beautiful, and I have learned and every day we learn more.” P5 reflected in her interview that the community recognized that the workshops benefited them, which was evident in greater participation in the second project, with adults and young people and even young mothers of 12-, 13-, and 15-years taking part. She stated that she wished to reach out to youths because “they are in the age of power.” During the interview, my RA discussed his insights regarding how the project met the needs of the people and how they grasped and internalized the workshops. The RA’s ambition for the group was to continue giving workshops:

In my country, in Peru, a lot of people . . . Especially in the rural areas, they don’t have access to a good education. And for this group to be able to do that, having the financial



support or anything, any kind of support, that would be nice, you know? . . . So, my people get education at least in that way, and they change their mindsets and everything.

My RA devoted himself to this work because he believed in it. He realized how important it was to go out to his people and to places that many people don't visit or are unfamiliar with and offer them the knowledge and training they so desperately needed, and he has indicated his willingness to continue working with me on endeavors like this in the future. Furthermore, he said that the fact that this research took place during the pandemic made the entire experience more meaningful because people were aware of the possible hazards of catching COVID-19 but were still eager to attend these sessions to learn. He stated that this demonstrated appreciation to everyone involved in the endeavor, including the women, himself, and me. My RA recognized that it was difficult for Peruvians in rural areas to feed themselves, let alone get education (Figure 17), demonstrating the importance of such initiatives in strengthening communities.

### **Participants' Stories**

A study of narrative inquiry requires piecing together in an ordered, chronological way the events and observations shared within interviews to pinpoint key moments of the participants' experiences. If we consider the study's aim to be a narrative with three main acts showing Pushaq Warmi's path towards enlightenment or self-discovery, then we must see the women as the actors, or players, in the story. My understanding of the different stages of the first Photovoice project with Pushaq Warmi gave me a foundation for the beginning, middle, and end of the second project. It also made it easier for me to picture the experiences of my study participants—all of whom were involved in the first project—as they went through the interviews. According to Brinkman and Kvale (2015):

Narrative researchers have tried to identify the plots that typically appear in stories. Plots are what order narratives, and the basic plots of modernist stories have been identified as

taking a journey, engaging in a contest, enduring suffering, pursuing consummation, and establishing a home. (p. 256)

### Figure 17

*The Long Road to Bring Bread Home*



I have learned that life is not organized in the manner of a story; reality is fractured, chaotic, and interpretative. To initiate meaning and purpose, humans alter and make sense of things. In their interviews, each woman described her experiences with the project, as well as her ideals, motives, and ambitions for being a part of Pushaq Warmi, both directly and indirectly. This allowed me to piece together the group's shared vision and the transformative nature of their experiences. Various models have been developed to illustrate the path that a hero or major character in a story takes to achieve transformative change. I used Dan Harmon's Story Circle to offer a visual roadmap of the growth of my project's participants, highlighting their experiences

and what they learned, to represent the positive transformation that the women of Pushaq Warmi experienced while participating in the study. This visual roadmap showed that the study had a notable and beneficial impact on them. According to Taylor (2021),

The structure of The Hero's Journey consists of twelve steps, where the hero delves out of their ordinary world into a special world and is faced with tests and obstacles, meeting allies and enemies on the way with multiple turning points.

The first step of The Story Circle involves a *character taken out of his or her comfort zone*, a place accustomed to and where they lead relatively normal lives. In this world, they are in control of their situation. The character, the protagonist, often *desires something*, something typically out of their reach, which propels them outside of the familiar, where action is incited. Doing so requires him or her to *enter an unfamiliar situation* where they cross uncharted territory in pursuit of what is wanted. Once out of their norm, the hero(ine) is challenged and learns to *adapt*. After adapting to their new situation, the main character *accomplishes the goal* or task they set for themselves, but this *comes with a price*, and he or she often experiences a loss or shift in thinking as a result. After this, the story's main character *returns to their familiar situation* transformed or *having changed* from the experience in the sense that they have either learned a lesson or experienced growth.

### **Dan Harmon's Story Circle**

Dan Harmon, a producer, screenwriter, and actor in the film and television industry and the mind behind the television shows *Community* and *Rick & Morty*, developed an eight-step cyclical framework to help writers structure and flesh out narratives (Figure 18).

Harmon's Story Circle, illustrated in Figure 18, is an eight-step cyclical journey used in television and film screenwriting. Each step changes the path and direction of the main character's journey. It is an even more simplified version of the 17-step heroic journey created

by Joseph Campbell (2008) in his work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and Christopher Vogler's (2007) 12-step model. Campbell described in this book how dreams influence a culture's mythology by appealing to fundamental human truths. Throughout his life, Campbell examined mythology from around the world and recognized recurring themes, particularly in the figure of the hero and his journey.

### Figure 18

*Dan Harmon's Story Circle Structure*



*Note.* Arc Studio Blog. (n.d.) Dan Harmon's Story Circle Explained: 8 Steps to a Better Screenplay. [www.arcstudiopro.com. https://www.arcstudiopro.com/blog/dan-harmons-story-circle-screenplay](https://www.arcstudiopro.com/blog/dan-harmons-story-circle-screenplay)

## The Three-Act Structure Shaping the Emergent Themes

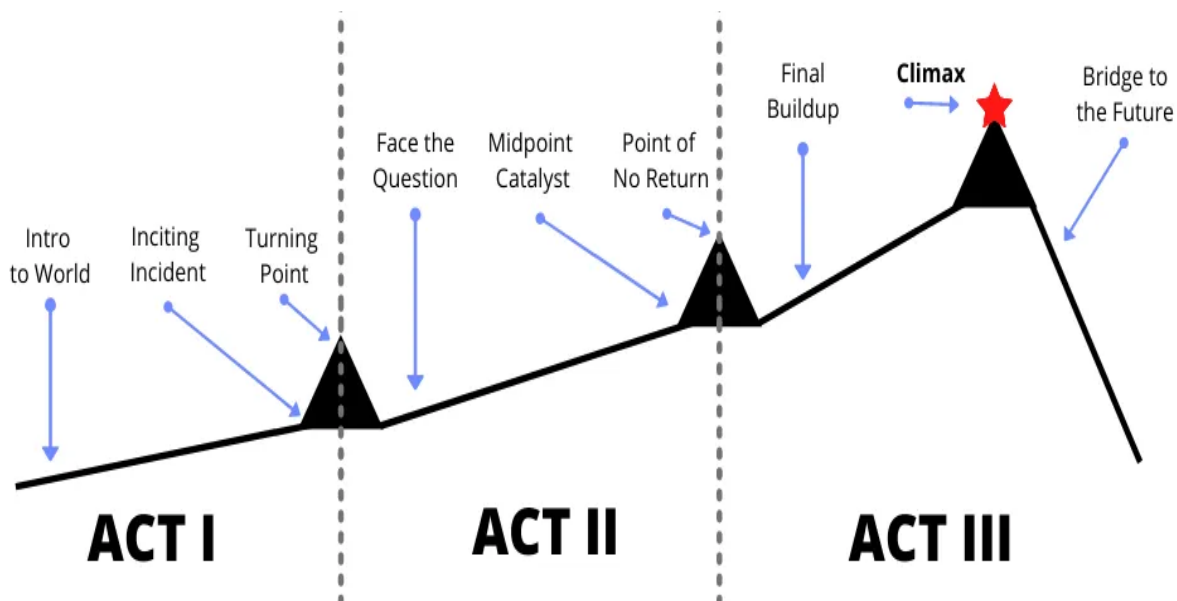
The Story Circle steps are smaller, individual components of the larger three-act structure (Figure 18), a popular model used in screenwriting and narrative fiction that creates a full story arc for the main character. The three-act structure can be traced back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, written in the 4th century BC, and his concept that a whole story contains a beginning, middle, and end. Act I consist of the exposition, an inciting incident, and the first plot point. The exposition sets the stage for the story and provides contextual or background information pertinent for the reader. This is where the characters are introduced, as well as the main conflict. The audience should, at this stage, learn about the protagonist, the world they live in, and what they desire. Then, the inciting incident is provided, which acts as a catalyst for setting the character in motion. This is where a situation, or event, is thrust upon the character, which forces them to act on their desires. It provides the character with an opportunity to fulfill a goal they have set for themselves and is often regarded as the call to adventure. The first plot point is established after the inciting incident, where the character decides to engage and commit to the action created by the inciting incident.

The confrontation, or Act II, is the longest section of the three-act structure, where the rising action, midpoint, and second plot point are presented. This is where the character embarks on their journey and several challenges, or roadblocks, are encountered, with the main character rising to the occasion. The story's overarching conflict is expounded on here. A significant event, or midpoint, is developed at this point in the narrative, where the character feels like the achievement of his or her goal is threatened, and the stakes are raised. The midpoint initiates plot point two and the character becomes more proactive; this is the turning point in a story where the character's direction changes, forcing them to pivot on their journey towards the end goal.

The final act, the narrative's resolution, contains the climax and denouement. The climax serves as the final moments of the story's overarching conflict where all loose ends are tied up in the denouement, which shows how the main character has been transformed.

### Figure 19

*Hoffman's Three-Act Structure for Writing/Developing a Story*



I am drawing on the three-act structure as an outline to illustrate the narrative framework that my research themes adopt. This framework should enable the reader to better understand the narrative structure. The various acts, paired with Dan Harmon's story circle, are employed as a device for the purpose of illuminating the process by which the primary themes of my research emerged and the reasons why they are relevant. The technique effectively portrays the transformative journey experienced by the study participants.

**Table 7***Correlating Themes to The Three-Act Structure and Harmon's Story Circle*

Act	Step	Scene	Theme
I	You	Pushaq Warmi	Goals and Motives
I	Need	Desire to Educate/Provide Training	Goals and Motives
I	Go	Travel to Three Communities	Motivate, Inspire and Share Knowledge; Work as a Team
II	Search	Women Who Want to Learn/Participate	Motivate, Inspire and Share Knowledge; Work as a Team
II	Find	Different Ways of Living	Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness
III	Take	Newfound Perspective	Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness
III	Return	Travel Home	Impact on Community
III	Change	Share/Raise Awareness of Societal Issues in Remote Areas	Impact on Community; Work as a Team

**Set Up (Act I)**

Pushaq Warmi and its members who were participating in the study were the protagonist of the bigger story being told in this dissertation. The women of the group were committed to empowering the women, children, and families that they reached, and empowered themselves in the process. The women of the Peruvian social empowerment group Pushaq Warmi were wives, mothers, entrepreneurs, and social advocates. As a group, they spoke out against the injustices they had experienced, both in their own lives and homes and within their communities. The vision of the group was to provide training to women, children, and families who lacked the access and resources necessary to live a good quality of life. Often, the women Pushaq Warmi worked with were forgotten and ignored by their government and mistreated and abused by their husbands or the patriarchs of the family. The majority of Pushaq Warmi women originally met through Casa de la Mujer, an organization in the district of Nuevo Chimbote known for

providing women who have been victims of family violence and are trying to either cope or escape domestic abuse situations in their homes with education, training, and resources. Casa de la Mujer provided the women with the tools to become strong and independent. According to their Facebook page, the organization offered women psychological and legal advice, therapies, workshops, counseling, and management of their emotions. The women of Pushaq Warmi were working professionals and all had a collective mission to reach and empower others. At the center of this investigation was how this empowerment was achieved in relation to service-learning projects. What did it look like? What process occurred? And how could the voice of the community of women, in this case, Pushaq Warmi, take center stage in the ISL project? The protagonist of a story often desires or goes off in search of something. The women in the group shared this collective desire to teach, motivate, and inspire other women in their community. Each woman felt compelled to do this for their own reasons and because of their own experiences.

### ***Step 1: Characters Out of Their Comfort Zone***

Step One, in Dan Harmon's reimagining of the hero's journey as it relates to the story circle, is where the characters are introduced, and the reader or viewer is given a glimpse into the characters' lives and the world they've built around them. The first stage of the hero's journey is what Campbell (2008) refers to as the "call to adventure," where "destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of society to a zone unknown" (p. 48). Learning from experience was the theme from the interview data that related to the beginning of the hero's journey. One must leave their comfort zone and be receptive to new experiences for the sake of learning. Pushaq Warmi, a group of strong Peruvian women, has made it their mission to go out into isolated areas and educate women, children, and their



families. The salt of the earth, the women felt a moral duty to tirelessly work towards the well-being of the family unit and expect nothing in return.

Individual interviews with study participants allowed the women to reflect on the two Photovoice projects: their level of satisfaction with the first, the different steps they took to increase satisfaction, and the success, if any, of adopting the Photovoice method in the community. The concrete experiences of the projects made up the first phase of Kolb's EL cycle, where Pushaq Warmi was learning by doing, fulfilling the tasks of a Photovoice project. Their work with these two service-learning projects introduced the women to an entirely foreign method and subsequently pushed the group out of their comfort zone. In the first Photovoice project, they were not only working under the direction of an American doctoral student who did not speak Spanish, but they were also made to adopt a very structured approach to working towards their mission. Because the women, a part of their own organization, were unfamiliar with the training and leadership of the facilitator and accustomed to their own operations, this posed a challenge. The guided interview questions gave the study participants an opportunity to ruminate over what insights were taken away from the first project.

Reflective observation, the second phase of Kolb's EL cycle, involves consciously returning to a task or event and reviewing its process for critical reflection. The women were dissatisfied with parts of the first project. This dissatisfaction was centered around the public exhibition of the photos; as P3 mentioned in her interview, "We had high expectations, but unfortunately the material was inadequate and therefore the achievements we had were very few." This reflective observation on the former Photovoice project led to what Kolb refers to as abstract conceptualization, the third phase of the EL cycle, where learners create ideas and generate new understandings based on their previous reflections. The group learned from the first

project, which led to what they felt was a better performance in the second. Once the women realized what did not work to bring more attention to community issues, they brainstormed and came up with an idea that would. P3 explained the great impact that a change in venue made to the second project: “This time, with the experience that a closed environment does not catch very much people’s attention, we have done it [the exhibit] in the Plaza Mayor. The difference has been great.” P5 also felt that their work was not presented well: “We expected a better quality in the presentation of our work in terms of photos.” But giving the women’s group complete ownership of the second research project design enabled them to perform to their own expectations and standards where I, as the principal investigator, acted predominately as a conduit to resources and support; as P6 observed, “to do things the way we wanted to do.” With this, the group fulfilled the last phase of Kolb’s (1984) EL cycle, active experimentation. The EL cycle was significant to and valuable in service-learning projects as it demonstrated whether a transfer of knowledge had taken place.

The change in workshop setting for the second Photovoice project had an impact on the women’s experience and helped them spread their mission beyond their comfort zone. The training and workshops of the first project were either at a hotel, Hotel Vertice, in downtown Chimbote or in neighborhoods relatively close to home, preventing the women’s group, as P5 observed, from seeing “the reality directly.” Having workshops in rural areas the second time around, where they felt most needed, took my study participants out of the relatively familiar and comfortable life, by comparison, they lead in Chimbote and Nuevo Chimbote. In more remote areas, the women of Pushaq Warmi were seen as outsiders who must gain the trust of the locals. P3 exclaimed in her interview, “our peasants . . . our people from the surrounding towns [that] we call ‘human settlements,’ are quite distrustful, shy, and elusive.” The women had to spend

time orienting themselves to the areas and getting to know the people. They met people with warmth and warm greetings. They met with the residents whenever and wherever necessary, regardless of their own discomfort. When sharing her experiences, P5 expressed the competing schedules between her group and the rural inhabitants of Cascajal and Samanco who worked in the plantations: “They are people who are dedicated all day to work. We must look for the moment where we can talk with them. We have had to adapt to that.”

As previously mentioned, the realities of each location were quite different. For example, just a short 20-minute drive from Chimbote was the rural town of Cambio Puente that, during our immersion trip to Peru in 2019, we traveled to for a recycling workshop, and where our students, with university students from Cesar Vallejo University in Nuevo Chimbote, participated in a trash clean-up day. Transportation in the rural areas of Peru was challenging, as evidenced by the mode of transport we used to get to Cambio Puente. Our group in 2019 traveled by burra, which was a small bus used as public transport. The difficulty in accessing these areas was also an issue with my study participants.

P4 mentioned in her interview that Cascajal was further away than the other workshop sites and that there was no mobility like that which can be found in her city. Rural areas, much like others, experience extreme drought, and clean filtered water, for a price, must be transported to the residents of a community like Cambio Puente. Lack of proper sanitation and clean water and housing is a daily concern for most Peruvians, but especially for those in rural areas where adequate resources are not available to the people (Figure 20).

**Figure 20***Expanding Population Creates a Need for Housing****Step 2: Desire for Something***

At this juncture in Harmon’s story arc, our protagonists are at a crossroads; they're content with their life overall, yet they feel a pull toward satisfying some deeper yearning (Figure 21). This desire usually serves as the story’s catalyst. In this section, I chose to focus on the theme of educating others, because the women shared the same desire and driving force to educate communities.

Pushaq Warmi’s mission has been to educate and empower women, to communicate and inspire women to look inwards and reclaim their independence from men. P1 shared why it was important to reach women in these areas:

We don't need a husband, a man, someone to go out in our needs, that we can walk beautiful pathways to reach for more women, to teach them, to tell them that they are not alone, that there are women with a lot of understanding so that they, stand out in this pandemic and also know what their duties are, their rights as far as they want, where to turn...That they are not alone here in Peru.

### Figure 21

*Community Wellness Training*



## **Confrontation (Act II)**

As a not-for-profit social entrepreneur group, the women of Pushaq Warmi faced many challenges. For one, Peru is a relatively poor country and the majority of the women in the group experienced financial hardship. Not only was the group met with external challenges, but internal ones as well. Another obstacle was that at the center of the group there was a lack of strong leadership and management. Peruvian culture has its own ideas of time management and organization, which made it rather difficult for the 10–12-member group to be consistent and cohesive as a group.

Pushaq Warmi operated within its own group dynamics, making it rather difficult for outsiders to work with them without understanding the complexities and nuances of the women, their individual backgrounds, and their culture. I developed a relationship with the women that has deepened through my interaction and work with them for the past 5 years. At the forefront of the Photovoice project was the COVID pandemic, which began in early 2020. In the United States, Americans were put under lockdown in March of 2020. Schools, businesses, and any agencies considered non-essential were temporarily closed, with many people confined to their homes with interactions only with those in their household. The pandemic was an almost insurmountable obstacle in getting this project off the ground. The proposal for the project had to undergo extensive revisions, as I anticipated being on the ground in Chimbote, Peru, for the duration of the project in the Summer of 2021, from training to planning meetings to workshops and community exhibit. However, travel restrictions were imposed, and the possibility of international travel was nonexistent.

The project had to be moved entirely to a virtual platform and an RA, stationed in Peru, had to be added to the IRB, which was approved in June 2021. In Peru, a developing country,

most citizens did not have access to the COVID vaccine. COVID vaccines began being administered in Peru in Spring of 2021 according to the age of recipient and their health condition. Many of the women of Pushaq Warmi who were over the age of 50 were vaccinated in the first few months the vaccine was offered to the public; yet, my RA, a healthy young male in his 20s, was eligible for the vaccine far later in the year. What's more, vaccinations being offered in the urban cities of Peru left those living in rural areas the unable to receive one, especially considering how costly they were and the transportation needed to travel to those urban areas.

Being vaccinated also did not guarantee safety around those who chose to not get vaccinated and did not follow proper safety measures against COVID. Many people in Chimbote, often the youth, disregarded the government-mandated quarantine and had large parties and gatherings and did not mask up. During the height of the pandemic, Pushaq Warmi did not meet as a group and all group business was delayed indefinitely. When the women felt it was safe enough, the three workshops were individually scheduled and held in the latter half of the year. From June through August, I met virtually with the RA and study participants on a consistent basis and as needed. During these meetings, re-training on Photovoice took place, along with discussion on time management skills and group dynamics. As Campbell (2008) outlines,

The usual hero adventure begins with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels there is something lacking in the normal experience available or permitted to the members of society. The person then takes off on a series of adventures beyond the ordinary, either to recover what has been lost or to discover some life-giving elixir. It's usually a cycle, a coming and a returning.

### ***Step 3: Unfamiliar Situations***

In this stage of the hero's journey the hero enters an unfamiliar situation. The characters find themselves in an altogether new environment in this next part of Harmon's story circle. The

narrative's central conflict is introduced here. The protagonists make progress toward their objectives, but they frequently encounter barriers caused by both internal and external factors. For this section, I chose to pair entering an unfamiliar situation with learning from others. The women's group gained a lot of knowledge by putting themselves in new situations and by being receptive to ideas and individuals they had never encountered before. For study participants, entering areas like Cascajal allowed them to see the reality of what life was like for women in rural areas. Many of these observations were captured in the photographs the women took during the workshops. In one of the photographs used for the exhibit there was a woman selling breakfast, a mother who, along with her children, had been abandoned by her husband 15 days before the pandemic.

Her story made an impact on one of the participants, P1, who got relatively close to her:

She was left with five children, so, she tells me. I told her: How did you do, mother, so that you can get out of that pain, of that, of that anguish that your children did not have what to eat? She tells me, do you know what she tells me? "I first wanted to kill myself with my children. But something told me 'No, don't do it, because you are brave.' So, you know what I did?" . . . Here on the corner of the school, she told me: "Madam, I came and found myself a stool with a lot of bags, and I brought my bread, my thermos, and I started selling. And a person out there came and said to me: Do you need a cart to sell breakfast? Sir, if you give me a gift, it will be welcome, because I cannot pay. I have five children to educate, five children who have to eat. And that's where I started..." So I came to the conclusion that in reality we women must be brave, we must be communicative, we must listen to people who selflessly wanted to help us, right? And we create an idea of working, an idea of getting ahead, that nothing is impossible in this life.

P1, who visited this woman every morning, took away from this encounter that the woman, despite all her obstacles, "was capable of getting ahead."



**Figure 22**

*Enterprising Women Sell Breakfast Off a Mototaxi*



The women of Pushaq Warmi were surprised with the level of interest and commitment their workshop attendees had towards the training, and documented it in the photos. P4 observed how she was impressed with the strength of the mothers who participated in the workshops:

One photo was of a mother of a family with her children, right? Despite the difficulties that she had no one with whom to leave her children at home, since she wanted to learn,

she had to take her children to the training, and listen to the talks with them. I was quite impressed because imagine, a mother who, despite the fact that she had this difficulty, wanting to go, she had to choose, right?

Mothers attending the workshops with their children appeared to be a common occurrence, and only served to enlighten Pushaq Warmi, and show the value they were contributing to the needs of the communities with their training workshops. P2 noted this with the photo of a mother breastfeeding one of her daughters during a workshop:

All three were girls. She had no shame or anything, in the middle of the meeting she took her breast out and breastfed her baby in public. She gave the baby her breast, while listening to the meeting with interest. She participated, she carried her baby during the exercises as well, and in the educational activities, right? With her girls there, she shared with them. Everything was fine, that is, she wasn't bored with anything. She was happy, and we could see the happiness on her face.

Although breastfeeding in public in Peru is a relatively common occurrence, the fact that the young mother decided to bring her three children to the workshops and breastfeed during the training showed the women leading the workshops how important others felt their presence was. P2 pointed out that the mother of the three girls had no one to leave them home with and, yet still chose to participate in the workshops. During their trips to the workshop sites, the group also took photographs of what appealed to them in the area. These photos showed the ways that the inhabitants of the areas adapted to the challenges of their environment. A photo P5 shared was of a mother of five children selling tamales:

She is a single mother and lives in human settlements in Cuatro Esteras. She is really fulfilling her role as a mother, a role as an entrepreneur and she is also fulfilling the responsibility of both, as a mother and as, I am not saying this as a father, but the responsibility of the father as well. He has abandoned those children.

This observation enlightened the study participant, revealing how important it was that the group stayed committed to their cause:

We must reach those types of people, to make them understand that things have changed and are no longer the old times, in which the woman has to be waiting for the man to arrive with the money or suffering family violence.

Amidst the challenges of entering the unfamiliar, there were triumphs. In the exchanges between my study participants and RA, he picked up on the greatest reward:

Getting to these rural areas could be very hard and difficult and also the people there, sometimes they might be like not so open to it, but it was very surprising for all of the ladies. I wish I was there; I wish I could experience that in person. But most of the ladies, agreed that all these people were so open, they were willing to learn and participate...

#### ***Step 4: Adapting to Situations***

In this part of the narration, the character must realize that the obstacles they face are multifaceted, and that to fulfill his or her desires or goals, he or she must adapt and overcome all challenges. This may result in further barriers and brings the storyline to its climax. In this section, I drew a connection between adapting to the situation and the relevant theme of working together. With the collective goal in mind, the study participants were able to adapt effectively by working together as a team to confront the challenges brought about by the project. Each member had a designated role and responsibility during the workshops, which empowered them to perform their best. As the president of the group, P3's duty was to present the group and greet, motivate, and make the workshop attendees comfortable and cared for. In the interview, she exclaimed that her work with women's empowerment carried her through:

It gives me a lot of energy, it gives me vitality, and it is because of my excerpt from being a teacher, it puts me in a mood that is to train, to be explaining, motivating, and well, um...I feel very well, I am very motivated, I love my job!

The eldest of the group, she coined the motto, "Women, cry for freedom" to express the warrior strength of all Peruvian women. She imparted her wisdom to others and shared these sentiments in her interview:

In my past times, we old women actually went out through so many streets to tell women that they should not depend on a man, because they have as much strength, as much energy as a man. Although we are still marginalized by society . . . this is our energy, our character, our emotion of taking so many abandoned women, so many raped women, so many widowed women, alone, that they too can go well, that they can have one, a worthy life.

The different tasks allowed each woman to recognize the training and skillset of the others. For example, P5, the nurse with over 40 years of experience, took charge of performing and training the workshop attendees on breathing and relaxation techniques for mental health, and respiratory exercises sufferers of Covid carried out through recovery. After the training, the other women in Pushaq Warmi gave P5 praise and expressed their own interest in her work: “I like that the girls from my group were surprised. They told me: “Oh, we didn’t know this part of your work, I like it!” P2 told her: “Oh, I didn't know, if I had known, I would have gone to your house so you could teach me the exercises after COVID that you gave here!” P5, in the interview, proceeded to cover the La Palmo Therapy, a breathing regime for post-COVID patients. P1 implemented the educational activities during the workshops.

P6, the psychologist, helped the attendees understand disorders that have increased in the pandemic, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and grief; their different concepts; and how to manage these. P6 introduced psychotherapeutic techniques, such as roleplay and dance therapy. She explained to the women attendees: “Dancing is therapeutic, right? There is wellness which produces hormones of happiness. This is responsible for eliminating pain, giving us emotional balance, strengthening self-esteem; so, many benefits.”

**Figure 23***Demonstrating Post COVID Therapy****Step 5: Fulfill Desire (Relevant Theme: Impact on Community)***

Step Five's part in the story circle is appropriately titled "fulfilling the desire," since this is when the protagonist discovers what he or she desires and experiences success. And at this point, the character finds there is a bit more to achieving the desire than they imagined, whether in terms of it not being precisely what they wanted or imagined. The protagonists may have discovered a solution, but new issues arise. I matched the step of fulfilling desire with the relevant theme of raising community awareness. The women's organization saw that, via the

workshops and the community exhibit, they were raising the awareness of community members and gaining their attention. This was done in the hopes that community members would learn more about women's empowerment and mental health. With this came additional developments that the women had not foreseen. The members of Pushaq Warmi were surprised by their experiences during the workshops and the community's favorable response to their presence in the areas, especially the men who were not typical workshop attendees. One study participant, P4, mentioned how they were asked to return to continue training in the area:

The men were also interested and asked us if we could go and train them, right? Train them, the adults, and also the young people. This was in Cascajal. And the young, right? Because there are very few institutions to train them, as people say. And they asked us to come back. In other words, in those rural areas people are quite interested, interested in learning.

In response to my asking in the interview how P1 felt the Photovoice project had been directed to the problems and needs of the community, she asserted:

When I asked the questions, we realized they had come with a different mentality, and when they listened to everything we explained to them, then they left with a different spirit, with a different mentality, with a different decision to do better; that's what we've seen.

Given the very traditional archaic views in Peru that women are incapable of being more than wives or mothers, any act uncharacteristic of this, whether it be the women of Pushaq Warmi entering a rural community to lead educational workshops for other women, or a woman walking miles away from her settlement to join, was a self-affirming act. In the interview with my RA, he also remarked how much of an impact the work Pushaq Warmi had on the areas they served: "[this project] reaches the needs and necessities of the people, and how they identify, and they internalize this (sic) whole workshops."

***Step 6: Paying a Price (Relevant Theme: Goals and Motives)***

In this section of the story, the main character pays a high price for what they want and was able to achieve previously. This cost places the character in a certain position, leading up to the story's climactic conclusion. This establishes a new significant need for the character, even if it contradicts what the character previously desired. It is here that I have made a connection between the price paid for the work the women did and how it tied in with their professional goals and motives. As women, wives, professionals, entrepreneurs, and social advocates the participants in the study wore many hats. The investment they made as a group working on the Photovoice project has taken time and energy away from their friends, husbands, and families, and even time they could have spent taking care of themselves. In her interview, P1 expressed that her mother taught her "to be strong, to be generous, to be good, to be selfless." She understood that women in better positions needed to support those in need, even if the cost was high. The women saw themselves in those they reached. With some coming from backgrounds of domestic abuse, they fully understood what little help was offered to them by their government and in a society where partner violence was the norm. Most of the rural women who attended the workshops were not familiar with depression, anxiety, or the importance of taking care of one's mental health, prior to their conversations with Pushaq Warmi. These issues were not discussed in schools or out in the open. Thus, the women were compelled to remain silent about their struggles. But also, there were bigger problems they faced hunger, for one. Many women, especially in rural areas, were focused on survival and ensuring their children had their basic needs met day to day. This was represented in the photos showing women selling food on the street, washing clothes in contaminated water, and bringing their children with them to the workshops because they had little to no help at home. There were quite a few single mothers who

attended; they were the providers as well as caretakers of their families. My study participants were impressed with the strength and doggedness of the women they encountered during the workshops. P2 pointed out that in Peru women who work outside of the home do so out of necessity and to support their families, with many homes lacking a husband or father. Later in the interview, P2 articulated that it took courage for women to leave the house to work. There also existed the risks of implementing a project during a pandemic. According to my RA, the project taking place during the COVID outbreak only reinforced people's motivation to learn:

Because not only the risks the people are taking to . . . make this happen, but also because the people [were] also willing to learn and attending these meetings . . . I don't know, everything is very valuable because of that, and it makes you feel appreciated because people are still . . . Even though they are running the risks of getting infected or something like that, and they would still go and attend, because they want to learn. That shows and demonstrates how people of these places, of these rural areas, are willing to learn more, continuing to get like an education somehow, do you know, and improving their knowledge. So, that's really good, that's very valuable. It makes us all, not only the ladies or you, it makes us all feel appreciated.

### **Resolution (Act III)**

#### ***Step 7: Return to a Familiar Situation***

In this seventh phase of the story cycle, the character returns to where the hero began, armed with new knowledge and abilities and perhaps a deeper sense of purpose. These are the tools that the character discovers assist them in confronting the story's climactic battle. I connected the theme of educating others to the return to the ordinary world. Pushaq Warmi wanted to spread awareness on the issues that women and girls in their community and in surrounding areas were confronted with daily. The more education and awareness there existed, the less stigma surrounding mental health issues and domestic and sexualized violence. If groups of women, like Pushaq Warmi, do not rise up and take a stand against such issues. then the cycle of oppression will continue. With the community exhibition in Plaza de Armas in Nuevo



Chimbote, my study participants were able to reach the public, display their work, and advocate for all those other women who needed education and support.

***Step 8: Having Changed***

Finally, the eighth step of Dan Harmon's story circle, "Having Changed," I paired with the theme of empowerment. This is the story's final climax, in which the character applies all they have gained and learned from this journey to attain their ultimate objective. The protagonist confronts the problem and discovers their true nature. Not only has the main character changed their own life, but they have also impacted the world around them. In this study, each participant felt her own sense of empowerment in providing education and training to women and their families. The veracity of this claim was supported by P3 in her statement:

The most interesting thing about this project is that we have been able to participate in training for the women, not from the city, but from the surrounding areas; here we call it Young Villages, and also from the agricultural community of Cascajal. That empowers us, and that is our mission.

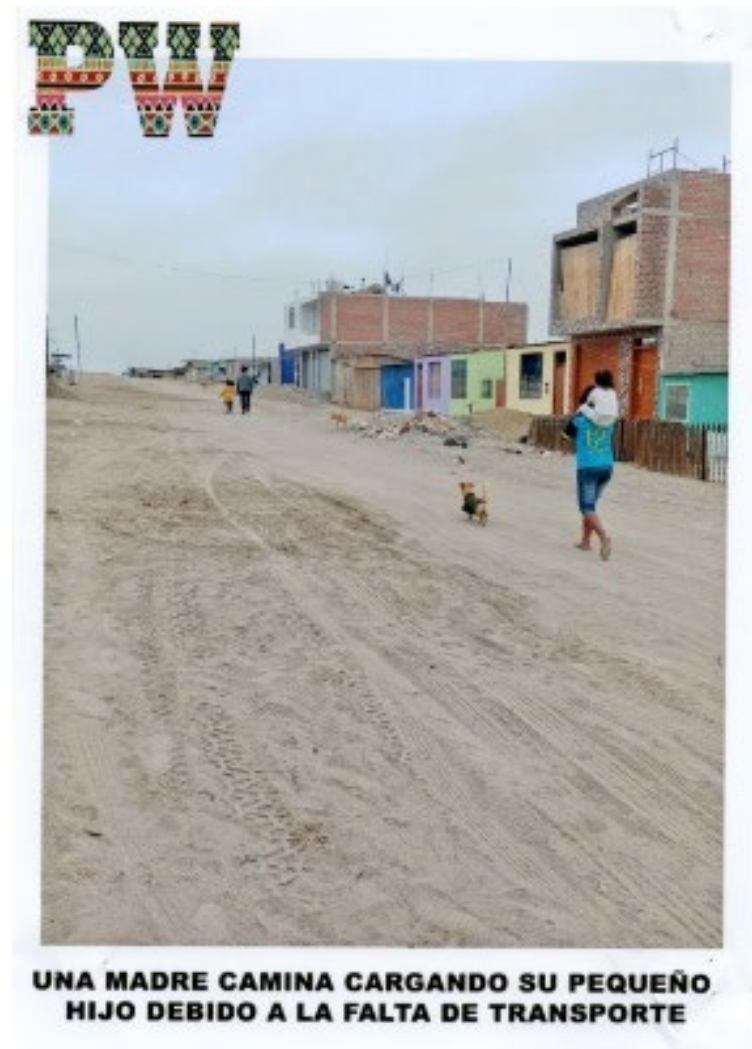
This mission of teaching women self-empowerment was the backbone of the group and kept it moving forward. When inquiring about the desired direction for the group, P3 expressed with enthusiasm:

I think we have to work empowerment because it is very important for women if they manage to empower themselves, but what they cannot do is break the chain of violence. We still must learn to work on the issue of emotional dependency, it seems to me.

The women's experiences in this project reaffirmed what their training workshops should focus on. Most of the women in the group felt, in Peru, that women's dependency on men discouraged women from learning and evolving for themselves (Figure 24). P3 mentioned how she wanted the group to continue to offer women "education in order for women to have another type, another mentality, that they are not looking for a man for economic support." A significant

**Figure 24**

*Mother Carries Son, Due to Lack of Transportation*



factor in the growth and leadership of the women's group has been the lessons they took from the first project, and the decisions they collectively made to raise their satisfaction with the second project. With the facilitation of the first project, the women felt that they did not have ownership and that they lacked the freedom to make executive decisions. Pushaq Warmi felt the first project was experimental, where they were just getting acquainted with the Photovoice technique and were under my entire direction. This was a stark contrast from the second project, where the women entirely took ownership of the project at every level, from development to

execution. Discussing the divergent experiences with the two projects, P2 pointed out that the women were a bit removed from the first project:

It has not been like now that we walked it, we have searched for it . . . We have taken the photo, we have had to make the summary, we have had to expose it ourselves . . . To say, now they have left us alone there, to see if we do a good job or not.

This level of autonomy and independent decision-making allowed individuals to recognize their own abilities. My RA was able to substantiate the level of autonomy the Pushaq Warmi women gained during the project:

In my opinion I think this time the ladies, all of them agreed with the same answer and they felt more entitled, and they feel like ownership in the project. So, they feel like... The responsibility was in their hands, you know? Maybe in the first project they were expecting you to help, or you to conduct or guide them. But this time they were all independent. And there is something that has been very different, you know? Like independency and feeling free to deal or to conduct the workshops and the photo and the photo exhibit the way they wanted.

## **Findings**

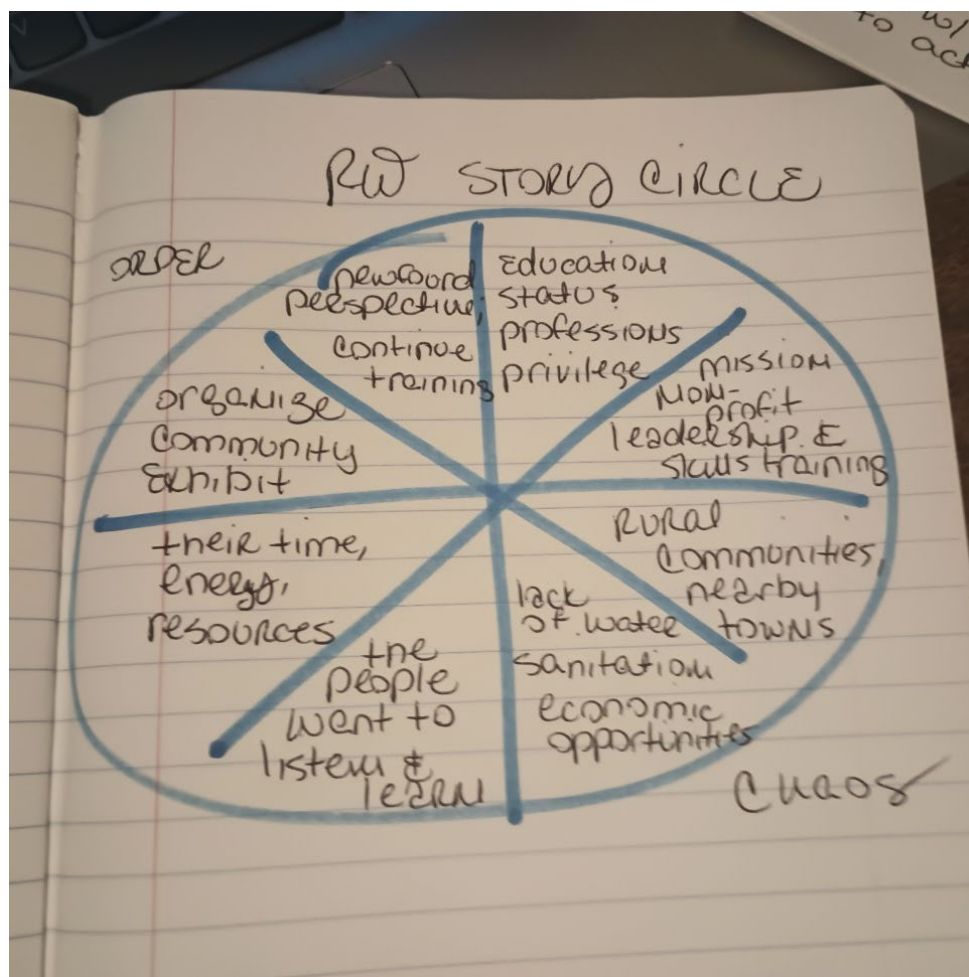
The significant themes emerging from the data were Goals and Motives; Motivate, Inspire, and Share Knowledge; Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness; Work as a Team; and Impact on Community (Table 8). The themes developed into findings.

Participants in this ISL Photovoice project went through a transformative change that nurtured five senses leading towards individual and community empowerment. This empowerment was because of the participants' capacity building, based on professional goals/community motives; purpose through motivation, inspiration, and knowledge-sharing; self-development and awareness through exposure to service-oriented projects; collaboration stemming from group work; and building self-esteem and reinvigorating a commitment to social advocacy and community impact through service work. My work with the study participants in an ISL project where they had ownership and control allowed community voices to be heard.

Additionally, the project's focus on the capacity development of the women demonstrated its potential for sustainability. The knowledge and skills that the study participants learned on Photovoice will continue to educate and train different communities. This transfer of knowledge also provided the opportunity for the women to train other women's groups on Photovoice, so those groups may bring attention to issues in their communities and help respond to/address them. Finally, my work and relationship with the women's group has had a powerful and lasting effect on us all.

**Figure 25**

*Pushaq Warmi's Story Circle*



### ***Finding 1: Goals and Motives***

The service-learning project guided by the professional goals and motives of the study participants promoted capacity building. While the women of Pushaq Warmi expressed their different interests and roles in the Photovoice project, their collective work during the workshops and community exhibition not only contributed to the success of the project, but their separate professional goals and motives were a contributing factor to that success. Each of my study participants reported having their own goals and motivations for participating in the project. Many of their motivations aligned with their professions, as was the case with those who were educators or in the medical field. Besides sharing knowledge with others, another goal of the women was learning from the community themselves. In this study, my participants emphasized their continued interest in learning and self-improvement.

**Table 8**

#### *Findings Chart*

Theme	Finding
Goals & Motives	Finding #1- Capacity building based on the professional goals & community motives of the study participants was fostered by the ISL Photovoice project.
Motivate, Inspire, & Share Knowledge	Finding #2- The ability to motivate, inspire, and share knowledge with other members of the community underlined the study participants' purpose.
Expand Learning & Cultural Awareness	Finding #3- The study participants' learning and cultural awareness were broadened through a service project that introduced them to other communities, nurturing self-development.
Work as a Team	Finding #4- Working as a team strengthened and cultivated the collaborative spirit of the study participants.
Impact on Community	Finding #5- The study participants being able to impact the community through a service-learning project boosted their self-worth and reinvigorated their commitment to social advocacy.

***Finding 2: Motivate, Inspire, and Share Knowledge***

The ability to motivate, inspire, and share knowledge with other members of the community yielded a sense of purpose in study participants. Study participants believed that being a source of learning and encouragement to other women helped them recognize their own value. It was critical for the women to demonstrate to others that they were strong and capable of becoming their own source of empowerment. Many of the women in these places were dealing with mental health concerns, not just because of the pandemic and serious domestic issues, but also because of having to raise children alone or lacking financial stability or economic independence. Research participants were able to convey to the women that they did not require the presence of a man in their life and that they could support their own families. They urged the women to keep learning and training to become self-sufficient and to work through their despair, anxiety, and stress to foster a more positive well-being. During the workshops, Pushaq Warmi members explained to their female audience how they might learn and gain the skills needed to become entrepreneurs. Being able to be a source of inspiration and strength for other women empowered my female research participants in turn. The women taking ownership of the project and being involved in every aspect of the planning and execution process demonstrated that they could complete every task they set out to complete, achieve their own objectives, and fulfill their duties. Research participants considered the project as valuable to their group's work and mission. The women were able to not only learn Photovoice, but also use it in their trainings and workshops to reach different communities. The fact that the women documented their work by taking pictures of what was striking to them and then putting those pictures together as a group to tell a story to the public highlighted the significance of their work and the ways in which they

could document it to demonstrate the realities of marginalized communities while simultaneously raising awareness of serious challenges.

***Finding 3: Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness***

The service project exposed study participants to different regions, which allowed them to expand their individual learning and cultural awareness encouraging self-development. With the main objective of the project and the mission of the women traveling out into other communities to teach others, research participants were unaware of how much their own learning and knowledge of other groups would be boosted. Pushaq Warmi, for example, had never gone to Cascajal or “Young Villages,” and seeing how the inhabitants in those villages lived was an eye-opening experience for them. They were surprised at how well the group was greeted in these locations, as well as how many women indicated an interest and desire to learn. They were also able to affirm which topics and training needed to be prioritized. For example, in Cascajal, there was a strong need for topics such as child abuse prevention and sexual education, as both were grave concerns in rural and isolated locations.

There was an emotional dependency on men among the female population, making it difficult to break the familial chain of domestic violence. With the increased interest of men in the work of the group, and the participation of men in their workshops, the organization saw the need for co-ed education and training on domestic issues and mental health. Many of the attendees struggled to move forward during the pandemic, and their interest in the workshops demonstrated to research participants that the work of the women’s organization was valuable in these communities. Other community problems, such as a lack of adequate water supply and good sanitation, were also brought to the attention of several research participants. They were able to reach more remote regions and rural areas where they saw the needs of others. Through

the operation of this project, the group was able to realize that they were capable of strong leadership and of working together, despite their differences. The fact that the training and workshops were centered on mental health also aided the group's learning, since several of the participants admitted to not completely understanding what mental health was prior to the project. This lack of knowledge stemmed from the fact that mental health is not regarded as important in their community, and therefore is frequently ignored. To educate other women, some of my study participants had to first learn. With some of their workshop attendees, Andean women, making the journey to participate in the workshops, research participants documented and learned how capable women were even in adversity.

The women also understood that, with the information and experience gained from the first project, they could apply what they had learned to improve the second. They considered the first project as beneficial in this regard. Because the group learned what did not work in the first project, they were able to apply this knowledge to the second project to produce an exhibition of their work that they were proud of. With their training, the group was able to change women's mindsets and the way they perceived themselves. For Pushaq Warmi, knowing how much positive influence their work had on others strengthened their group's image and acted as a form of empowerment. Knowing that the group's work was acknowledged and accepted in the community boosted their confidence in themselves and their collaborative efforts. Pushaq Warmi was empowered by teaching people how to cope and deal with family crises and the importance of taking care of one's mental health. The group also increased its self-confidence and capacity to take decisive action to complete a project effectively.



***Finding 4: Work as a Team***

Study participants' capacity to work as a team on a service project nurtured a collaborative spirit and reinforced a shared purpose within the group. Participants said that it was important for them to have a sense of unity and to be able to operate well as a group. The goal of the group's members was to educate other women on mental health, and they all committed themselves to accomplish this goal together. The women were able to perform this task with relatively few challenges, since they were able to coordinate their efforts quite effectively. Pushaq Warmi was quite pleased with the fact that they had been able to successfully unite as friends and partners in order to achieve their goals of reaching three different communities. The members of the group discovered, as a result of the project, that their ability to collaborate had increased. The women were able to inspire and encourage one another, as well as assist and learn from one another.

Prior to beginning work on the second project, Pushaq Warmi conducted an analysis of the previous project to determine what aspects required change and modifications. They realized as a group the shortcomings that they had created in the previous project, as well as the reasons why they were dissatisfied with the material and the expectations that they had set for themselves. Pushaq Warmi was able to collaborate on a plan for this second project and better prepare themselves for it as a result. The members of the group not only supported and encouraged one another, but they also gained a better understanding of the varied work that each of their colleagues did. Therefore, not only did the women benefit from reaching out to communities that are often overlooked and imparting the information and skills that the people in these areas do not hold, but also, they gained a deeper understanding of each other and their own unique capabilities. During the workshops, each of my study participants had specific duties and

expectations based on their expertise, skills, and ways in which they could contribute most effectively. The collaboration and camaraderie of Pushaq Warmi were critical to the success of this initiative. The greater their confidence in themselves and their group, the greater their ability to assist and inspire women in neighboring communities. Individual members of the group have not always seen eye to eye because it was in their nature to each take a strong leadership position, but each of the women learned and understood their role in the project and how to best maximize their personal strengths and contribute to the project's overall success. In addition, the group took complete ownership of the project. These factors resulted in their individual and collective empowerment.

***Finding 5: Impact on Community***

Study participants being able to impact the community through a service-learning project boosted their self-worth and reinvigorated their commitment to social advocacy. There were several ways in which this project affected the community. First, the goal of the study participants was to reach as many women as they could with knowledge, skills, and encouragement in the pursuit of education and women's empowerment. The group encouraged women in these areas to work on their self-esteem and their confidence to care for themselves and their families, emphasizing that they had the same strength and energy as a man. The women who attended the sessions left with newfound trust in their abilities, awareness of mental health, and a renewed sense of purpose. They were eager to learn and excited to discover that the participants in the study were interested in them and invested in their learning. Those from the communities who participated in the trainings expressed their dismay that few organizations took the effort to work in the area the way that Pushaq Warmi did. No one told the residents in these communities that they were important and deserving, and this group delivered these sentiments

to them in their workshops. Participants in the study were able to observe how concerned parents were for their children's education and future. The communities expressed a desire to have the group return and continue the training and workshops, since these topics were vital in these communities but received little attention. Pushaq Warmi's care and support, coupled with their training and education, empowered the women of these areas. The knowledge of the group's influence in the different communities also empowered the study participants. When a community is actively involved in a project, ISL may demonstrate how this reciprocal cycle of empowerment works.

John Mezirow (2006) defines transformative learning "as the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) -sets of assumption and expectation- to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change" (p. 92). During the time between the initial and subsequent Photovoice projects, Pushaq Warmi members underwent transformative learning processes in two fundamental aspects. Firstly, they successfully adapted and applied a method they were previously introduced to and trained in, tailoring it to their specific objectives and meeting their anticipated results. Secondly, the women developed a heightened consciousness regarding the diverse range of issues and obstacles prevalent in rural and remote regions of Peru, which are not as extensive in their own communities. During the study, the women went through several stages that required them to reflect on their experiences. Critical reflection, or critical self-reflection, on assumptions and critical dialogue, in which the learner affirms best judgment, are two essential components of transformational learning (Mezirow, 2006). The interviews I had with the women in both projects, as well as the meetings I had with the members, as well as the meetings they

held inside their own group, were the most significant instances in which I was able to observe this.

### **Summary**

This qualitative study sought to understand the viewpoints of an international group engaging in a Photovoice service-learning project. Participants were members of a Peruvian women's group promoting social entrepreneurship. After three mental health workshops and a Photovoice community exhibit, each participant participated in two interviews. The first interview was informal and lasted around one hour; the questions revolved around the participant's experiences participating in two Photovoice projects and the differences between these. The second interview, which lasted 15 minutes, was performed for member verification once research participants received and reviewed their transcribed interviews. Utilizing Dan Harmon's Story Circle for its ease in demonstrating the cyclical journey of my research participants, I identified the themes that led to the transformative change of Pushaq Warmi and then constructed a narrative of their experiences in an ISL Photovoice project. The eight steps of Dan Harmon's cyclical journey were as follows: In A Zone of Comfort; They Desire Something; Enter an Unfamiliar Situation; Adapt to That Situation; Get What They Desired; Pay A Heavy Price; A Return to Their Familiar Situation; and They Have Overall Changed. The five themes that emerged from the study were Goals and Motives; Motivate, Inspire, and Share Knowledge; Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness; Work as a Team; and Impact on Community.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This study built upon my personal involvement as a doctoral student in three short immersion trips to Peru organized by WGC. This qualitative study aimed to investigate the perceptions of an international women's group in Chimbote, Peru, regarding an ISL Photovoice project. Seven participants, including six members of Pushaq Warmi, a women's group in Chimbote, Peru, and one RA from Chimbote, were asked 12 open-ended interview questions.

The study comprised two research questions:

- Research Question 1: What is the process of empowerment that the women's group, Pushaq Warmi, underwent following an ISL Photovoice project in Chimbote, Peru?
- Research Question 2: What were their perceptions of the project?

Five major themes emerged during data analysis to help answer the research questions.

These themes emphasized what the group of women found significant to their experiences: Goals and Motives; Motivate, Inspire, and Share Knowledge; Expand Learning and Cultural Awareness; Work as a Team; and Impact on Community. This chapter presents an interpretation of the study's findings through presenting a succinct overview of Pushaq Warmi's participation in the Photovoice study using elements of the hero's journey, a critical analysis of ISL based on the principles of Etting's Process of Empowerment Model, a discussion of its limitations, suggestions for future research, and the implications of the study. The findings highlight the importance of ISL students and volunteers working with the communities of their service sites to build relationships based on mutual trust and respect. These connections will aid in the development of service-learning programs. Communication and strong teamwork are the foundations of any successful ISL endeavor. ISL must pay more attention to the voices, needs,

and concerns of global communities. To promote and maintain initiatives, such activities require mutual learning, common interests, and collaborative planning among all partners.

### **The Hero's Journey and its Application to the Findings**

Utilizing Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey and Dan Harmon's Story Circle as frameworks, this study aimed to elucidate the transformative journey of the study participants. Each of these two models has distinct phases that were relevant to the experiences of Pushaq Warmi. ISL initiatives can engender a transformative process, not only for participating students and faculty, but also for the community members with whom they collaborate. This concept is related to Kolb's (1984) model of EL, which posits that knowledge acquisition is influenced or guided by personal experience. The study employed Photovoice as a participatory research method to facilitate greater agency and leadership among the women's group involved in the project. The study results indicate that service-learning initiatives can promote greater engagement and empowerment among individuals in global communities through various means, such as capacity building aligned with professional objectives or community aspirations, motivation, and inspiration. Service-learning initiatives are driven by shared knowledge, self-awareness, and growth, all of which are facilitated by service-oriented projects, collaborative efforts resulting from group work, and enhanced self-esteem and renewed commitment to social advocacy through community impact.

The critical reflection at the heart of service-learning allowed the Pushaq Warmi women to explore the best methods for them at any stage along their journey. According to Freire (1970), for education to be empowering, the educator must not only be democratic, but also develop a transformative connection with the students, students and their development as learners, and students and society. I supported the women's group in facilitating their own

learning by serving as their guide and teacher. However, it was the women's desire for knowledge and their mission to educate that drove their progress. The women are utilizing their organization to foster awareness regarding oppressive and concerning issues prevalent within their society, while concurrently engaging in the education of fellow women and communities. Pushaq Warmi has what Freire calls conscientization. Freire defined conscientization as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions—developing a critical awareness—so that individuals can take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1970, p. 19). The capacity of women to engage in reflection and self-analysis during their experiences in a service-learning project and develop a broader awareness of their society, as well as their ability to utilize their own voices and mobilize their organization to offer support to individuals within these communities, promoted empowerment among the women.

In the next section, I use distinct stages of the hero's journey to demonstrate how the art of storytelling can chronicle the growth and development of participants in a global service-oriented learning initiative, in this case a Photovoice project, and present the transformative experience of the women's group, Pushaq Warmi, along with some insights of my own journey.

### ***The Ordinary World***

Like the first stage of the hero's journey, where the hero in his natural surroundings, or everyday life, at the beginning of every ISL project are young eager students who are excited about the prospect of international travel and want to expand their learning and self-growth by engaging and working with diverse groups from unfamiliar cultures. Hero stories about adventure and excitement sometimes involve the main character facing an insurmountable challenge or entering an unfamiliar environment. Students about to embark on a service are met with fear, trepidation, and anxiety because they are going into the unknown. They become the

protagonist in their everyday life stories. At the same time, the community members, being main characters in their own everyday life stories, are also constructing their own narratives.

There were multiple stories that were part of the larger narrative of my study. As the researcher, I had my story of being a doctoral student undertaking the current investigation for my dissertation. The study participants, the members of Pushaq Warmi, had their own individual stories of working towards advocating for all other women in their country. It is important, within service-learning projects, that the stories of the international communities are heard and validated. The heroines and key protagonists of this narrative were the Pushaq Warmi women. In this study, we see the women in their everyday reality, before starting on this journey or opportunity. The group's nurse was relentlessly helping COVID patients, both young and elderly, by working 12-hour shifts or longer at a nearby clinic in Chimbote. An anxious and depressed mental health patient was being treated by the psychologist at her office. The primary school teacher was teaching the children in her class the alphabet and numbers while singing and dancing with them. The women's group's mission was to support those who needed it most, the women of the mountains, those who live on the outskirts of cities and towns, those who feel tired, defeated, and useless, and continue to wake up every day to take care of their families with a brave face because they have no other choice. The participants of this study saw themselves in these other women who went about their days caring for their family and community, often at the sacrifice of caring for themselves. Pushaq Warmi's work was driven by their own objectives and motivations. They aimed to help women who had endured domestic violence and were struggling with self-image and mental health issues while raising their children and managing their homes. The group perceived the world around them to be indifferent to their needs and concerns, and



they wished to leverage their education and voices to support those they saw in situations with even fewer opportunities and advantages.

### *Call to Adventure*

The hero is met with a challenge, adventure, or dilemma in the second stage. The student's call is the service trip itself; the mission behind most service-learning trips is to bring education, skills, training, and resources to international communities that the communities would otherwise not have access to.

The problem for the female participants of this study was societal and cultural. It dated back hundreds of years to the suppression of women. Peruvian women do not have as many options to pursue education or gain employment outside the home, as they live in a male-dominated culture with highly conventional, antiquated attitudes to girls and women. Domestic violence is a major issue in Peru, yet despite its prevalence and pervasiveness, it is rarely discussed and is not given much attention. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of women, who have been confronted with a range of challenges, including stress, emotional and physical trauma, bereavement, and low self-esteem. These pre-existing mental health issues have been further exacerbated by the pandemic's impact on isolation and financial difficulties. In this study, the women's organization committed itself to working on eradicating and increasing awareness of this problem. When I initially started working with the women, I saw that their enthusiasm and energy were contagious. I felt a tremendous connection to them, as if they were my own relatives—my aunts and female cousins. They did not regard me as an outsider, but rather encouraged, supported, and spent their time and energy on the value of my work, aware and grateful that I had done the same for them. I wanted to keep working with them because I believed in them, and after witnessing firsthand the

neighborhoods and areas where they lived and worked, I knew what they were up against, so I wanted to help them as much as I could. The women encountered several challenges in carrying on with their work. Not only did the women lack the funds and supplies required for these workshops, but they also had to consider transportation, access to these regions, the location of the workshops, and if they would be approved by governmental officials.

### ***Refusal of the Call***

This stage of the hero's journey is referred to as a refusal of the call, and at this point in the narrative, the hero is faced with a large task in the unknown. Because of fear or a conflict of interest, the main protagonists are hesitant to start on this adventure.

In my own experiences on service trips before this study, I would go back and forth with myself weighing the pros and cons of my participation on a trip. My doubt was usually confined to unwarranted fear of being in an entirely foreign environment or traveling outside of the country. Fortunately, the pros of participating in an international service trip always outweighed the cons. I would see different places, meet different people, learn about different cultures, and experience different ways of life.

International service is a rich and rewarding experience that not everyone can take advantage of. Community members might experience hesitation in working with American students on service projects. Some members of Pushaq Warmi refused to engage in the research for reasons unknown to me, while others were enthusiastic and invested from the start. The president of the group at first declined to participate in my study, before the women signed the consent paperwork for the IRB. She didn't understand my motivations for the project and why I wanted to work with them. She was also unsure whether I was still a member of WGC and whether I was working for the organization. Fortunately, she provided her approval and blessing

for the group to start on the project after speaking with another group member. I do not wish to presume why half of the women's group did not want to participate in the project, other than the fact that each study participant committed a great deal of time and effort over the last couple of years. During a COVID outbreak, when sickness was a major issue, I can understand the desire to prioritize the health and safety of oneself and one's family.

### ***Hero is Encouraged by the Wise Old Man or Woman***

During this stage of the journey, the hero is frequently directed or led by a mentor or teacher, a person who can provide them with instruction, supplies, or the abilities they require. This individual provides just enough assistance to encourage the hero to continue their adventure and confront the unknown on their own.

During my doctoral studies and participation on WGC's immersion trips, I had several mentors who were instrumental in my learning process. UIW faculty, staff, and offices, the staff at WGC, and the Sisters of Charity offered me guidance, support, and encouragement throughout my time as a PhD student and in my active involvement with immersion trips. Having so many strong and supportive mentors taught me how to become one. I now model all of them. I acted as the women's mentor for the Photovoice project. As their mentor, I taught the women how to use the Photovoice method and supplied them with the tools and resources they needed to carry out the workshops and public exhibit. The extent of my engagement with the project was limited to this. In the end, the women carried out and finished the project on their own. Beginning in the summer of 2021, I met regularly with the women remotely over the course of several months. During this time, we discussed everything from project planning to the status of COVID to Photovoice, as well as other skills they would want, such as time management and

teamwork. Additionally, we discussed what the women in their communities and neighboring regions truly needed at the time.

### ***Crossing the Threshold***

The hero encounters trials, makes required sacrifices, and is presented with a final test in the unknown realm. The protagonist enters the story's unfamiliar world for the first time in this part of the journey.

From the vantage point of a student on a service trip, the trials can be numerous. I have had my own share of experiences on service trips where a language or cultural barrier gave me pause, especially with respect to the first Photovoice project. As a student, you must be willing and prepared to sacrifice your time, energy, and resources if you are to participate in an international-service-learning project. For the women in this study, this was the physical act of traveling to both familiar areas and those they had never been to previously. New environments and experiences exposed them to different concerns, different attitudes, and different ways of life.

### ***Tests, Allies, and Enemies***

The hero is confronted with trials, allies, and foes that cause conflict or provide obstacles at this stage. The hero is required to create both allies and foes in this new world, as well as complete specific tests and overcome obstacles as part of his or her training.

The final test, as a student, was the act of carrying out an ISL project. My study participants expressed that their biggest physical challenge was transportation to more remote areas. Most of the public that they encountered appreciated their presence in their communities, were interested in their work, and were grateful for them taking the time to teach them. The adversaries here would be the poor infrastructure of these regions and the absence of necessary

resources and government or political attention. Some of the women were unaware of how serious issues like lack of clean water were in some areas. The more study participants learned about these communities, the more they recognized how much need there was for education and support. They also learned how much they could offer others.

### ***The Ordeal***

In this scenario, the protagonist arrives at the innermost cave. The hero reaches a treacherous location, often situated deep underground, where the objective of the quest is concealed. Frequently, the protagonist needs to venture into their own dream realm to confront and conquer their fears. Here, the hero suffers the ultimate trial. This is often described as the moment the hero hits rock bottom. He/she confronts the potential of death, brought to the verge in a confrontation with a supernatural beast.

For a student participating in a service trip, the fear of feeling like their presence is not valuable can be just as significant. A concern for the women of this study was being rejected by the communities they ventured out into, and not being recognized or taken seriously for their efforts. The legendary beast in this case was the tyranny of women and their silence. However, the women accomplished this great feat by working together and leveraging each of their diverse set of skills for the success of the workshops. If the participants in this study had not been receptive and responsive, the workshops would have been unsuccessful. The more the public engaged with the women and participated in their workshops, the more the women realized their voices were being heard.

### ***The Reward***

In the hero's journey, there is a crucial part in every story when the protagonist seems to die and be reborn. It is a primary source of the hero myth's magic. The elixirs in this story are

knowledge and experience.

One of the rewarding parts of the project for my participants was the conversations that they had with women in different areas. The women they met trusted the group with their stories and their experiences. Also, the women were able to teach and train not just women and their children, but men, too. They had the capacity to encourage, uplift, and educate others. In validating the voices of other women, they recognized the value of theirs.

### ***Return With the Elixir***

The final reward gained on the hero's journey is the return with the elixir. According to Christopher Vogler (2007), this phase demonstrates that the hero has been restored and purified, earning the right to return to the ordinary world and share the elixir of the journey. This elixir may be in the form of love, knowledge, or just having come back from the other world with a valuable lesson, but the journey is meaningless if not brought back for the good of others (Vogler, 2007).

The women of Pushaq Warmi returned to their homes and communities with a newfound sense of purpose, knowing that they did a good job. They also understood that, with their return, they had a job to do: putting together a public exhibit to show their work to the rest of the community and highlight the situations of women and families in neighboring regions. Because mental health is an issue that is not acknowledged or attended to, the women felt the imperative to show what education, support, and training were needed to assist the people. The women were able to have a discernible effect on the communities and attendees because of the workshops and the public exhibition that they hosted. The women of Pushaq Warmi became empowered because they were able to operate as a team on common goals and objectives. They also shared their

collective knowledge and inspired others, learned more themselves, and influenced the community around them.

Students and volunteers who travel as part of a service-learning initiative are also rewarded. They have dedicated themselves to and followed through on their commitment to work in developing countries, aiding local and international organizations with educating, training, and providing support on issues important to these areas. Yet their work isn't done. They must return to their communities and educational institutions to share their experiences and knowledge, ensuring that their efforts to help create a more equitable, fair, and sustainable world are broadened in the spirit of global citizenship.

Participating in immersion trips, meeting a group of women who live in the community, gaining insight into the issues that are prevalent there, and observing how their organization is rising to the challenge of finding solutions were all experiences that profoundly impacted my life and will continue to do so. The experience had a strong impact on the trajectory of my doctoral studies and has expanded my future opportunities. Working with the women in Peru made me realize more of my potential and how I could use my knowledge, skills, and resources to amplify their voices. On my travels, I gained a fresh perspective and a deeper understanding of the important work carried out by Pushaq Warmi for the women and the communities they serve. It became strongly evident to me that there is a need for increased awareness of their efforts. The primary objective of short-term international service-learning trips is to enhance the educational experience of students. However, it is also important to consider strategies for effectively addressing the needs of communities and fostering a more reciprocal relationship between students and the communities they work with. It is important that we redirect our attention towards examining the potential for student collaboration with communities to effectively

address tangible societal needs and improve community capacity. I have been able to use my international service-learning experiences and what I have learned to cultivate new knowledge and contribute to the scholarly work on international service learning, as well as to increase awareness of how students can not only create transformational learning experiences for themselves, but also provide others with the opportunity to engage in potentially transformative learning experiences.

### **Ettling's Model and the Student Practitioner**

In this section, I will discuss how the study and my experiences on ISL trips to Peru with WGC have shaped me as a person, student, and researcher. I use Ettling's model to demonstrate my personal empowerment journey during my involvement in WGC's ISL trips. ISL can turn students into practitioners while also strengthening underserved communities' capacity.

The editor in *Experiential Learning: A New Approach* by Lewis Jackson and Rosemary S. Caffarella (1994) quotes Kierkegaard as saying, "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards" (p. 1). This can be said of my experience with this investigation. I did not anticipate nor was I prepared for the work undertaken for this study. The decision to apply for a graduate assistant position in 2016 at what was, at the time, known as The Ettling Center for Civic Leadership at UIW sparked the chain of events leading to my research with Pushaq Warmi and ISL. I was in the second year of my doctoral studies, familiar territory for me as I have spent most of my life in an educational setting as a teacher and as a student. Still, civic leadership was a new concept for me. As a graduate assistant mentoring undergraduate students and connecting them with local organizations, this brought to my attention the disconnection most students have today with the real world. I saw a huge difference between students who volunteered and were more engaged with the community and those whose studies and efforts



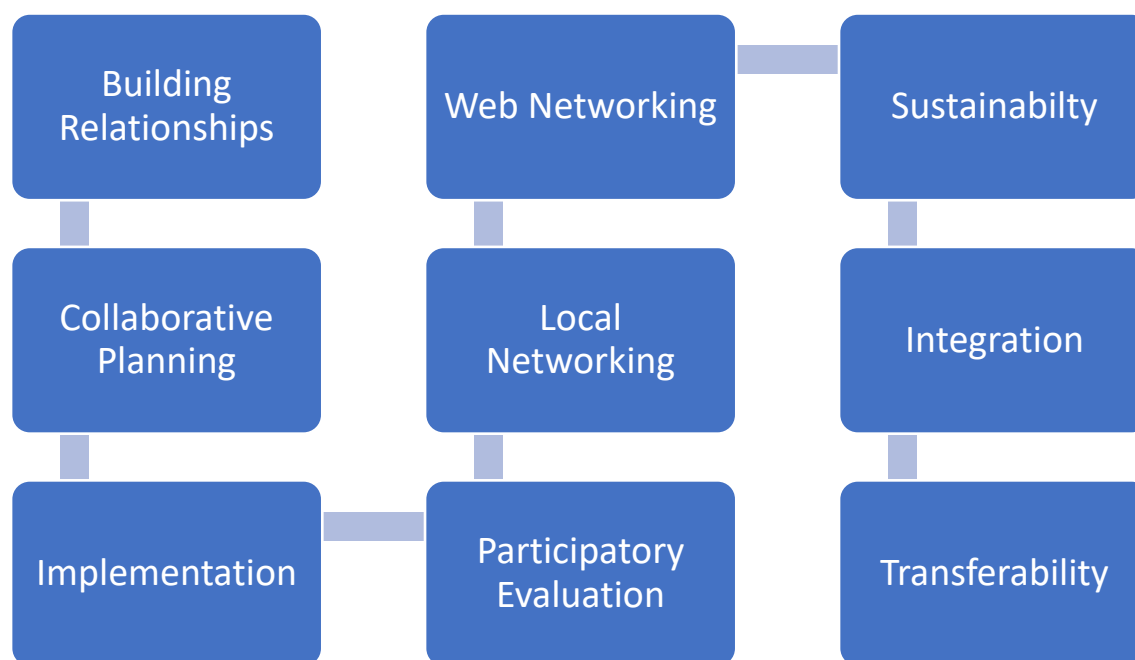
were more concentrated on campus and limited to the classroom. The connection and engagement with the community fostered the growth of these students and moved them from seeing themselves at the center of the world to thinking and recognizing what contributions they could make to the world. Their ideology shifted more from “me” to “we.” I observed this firsthand with my own experience as a PhD student, something I had never previously adopted. This shift in my thinking has not only changed the way I think and learn as a student, but it has transformed my attitude towards, and philosophy of, teaching.

As a graduate assistant, I was introduced to powerful women at the university who I began working alongside and who became my biggest mentors and advocates. There, I became acquainted with the Sisters of Charity and WGC, and the international work, immersion trips, and acts of service they undertook in countries such as Tanzania, Zambia, and Peru, as set forth by the legacy and scholarship of Sr. Dorothy Ettlting. The programs WGC developed in these areas involved working with women’s groups to cultivate their learning and leadership. In *Reach Out Africa*, Dorothy Ettlting and Tere Dresner-Salinas (2014) quote the United Nations Development Fund for Women and their definition of women’s empowerment as “gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power . . . [it entails] developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one’s ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one’s life” (p. 32). In her work, Ettlting and WGC created the circular process of empowerment. According to Buck et al. (2019), “this process model was used to build capacity in marginalized communities abroad and with those in more fortunate circumstances at UIW with the goal of matching faculty and students’ talents and skills with the needs of those marginalized communities” (pp. 2-3). Ettlting’s (2014) model served as the basis for my approach in working with the members of Pushaq Warmi. The model consists of nine interdependent steps that

synergistically enhance the reciprocity and sustainability of service-learning initiatives. This model facilitated my engagement in a discourse with the service-learning scholarly works, identifying the areas of deficiency and suggesting strategies for those involved in ISL to effectively collaborate with global communities. Dr. Ettlting's Circular Process of Empowerment illustrates a process that non-profit groups can use for the purposes of cross-cultural education and leadership development (Figure 26).

**Figure 26**

*Ettlting's Circular Process of Empowerment*



### ***Building Relationships***

Barker and Smith (1996) suggest that engaging students in community-based programs and EL activities can improve their international understanding and global citizenship, while simultaneously benefiting local communities. The existing body of literature on ISL suggests that the main emphasis of initiatives and programs is on student learners. The current approach to

service-learning tends to prioritize the benefits that students can derive from the activity while neglecting the potential long-term benefits that the activity can have on the community being served. This observation has been made by several scholars, including Mitchell (2008), Robinson (2000), and Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2000). There is a lack of academic literature regarding the preparation of communities for ISL visitors, the perspectives of community members on the cross-cultural encounter, and the enduring effects of such encounters on both individuals and communities (Crabtree, 2008).

The concept of service-learning has been described by Mendel-Reyes (1998) as a “pedagogy for citizenship” (p. 34), as it enhances civic responsibility through community involvement and academic education. Prior knowledge of the culture and community in which students will be engaged is necessary for participation in an ISL program. According to Wood et al.’s (2012) study on the impact of ISL on communities, it was noted that the preparation of students is a crucial factor in enhancing their understanding and engagement with the community, and the impact aspect of their study-abroad experience. This is contrary to the intent and nature of these travels, which are to assist communities in becoming more sustainable and equitable. Without knowledge of the international community and its citizens, students are unable to fully understand how they can be of genuine service and use their own knowledge, talents, and skillsets to assist in community development. This deprives the students and the community of their agency.

According to Crabtree (2008), one strategy to mitigate the possible drawbacks of ISL is to create service initiatives that prioritize cultivating relationships and fostering the critical awareness of all involved parties. A relationship based on mutuality and reciprocity must be established between students and international communities before, during, and after service

missions. The principle of reciprocity plays a crucial role in facilitating ethical and effective collaborative research. This guiding principle should also inform the learning outcomes of students involved in ISL projects and their potential positive impact on the community (Henry & Breyfogle, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Crabtree (2008) posits that it is imperative to acquire knowledge of the theories, methodologies, and practical approaches that have a higher probability of generating mutualism in both the process and results. All participants must share the common objectives, interests, and expectations for short-term immersion trips to be successful. This presupposes that students, organizations, academic institutions, and community organizations engage in a transparent dialogue and begin to carefully identify these in advance.

Prior to immersion trips, WGC provided all travelers with a guide and interactive workbook for short-term immersion experiences. The purpose of this booklet was to encourage student travelers and volunteers to reflect before, during, and after their journey. Alma Fernandez Villanueva, a doctoral student at UIW in 2017, created the booklet and structured it according to three phases: preparation, insertion, and return. The preparation phase involved communication and team building among project participants, including travelers and international partners, to define a clear understanding of the collaboration's roles, responsibilities, and goals. During the insertion phase, students learned the importance of orienting themselves to the people and culture and committed to daily reflection while on the trip. Finally, the return phase required students and travelers to continue learning, serving, and advocating for the citizens and issues they encountered on the trip. The purpose of these trips was not only to expose students to different countries and cultures, but also to collaborate with other communities and share knowledge, skills, and resources. Host institutions or organizations are required to emphasize building a strong and cohesive team between travelers, volunteers, and service communities.

With my first immersion trip to Peru, the first of three, I began working with a group of Peruvian women to further increase their potential as a social entrepreneur group, which, unbeknownst to me at the time, placed me immediately within the web of the Circular Process of Empowerment paradigm. The first phase in this nine-step process was establishing a relationship of trust and collaboration among students, colleges, and organizations, as well as local groups or community people who wish to develop their leadership capacity. I contend that this was the most difficult and time-consuming phase of this process, particularly in terms of ISL programs. To establish a sustainable and meaningful impact through ISL, students must demonstrate a willingness to cultivate enduring relationships that persist throughout the duration of the collaborative effort. My relationship with the women required a lot of time to develop.

My initial journey to Peru introduced me to Pushaq Warmi, but it was not until I returned the following year that I began working with them, and it was not until the next year that they began to realize my strong commitment to working with them. Peruvian culture is highly relationship-oriented, particularly in business, with trust established through a strong personal relationship and subsequent behavior dependent on a hierarchy based on age, authority, and economic status (Scroope, 2018). It has been a privilege to develop personal relationships with the women over time. Before conducting business, we exchanged pleasantries about our lives and exchanged hugs, if we were meeting in person. On my trips to Peru, it was not uncommon for the women in the group to invite us into their homes for dinner and a night of dancing. The women were welcoming and ensured that I was always comfortable and enjoying their company. One time, a friend and colleague and I met the women at a nightclub. The women appeared to make having fun a priority even when they were working, as they approached all business with enthusiasm and pleasure. They were also extremely caring; they cared for themselves, each

other, and other people. They have consistently expressed concern for my well-being, not only as a business partner but also as a friend.

After the conclusion of the initial Photovoice project, the continuation of the collaboration required great effort on both my and their parts. Although I enjoyed working with the women, this was, at times, challenging, given their concepts of time and management. It was always the case that a few of the women could not attend our meetings due to job, family, or other obligations. Some members would arrive late, while others never showed up. Working with the group required patience, adaptability, and resilience. I also learned which group members I could rely on while attempting to get things done. As we moved forward with the second project, I realized that they had a very relaxed attitude towards time and that the women had very strong personalities, which sometimes competed against each other, and they preferred to do things their own way. Conflicts and disagreements were inevitable in a group of women with extremely strong ideas. However, the women overcome these difficulties and united in order to achieve their objective. The initial endeavor provided me and the women of Pushaq Warmi with an educational opportunity. Truthfully, the women did not start to rely on me until I entrusted them with the direction of the second initiative. With the first project, I managed all parts of the decision-making process, which is typical of Western organizational leadership culture, which the women were dissatisfied with, as they desired to be more involved. Even though Pushaq Warmi had a president, it was a democracy in which every individual's voice and opinion were heard. My research was delayed at one point because the president of Pushaq Warmi did not want the group to participate in the project; however, this decision was changed when the other members expressed their disapproval. One of the biggest benefits of my research has been getting to know the women of Pushaq Warmi and creating a close, informal working relationship

with them. A relationship of reciprocity must be developed between universities, host organizations, and international communities to achieve a high level of quality within a service-learning project.

### ***Collaborative Planning***

Building trust and collaborative planning, the second element in Ettlign's model, are cooperative endeavors. Ettlign (2013) asserts that joint planning means working together with a local partner to figure out what kind of leadership development and skill building are needed. Because most abroad service-learning trips are planned for short-term experiences, this critical phase is frequently omitted during the planning process. In her dissertation titled "The Initial Planning Process of an ISL Pilot Initiative Under Development", Dr. Denise Peña Krohn (2018) found that the primary planning phase involved the implementation of strategies aimed at fostering collaborative group dynamics, which encompassed active engagement with the local community; these interactions resulted in a better knowledge of the needs of the community with whom they were collaborating. Dialogue before service trips between international communities and American institutions is critical for determining where to focus training and capacity building efforts.

Dr. Ettlign conducted an initial phase in the development of a project aimed at providing training to children and adults in Zambia to manage grief and loss. This phase involved researching some of the fundamental components of Zambian culture and examining the importance of utilizing culturally appropriate materials in promoting effective educational experiences within a specific cultural setting (Ettlign & Vichcales, 2014). I was particularly involved in the planning of my second (2018) and third (2019) trips to Peru, as well as my trip to Kenya in 2019. This is because I led workshops on each of these trips. I interned at WGC in the

spring of 2019. I was directly involved in the logistics and planning of the May trip to Peru and the July trip to Kenya. This was an excellent learning opportunity for me because it provided insight into what it took behind the scenes to plan and coordinate a successful service-learning trip.

As an intern, I worked in the WGC office housed on the UIW campus under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Uribe, the executive director of the organization. At the onset of my internship, WGC had a team of four employees, three of whom were part-time. Dr. Lisa Uribe was Executive Director, Nicole Foy was the Director of Communications and Community Development, Tamarra Mencey, the only full-time staff member, was Director of Administration, and Marlene Diaz was Administration and Development Associate. During my internship, Dr. Uribe resigned from her position and Nicole Foy began acting as interim director while the organization secured a replacement. I worked closely with Marlene Diaz, as one of her major tasks was to take care of all the logistics of the recent immersion trip in Peru. Since I had been a volunteer on two of the most recent trips, she often called on me to guide and aid her with creating the trip's 2-week itinerary. Despite its minimal staff and limited hours, WGC was a solid non-profit organization because the women who ran it managed and operated it efficiently. The office had a powerful group dynamic.

The itinerary, scheduling, and the overall coordination of gatherings, workshops, and group excursions were the most time-consuming and challenging aspects of the internship. Because the executive director left WGC 2 weeks before the trip, I took a bigger role in overseeing the trip's planning. This left less time to focus on creating the workshops, another big task of my internship, but I felt that, for the workshops to be successful, the communication between partners and organizations in Lima and Chimbote needed focus. This planning included



email correspondence, group Zoom meetings, live trip meetings, and one-on-one meetings between me, WGC staff, UIW faculty, trip leaders and volunteers, CCVI sisters, and two women's groups in Peru, one being Pushaq Warmi. As the workshop coordinator, I felt a certain level of responsibility and accountability for not only the workshops but the overall trip. For much of the internship, Dr. Uribe played an active role in guiding my daily tasks. She also made it a point to meet with me on several occasions regarding the future direction of partnerships in Chimbote. However, after her last day, communication with her ceased so I proceeded forward with the guidance she had earlier provided.

Nicole Foy stepped in as interim executive director but did not have a strong presence in the planning and execution of the trip. She was, however, the trip leader of the Peru immersion trip in the summer of 2017, my very first, and so I mirrored a lot of her actions throughout the 2-week trip because she acted as a very strong and efficient leader. Another person I communicated with frequently was Dr. Alison Buck, a former staff member of WGC. She guided me through the process of getting IRB approval for my interviews with Pushaq Warmi and instructed me on how to amend the IRB for the current year. I became more aware of the challenges and unmet expectations between WGC and the Peruvian women's group as a result of my combined internship and workshop experiences. In the years leading up to WGC's closure, both groups grew increasingly dissatisfied with one another. Due in large part to the inconsistent communication, there was insufficient trust between the two organizations. I feel this lack of confidence was due to cultural differences and Pushaq Warmi wanting more authority over their affairs.

Many of WGC's partnerships with women's groups in Africa were business-related, but Pushaq Warmi was less concerned with making money and more concerned with giving women

in their communities more power through education. The group unanimously determined that child sexualized assault should be the focus of the first initiative because it was a significant problem in Peru that was generally neglected. Based on their observations in their communities, the participants in the study chose to refocus the attention on mental health during the pandemic instead of renewing this topic for the second project. Throughout our initial meetings in the summer of 2021, members of the group addressed their own struggles during the pandemic (e.g., loss of employment, the death of family members). At the time, they were tasked with addressing a perceived lack of information regarding how to deal with mental health crises in circumstances of isolation and uncertainty. In addition, the capability to conduct research on information that was already available, and needs assessments, were a part of capacity building (Ettling & Vichcales, 2014, p. 23). External practitioners must network with locals and understand regional concerns when working in a new and unfamiliar area. I conducted my own research on the topics of mental health and abuse to learn about and understand why these were such prevalent issues in Peru. One thing I've learned from working with the women in Peru is that people are our most powerful and valuable resource. There are teachers, businesswomen, a nurse, and a psychologist among the members of Pushaq Warmi. For the group, social change began with bringing their knowledge to rural communities and leading workshops where local women learned to manage and address mental health issues at home. Ettling's model has primarily been used for the benefit of collaboration with group and individual women-owned businesses, where money such as microloans can be directed to such ventures, but it can be adapted to fit social activism if we think in terms of human capital. The pilot Photovoice project with Pushaq Warmi in Chimbote was just that: an experiment. The rest of the group and I were figuring things out as we went. I was fortunate enough to have the project completed during one of the final WGC immersion

trips. Extending the work in this study felt like carrying on the legacy of Sr. Dot, WGC, and all those who participated in and supported the organization.

### ***Implementation***

The third step in the process of the empowerment model is referred to as implementation. This step requires the input of the local community when working on ISL projects. The history of development has been influenced by ISL courses and co-curricular experiences, which have often been characterized by idealistic aspirations for projects, insufficient knowledge about NGOs, and implicit support for governments that have failed to adequately address the needs of marginalized communities and populations (Streeten, 1997). Those behind the design of projects and programs for ISL trips must take into consideration the viewpoint of international communities and local officials and policymakers who can get things done. Long after American students and faculty have returned home, it will be the responsibility of the international community to ensure that these programs are able to carry on and remain sustainable. According to White et al. (1994), the objectives of participatory development encompass four distinct aspects: the equitable distribution of power and authority among the populace; the promotion of awareness and consciousness; the cultivation of self-sufficiency and durability; and the dissemination of knowledge. It is necessary for international communities to have a say and a direct stake in the design and implementation of initiatives in the country in which they are based. The focus of these initiatives is to find solutions to the problems that are being faced by different communities all around the world. It is impossible to have a complete grasp of the challenges, concerns, and needs of a community without collaborating with international organizations. The greatest of initiatives might not become beneficial concepts with limited long-term viability in the absence of local participation in planning and execution (Ettling, 2014). This

means that projects should involve the entire community, from government officials to parents and educators. The women invited everyone, from TV news stations to friends, teachers, and public officials, to the first project. To their dismay, only a few people in high positions showed up. Perhaps this was due to the nature of women's highly sensitive and divisive issues. Because many of the workshops were held in rural areas that the women were unfamiliar with, they invited those they knew, and relied on word of mouth. According to the women, they needed to first establish a non-threatening presence in the community for locals to trust them and learn about their work. Fortunately, many of the workshops were held in densely populated areas where the group was easily visible to the public. One of the workshops was held during a vaccination clinic which helped to boost their attendance at the training that day. The communities were generally receptive and interested in the workshops. They wanted assistance and have even requested that the group return. Men were also very positively responsive towards the workshops, showing an interest in supporting their family's education. The group's work in Chimbote's rural areas extended far beyond the scope of this study.

I hope that future collaboration will garner more local support from other offices and agencies, including the Sisters of Charity, who can then assist Pushaq Warmi with hosting workshops in various communities. There is a critical need in Peru for mental health education for men, women, and children, as well as women's support when it comes to spousal abuse and child abuse, which must be addressed. The current project is the start of a grassroots effort that demands continuous local involvement. It was WGC's intention for those who participated on service-learning trips to "be more conscious of our responsibility to see ourselves as part of a whole that preceded our coming and would outlive our presence" (Ettling, 2014, p.24). Faculty

and groups that lead service-learning trips should have the community's considerations and involvement in its projects.

### ***Web Networking***

To empower international communities, education and training in computing skills and the use of the Internet and other technologies are essential for networking purposes. The significance of relationships within networks has been recognized as a crucial asset in the internationalization of firms and entrepreneurs, as evidenced by various studies (Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2003; Coviello, 2006; Dimitratos & Jones, 2005; Harris & Wheeler, 2005; Johanson & Vahlne, 2003; Ojala, 2009). To enhance the capacity of international women's groups, whether it be to disseminate their message of social justice and raise awareness of local issues, or to profit and support their small businesses, a solid understanding of technology communication is required. The purpose of this fourth step, known as web networking, is to demonstrate how women's groups in developing nations utilized the WGC website during their cooperation. When Ettlting designed the model, there were a limited number of web technologies and applications available. Although the website is now inactive, it is still available to the public and is where one may learn about WGC's overseas projects.

WGC initiated its operations in Chimbote, Peru, in 2011, with a primary focus on early childhood programs and a project named "Sembrando Infancia," which aimed to enhance the nutrition and development of children. WGC and the project worked in four land invasion zones on the outskirts of Nuevo Chimbote. They were connected to four educational institutions in the vicinity, where they provided staff visits, teacher training workshops, and volunteer traveler workshops. In 2013, WGC started a partnership with Pushaq Warmi to collaborate with and support their efforts to empower women and promote entrepreneurship. Early trainings for the

women included computer and Internet skills, and accounting using software. Once selected for an immersion trip, student travelers and volunteers were required to undergo 6 months of preparation in the form of meetings. During this time, we learned about the customs, mindset, and culture of the destination country. At this stage, WGC staff, travelers, and Pushaq Warmi both directly with staff and indirectly through Incarnate Word Missionaries on site in Chimbote, designed the itinerary, which included excursions, projects, and training workshops. Pushaq Warmi connected with us during one of these meetings through Skype; this was where I was first introduced to the women's group.

Collaboration with groups in underprivileged areas requires the utilization of technology. A significant portion of my preparation with the group for both projects had to be conducted abroad. During the first project, I maintained communication with the women using Facebook Messenger, which allowed me to translate their messages with ease. At the time, the president of the women's group was the person who aided me in ensuring that everything was taken care of on the ground. The photographs from the initial Photovoice project were exchanged via Messenger, along with any project updates. Due to the COVID pandemic, my research, including the second Photovoice project, made extensive use of technology. Throughout the course of the project, two primary technologies were utilized, WhatsApp and the Zoom application. The women were able to use these technological methods with remarkable ease and, aside from the occasional technical difficulties with Zoom, had no problems. Being capable of adapting to technical advancements and having access to technology, particularly in a developing country, is empowering as it promotes cross-cultural engagement. Since we were all suffering the global effects of the virus, the COVID pandemic made our sessions more intimate and permitted very frank and in-depth discussion. It provided a safe environment in which to

communicate our emotions, struggles, and frustrations, so strengthening my bond with the study participants. Zoom videoconferencing became the space where interdependence between myself and the group was created and a connection of reciprocity was fostered; this was Sr. Ettlting's desire for all of her global relationships. Additionally, the WGC staff assisted the women's group in Chimbote in creating a Facebook page for Pushaq Warmi, and separately for its craft business, where they have been able to share and spread awareness of their mission and their ongoing projects and workshops out in the community. This was done with the assistance of Incarnate Word Missionaries. Even now, the group continues to use this Facebook page. Web networking is essential for American universities and U.S. organizations to connect and begin establishing a relationship with international communities.

### ***Local Networking***

The objective of local networking is to foster or encourage the long-term sustainability of relationships between groups and local organizations (Ettlting & Vichcales, 2014). It is essential for community organizations to form partnerships and collaborate with those who can provide additional support and contributions to their cause. Not only will these partnerships or collaborations start working together towards mutual interests and goals, but they will also start sharing information, skills, and resources. Collaboration and increased manpower empower everyone engaged.

Because the Pushaq Warmi women were working on projects with a focus on sensitive subject matter, it was important that they establish relationships with local NGOs and offices to feel supported. However, the pandemic prevented the women from interacting considerably with others, and workshops were significantly delayed. Many local businesses and offices were closed or understaffed. Purchasing supplies for the training sessions was problematic. For instance, the

cameras had to be ordered and shipped to Lima, Peru, where a relative of my RA resides, who then had to take a 7-hour bus ride to Chimbote to deliver the materials to my RA. If there had not been a pandemic, more effort would have been made to link with area resources, but as it was, local community resources were scarce. Pushaq Warmi worked on forming collaborative partnerships with other groups, public officials, and entities in the region. Ettling (2014) emphasized the significance of networking in accessing existing information sources, generating new financing opportunities, and establishing long-term sustainable development.

### ***Participatory Evaluation***

There is very little research on how ISL projects are evaluated, especially by the international communities directly invested in these projects or programs. Although ISL emphasizes the importance of respecting the community and establishing robust cross-cultural partnerships, there has been an absence of research that examines the tangible and potential impacts of ISL programs on the communities that host them (Cruz & Giles, 2000). Within the context of academia, service-learning is commonly understood as a dynamic interaction between college or university students who assume the position of service providers, and the community, who are the recipients of said services; reciprocity establishes a dichotomy between students and the community, thereby perpetuating the community's status as the Other (Powell et al., 2011). Understanding the perspective of international communities and whether a project has, in their eyes, reached or attained a level of success is necessary for determining whether future work or implementation of such initiatives is worthwhile. Students and international communities that collaborate on service-learning initiatives must recognize the value of these opportunities. The literature provides an overview that advocates for the ethical and responsible implementation of ISL. It is deemed imperative for all stakeholders to establish relationships, acquire knowledge of



the historical and comparative ideologies of partnership development, and scrutinize the contextual factors that impact the work (Crabtree, 2008; Krohn, 2018; Porter & Monard, 2001). Hence, it is imperative for the global community to appraise and participate in the formulation of service projects and their corresponding initiatives or programs.

After each of the WGC projects in Africa, the staff evaluated the projects through surveys and qualitative data. In collaboration with the women's groups in Africa, WEDIS (Women's Economic Development and Impact Survey) emerged to learn about the women, their lives and needs when they came into the group. There was also a workshop evaluation for each workshop. WGC later developed similar tools oriented to the Peruvian environment and culture. WGC adopted the model known as CBPR to evaluate programs and employed an interdisciplinary research team. According to Teachout and Buck (2014), CBPR is an effort to foster and promote empowerment and information exchange where the community's priorities are respected, and a collaboration develops between researchers and community members who live in the situation being studied so they may reflect on lessons learned from common projects to generate meaningful and sustainable benefits in the community (Ettling & Vichcales, 2014). Evaluation strategies for specific projects in emerging nations have both advantages and disadvantages; in addition to ethical and cultural constraints, there are also technological challenges. Participants in a project reside in different cultures and contexts and have varied interests and goals; therefore, evaluation procedures must be tailored to each group (Ettling & Vichcales, 2014).

After completing each Photovoice project with the Pushaq Warmi women, I conducted interviews to assess their perceptions and experiences with the projects. Informal conversational interviews with the least amount of structure helped participants feel more natural and at ease. Not only are interviews useful for gathering quotes and anecdotes for a narrative analysis, but

they also allow the interviewee to focus on what is relevant to them. I felt that interviewing participants at the culmination of a project allowed them to reflect on their experiences and recognize what they have learned or gained from it. Interviewing was also effective in a variety of contexts and cultures. I conducted an informal focus group interview with the women of Chimbote for the first Photovoice project, where I asked a few guided questions. Their responses prompted new inquiries, which were also pursued. The first Photovoice interviews' feedback was the impetus for the current inquiry and the second Photovoice project. At the close of each service-learning project, a series of evaluations or assessments of the project should take place by both the local community group and the United States universities or organizations.

### ***Sustainability***

The concept of service-learning encompasses a philosophical, pedagogical, and programmatic approach that is grounded in EL and mutual development; the utilization of service-learning as a strategy for sustainability education incorporates these concepts in relation to various facets of sustainable development (Wall, 2019). At the outset of a partnership, both parties must be aware of their respective long-term goals for the collaboration. Although ISL strives to make a genuine contribution to the host community, concerns have been raised regarding the efficiency, durability, and pertinence of global service projects; one of the main issues is whether these projects are meeting the actual needs of the host community (Ver Beek, 2002). It is imperative to establish a transparent and critical discourse between global communities and American academic institutions to evaluate the self-sustainability of service-learning initiatives undertaken by the international community. Furthermore, it is important that they possess the potential to become self-sufficient without external assistance. If external assistance is required, one must address the question, What would a collaborative effort entail in

the future that would effectively address the needs of the global community and promote the progress of all ongoing initiatives? According to Dr. Ettlting (2014), sustainability requires a long-term commitment to the relationship, efforts that foster collaboration and interdependence rather than reliance on external resources, and long-term strategic planning for maintaining activities.

Many of the programs in which WGC collaborated with partners in Tanzania and Zambia were mostly successful owing to a distinct business niche that addressed a significant need in the region, and local partners who helped acquire funds for their operation. Pushaq Warimi faced a challenge in their capacity as a social entrepreneurship group, wherein they engaged in the sale of handicrafts to sustain their workshops and offer training to women and families. The monetary assets required to continue their efforts had to come directly from their personal finances or from the money they obtained from selling their handicrafts, artisans' financial resources, support from public or private sponsors, or monies contributed by researchers such as myself. Pushaq Warimi intended to reach out to and engage with governmental authorities and offices in the future to provide education and training and to raise awareness of their activities. This may result in increased governmental or private financial assistance.

### ***Integration***

According to Dr. Ettlting (2014), integration occurs when all local and global partners demonstrate learning and mutual empowerment. The process of community empowerment, according to Freire (1970), commences with active listening, engaging in participatory and liberatory dialogue, recognizing shared values, and devising novel approaches to effectuate change; through engaging in dialogue, individuals can gain insights from diverse perspectives and develop novel approaches to problem-solving. The way influential individuals in society

articulate issues and remedies serves as a demonstration of the challenges and opportunities for communal self-determination (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994). It is important for both service trip participants and the communities they serve to undergo a transformative experience that enhances their learning and development. Additionally, it is crucial for these communities to recognize their own capabilities, assets, and skills, which can contribute to their growth and resilience. Sustainability necessitates integration and the passing of knowledge to other members of the community. The concept of sustainable development encompasses not only economic and social activities, but also pertains to issues related to populations and their utilization of natural resources, as well as their influence on the environment (Fourie, 2003).

Both I and the women's group in Peru have richly benefited from this project. I was able to complete an international study, and this experience has educated and humbled me as a human being, a PhD student, and a research scholar. Pushaq Warmi has made great progress towards their goal of advocating for women and families, carried out a Photovoice project where they took full ownership, and expanded their outreach into more communities.

### ***Transferability***

The concept of transferability refers to the process by which the knowledge gained through our relationships can be applied in other contexts, which may vary in terms of their geographic location or cultural realities; with each new piece of information that is exchanged, new connections are made, and new business ventures are launched (Ettling & Vichcales, 2014). Transferability helps individuals to effectively solve problems or carry out tasks in various situations or contexts. The acquisition of knowledge by international groups and their proficiency in transferring it to diverse social settings, as well as effectively instructing other groups of learners, provides them with the capability to empower others promoting community

development. The focus of community development ought to be on the cultivation of individuals' capacity to participate as engaged agents in political processes, despite their concurrent positioning as passive recipients of policy directives; this intersection between community politics and policy can lead to a meaningful approach to community development that addresses the needs and concerns of individuals, while also potentially disrupting established systems of authority (Shaw, 2008).

This study exhibited the possibility of extending its scope to other areas of Peru, where female groups could conduct workshops within their respective communities to address local concerns or needs. The women also planned to extend the reach of their workshops and Photovoice initiatives to other geographically isolated regions, while exploring additional subject matter based on community feedback. My intention is to further acquaint the Pushaq Warmi group with alternative training methodologies that align with their specific interests and objectives.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A constraint of the research was the existence of linguistic and communicative barriers. As I lack bilingual proficiency, I encountered a challenge in communicating with my study participants, who exclusively spoke Spanish. All online communication with members of Pushaq Warmi was translated using an internet-based translation tool. The complete involvement of my RA was necessary for the translation process from Spanish to English and vice versa, including attendance at meetings, interviews, and participation in WhatsApp group discussions. The data obtained from the interviews was conducted in Spanish, which resulted in my inability to understand the conversational exchange between the study participants and my bilingual RA from Peru. As a result, I engaged the services of a transcriber/translator for the transcription and

translation of all seven interviews. I found, upon reviewing the transcripts and translations of each interview, that the English translation of the Spanish discourse provided by my RA sometimes elaborated and at other times lessened what the study participants had communicated. This may be attributed to my RA being native to Chimbote and understandably identifying with the experiences of the women due to being a part of the same culture. To keep my analysis of the data as authentic as possible in capturing the experiences of my study participants, I relied only on the English translation of the responses provided by the women themselves, which were member-checked in separate interviews. I also chose to interview my RA after my study participant interviews were conducted; his involvement in both Photovoice projects and the fact that he was on the ground in Chimbote and able to communicate with the women offered him insight into understanding the two projects and their dynamics.

The COVID pandemic was the most significant restriction on the study. The dissertation proposal was written in Fall 2019/Spring 2020, before the COVID virus caused a global pandemic and quarantine and travel restrictions were implemented. The proposal's final draft was approved in the Fall of 2020. Initially, I intended to travel to Peru in person during the summer of 2021 to carry out data collection, which would involve three workshops and a Photovoice exhibit, accompanied by Pushaq Warmi and the RA as my Spanish translator. As isolation, social estrangement, and age-restricted vaccines became the norm, travel became impossible, and the workshops and Photovoice exhibition were postponed. No one in the study was unaffected, not myself, not my RA, not the Pushaq Warmi women, and not the communities the study participants wished to reach. As the principal investigator, it was my job and top priority to conduct this study ethically and safely, with little danger to the women, myself, my RA, and the rural communities surrounding Chimbote. Therefore, all meetings and interviews

with Pushaq Warmi were moved to a virtual platform, and the women were given sufficient time to hold the workshops and community exhibit once they had all been vaccinated and social restrictions were relaxed. Shifting all the interactions between myself and the study participants online turned out to be a strength in disguise. At the onset of the study, I had planned to conduct the training and planning meetings with the women in person in Chimbote, Peru, and then conduct the interviews on the ground after the workshops. The COVID pandemic made it impossible to travel or physically interact with my study participants. On closer reflection, I believe this was better for the project because the impetus behind the project was to capture their community voice, their involvement in an ISL project, and to examine their perspectives. I was closely involved with the first Photovoice project in the sense that I acted as organizer of the workshops and facilitator of the community exhibition. This acted as a deterrent for the group members who were accustomed to their own operations and way of handling things. My not being in Chimbote for the second project made my study participants take complete control and ownership of the project. It ultimately led to richer, deeper, and far more meaningful experiences for the women.

Another limitation was the unexpected and abrupt closing of WGC in 2021. Considering WGC's closure, the future of pre-existing connections with the Chimbote women's organization was an additional unknown. The women initially had difficulty comprehending that I was conducting this study as an independent researcher and not on behalf of WGC. This created conflict because the president of Pushaq Warmi claimed that WGC did not fulfill its promises, and she did not want her group to participate in the study. Once it became evident to the women that I was acting as an individual, the relationship with WGC was perceived as a strength, as my connection with WGC had previously allowed me to work with the Peruvian women's group. At

first, it was difficult for the women to distinguish between the two Photovoice projects, the first of which was under WGC and partially funded by that organization, and the second of which was my dissertation research.

My status as an outsider to the members of Pushaq Warmi was a further limitation of the study, as it is for any international inquiry. While I developed a strong connection and rapport with the women, not being from Peru and not being able to speak or comprehend Spanish made it difficult, but not impossible, to interpret the women's nonverbal clues and body language. I do not belong to the community. I am an outsider, and despite my 6 years of interactions with the women's group, I have only scratched the surface of who Pushaq Warmi is, what they confront, and what they stand for. My relationship with the RA made it easier for him to share his thoughts and feelings with me during the project.

An additional constraint of the research pertained to the issue of accessibility. The distance between Chimbote and the rural areas was a problem for the workshops; the lack of transportation and money for transit made it difficult for the women to continue hosting workshops in rural areas, where education and support are desperately needed. Due to the remoteness of these locations from urban centers, some rural residents were less open to the workshops and were skeptical of the work Pushaq Warmi was doing, and their presence. However, most interactions between Pushaq Warmi and rural women and their families were friendly, characterized by curiosity, and engaging.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

My initial suggestion refers to the necessity for further research on the effects of ISL initiatives on global societies. During my investigation into the subject matter of ISL, I have identified a significant void in the scholarly literature pertaining to the viewpoints of global



communities. An additional suggestion for prospective investigations is to further explore strategies for maintaining brief ISL initiatives. The utilization of CBPR, adherence to the basic principles of WGC, and implementation of The Ettlign Model performed an essential role in establishing the necessary foundation for the successful execution of the international service-learning initiative within my study. These topics require greater attention within the academic community. For projects to be sustainable to outside communities, students must be committed to establishing long-term relationships with groups, organizations, or members of the community. Students as “outsiders” of the communities must make a concerted effort to develop a relationship based on mutual trust, understanding, and collective goals. Capacity building requires more time and investment than a 2-week immersion trip. Yes, immersion trips are significant in exposing students to different people and cultures and the issues that are problematic to them, but students must seek to continue engagement with the populations they meet and learn to apply their own knowledge and skills towards making a joint effort to work on these issues. My experience wouldn't have been as rich and meaningful had I not taken part in three immersion trips to Peru with WGC. With each trip, new knowledge and experience emerged that strengthened the current study.

At the heart of capacity building is the idea of contributing to social change. If we think of strong and effective service-learning projects in terms of capacity building, especially one such as this Photovoice study and the social empowerment of an international women's group, then the traditional approach to student-centered learning in ISL projects must shift to one of community-based learning. This cannot occur without long-term investment and the building of relationships on the part of students, academic institutions, and external organizations in the community. Additionally, it is imperative to establish a transition strategy or readiness for

sustainability when a given student transitions out. One of the strongest assets UIW has had is the large and long-standing presence of the Incarnate Word sisters in Peru. The sisters' involvement and deep commitment to serving the area of Chimbote, Peru, is a channel that must continue to be used to funnel education, skills, and resources out into the community.

CBPR occurs when researchers design and carry out research projects with members of the community. My project aimed to facilitate enhancements and improvements in CBPR, with a primary emphasis on the benefits accruing to both the community and students. Wallerstein et al. (2018) offer the following definition: "CBPR embraces collaborative efforts among community, academic, and other stakeholders who gather and use research and data to build on the strengths and priorities of the community for multilevel strategies to improve health and social equity" (p. 3). The intent behind CBPR is to work with the community to bring about solutions to real-life problems: "Academic researchers partner with community organizations to determine how to best meet their needs by building on their strengths and integrating knowledge to meet shared goals" (Gimpel et al., 2018, p. 139). The research warrants a collaborative partnership between the researcher and the community and recognizes their significance and contributions to the projects. Studies have linked service-learning with CBPR in that, when combined, it "engages students with community stakeholders and faculty in a collaborative process to bring about social change and improved health" (Marcus et al., 2011, p. 47).

For a successful partnership in a project involving CBPR, a certain set of principles must lay the foundation for the enterprise. Such research should build upon the strengths and resources within the community. The knowledge and skills of community members must be shared and valued. Since this is a joint venture, community participants would need to be included in all phases of the project, with collaboration between researchers and engaged scholars and

community members where they are seen as equals and are mutually trusted, understood, and respected. All stakeholders must support and have a commitment to local social concerns. Whatever knowledge is gained from the project, all partners should recognize the mutual benefit. This benefit should be a source of empowerment for all stakeholders. In CBPR, the findings of a project must also be shared among the partners so this may prompt future action, or next steps.

There exist clear similarities and differences between CBPR and service-learning, but when used together they have the potential to transform and mutually benefit all the stakeholders of the project. CBPR aims to support and work with community members to strengthen and empower communities. According to Springer and Skolarus (2019), “Engaging with the community throughout the research process produces results that have greater relevance to the community and can be more readily sustained to support the community’s needs” (p. 48). In 1979, The Belmont Report outlined a set of principles detailing the ethical conduct of research with human subjects (Office of Human Protections, 2022). Of these principles, respect for persons, beneficence, and justice are of special importance regarding CBPR. Hacker (2013) contends these principles mostly apply to individuals as research subjects and not how communities would be protected, and does not account for the ethical behavior of researchers with communities, or look at the benefits and risks such research may have on the community. As the researcher, I am obligated to look at my research participants as individuals but also as part of the community in terms of the risks and benefits of my study.

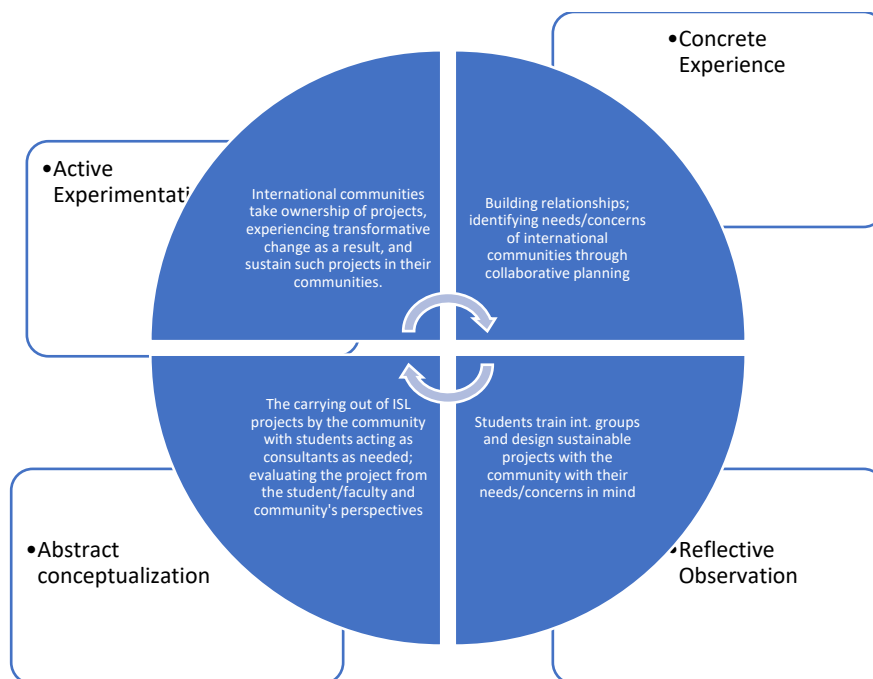
### **Implications of the Study: ISL and UIW**

This study helped to show that Ettling’s Process of Empowerment can be implemented effectively in ISL projects that are more community-directed, and service-learning projects can be transformative for international communities when given the opportunity to be facilitated by

community members. I want to use what I have learned from this research to assist in the development of an ISL Faculty Handbook for UIW. This handbook will combine Kolb's EL process with Ettlign's Process of Empowerment Model, as shown in Figure 27, to make service-learning projects more inclusive of the communities at international service sites. I argue that it is the building of relationships between students and international communities, and identifying their needs and concerns before working together to design and carry out service projects that increase the service-learning effort's chances to be supported and maintained by the communities themselves.

**Figure 27**

*Application of Ettlign's Process of Empowerment Model to ISL Projects*



This handbook will be guided by the social justice tenets and mission of the University and carry forth the legacy of Sister Dorothy Ettlign. The handbook will include but not be limited to the following principles of service-learning projects:

1. Faculty must develop relationships with community groups.

Given the fact that many service-learning trips are short term, 2 weeks for example, then it would make sense for faculty to begin developing relationships with community groups a semester or two before any service projects take place. Many students, especially undergraduate students, do not have the time or opportunity to invest more than a semester on a short-term ISL trip; therefore, the onus is on faculty to establish relationships with communities beforehand. These relationships should be reciprocal, built on openness, trust, and collaboration. The faculty will then introduce the students to community groups and expose them to the country, culture, and climate of their service site.

2. Connect course to social justice issues and real-world problems.

As faculty develop a relationship with community members, the social issues and real-life concerns of these communities will become known. This will allow the faculty to connect their courses to the issues pertinent to their service sites. Addressing the concerns of the community allows the community to have more buy-in on the service projects. They will be not only more invested in the projects, but they will be more proactive towards making these projects more sustainable for their community.

3. Have students introduce/train community members on methodologies they can use to sustain community efforts.

It is important for students to learn different methods, skills, and techniques that they can share with communities to help them build their own capacity. These methods are not only useful for them to learn but also for community members to continue using these methods and training others long after the service projects come to an end.

4. Direct students to work together with the community members/groups to design projects. Students should build leadership and collaborative skills with community members and different groups by working with them to design service projects. At the same time, this will allow both students and communities to cultivate enriching relationships and broaden their cultural horizons.
5. Have the groups carry out the projects in their own communities. For service-learning projects to be viable, community groups must carry out their own projects in the community. Community members want to have ownership in service projects and to feel like they are contributing members who have a voice. These projects are meant to focus on real issues that they have a direct stake in, thus the community must be involved in helping to address the concerns they are confronted with.
6. Have students guide community reflection and post-evaluation. To create student practitioners and researchers, students must learn to ask the right questions and create evaluative measures to assess the outcomes of projects. During this time students will also build research skills.
7. Allow students to reflect on their own experience. It is necessary for students to be given the tools, time and space to reflect on their own experience with service-learning, so they understand what worked and what didn't in terms of the project. They will also be able to assess their growth and what they learned from the experience.

8. Faculty should evaluate their own service-learning outcomes.

Faculty members at the end of a service-learning trip should evaluate their own service-learning outcomes in terms of whether the projects fulfilled the goals and objectives of their course.

9. International groups take what they learn from a service-learning project and introduce and implement similar projects in their communities, increasing its potential for sustainability.

The knowledge and skills that study participants receive on Photovoice will be leveraged to teach and train new populations in the future. This information transfer also allows the participants to teach other women's organizations using Photovoice, allowing other groups to raise awareness of problems in their communities and respond to and address them.

### **Summary**

In this ISL project and others like it, greater community impact is present when academic institutions and international communities work collaboratively in the interest of common goals and the reciprocal sharing of knowledge to increase learning and/or cultural awareness. The university's mission is to develop emerging leaders and global citizens, to enlighten them and create stewards of excellence. Thus, our students must learn about other cultures and see the different realities of people, while at the same time sharing their knowledge and understanding of how to work in partnership with other communities in the interest of sustainability. WGC and the teachings of Sr. Dorothy "Dot" Ettlting remain as a valuable wealth of information, and her model on the empowerment process of capacity development in international communities should continue to be learned by students, faculty, and staff at UIW so that its techniques and

strategies may be adopted in the imminent future for projects or programs on ISL trips. Service-learning should center on a fair trade and reciprocal exchange of learning and cultural resources. Students gain just as much education and experience from communities as the other way around. This takes relationship-building and long-term collaboration, which can be done in programs at the university, led by either university faculty, school offices, or local partnering organizations and international groups or partners, along with the discerning student-scholar interested and committed to research and service. Ettlign's paradigm can equally serve to empower students and communities where everyone's voice is heard. This study is one documented experience of this mutual empowerment; now imagine the potential of Ettlign's model to transform all others who are led by it.



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## Appendices

## Appendix A:

Participant Consent Form: English

**Informed Consent Document**

Subject Consent to Take Part in a Study of:

Equalizing Community Voice in International Service-Learning Projects: A Narrative Inquiry

University of the Incarnate Word

**Authorized Study Personnel:**

Researcher: Monica D. Hernandez, PhD Candidate  
Dreeben School of Education (PhD Candidate)  
Phone: 210.669.8309  
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Research Associate  
[Personal Information Removed]

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Alison Buck  
Phone: 210.442.4568  
Email: [mbuck@uiwtx.edu](mailto:mbuck@uiwtx.edu)

**Key Information:** Your consent is being sought for a research study facilitated in Chimbote, Peru. The proposed study seeks to collect data from purposively selected key participants to identify a women's groups experiences and perceptions of an international service-learning project. If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve the following:

- Procedures will include the participants and the researcher to complete an individual interview. Each interview will have a fluid set of questions and will last approximately 90 minutes in length.
- The meetings will take approximately an hour and a half, providing you enough time to get situated. The researcher may ask for an additional meeting to ensure sufficient data is collected.
- There are minimal risks associated with this study.
- You will not be compensated for your participation.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate at any time.

**Invitation:**

You are invited to volunteer as one of the subjects in the research project mentioned above. The information in this form is meant to cover the nature of your participation and obtain your full consent. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask prior to providing your signature.

**Why are you being asked to be in this research study?** You are being asked to be in this study because the researcher feels that as a member of Pushaq Warmi and a direct participant of an initial Photovoice project conducted during 2018-2019 with the researcher you will be able to provide in-depth information on your personal perceptions and experiences with the international service-learning project.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?** The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to explore the women's group perceptions in Chimbote, Peru of their interaction and involvement with international service-learning projects and their empowerment and sense of efficacy. The researcher wants to provide the women's group an opportunity to equalize their voice within an international service-learning project and share their experiences.

**If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:**

- Procedures for this study will involve participation in an individual interview, 90 minutes in length. During the interview, you will be asked questions referring to your participation in and perceptions of an international service-learning project. If you agree to participate in the study, you may be asked your beliefs on best practices for international-service learning projects and how they could potentially serve the best interests of the Pushaq Warmi group and the community. The interviews will ideally be held in person, but if not, an alternative to this is that they will be facilitated via Zoom conferencing on a scheduled date and time at your convenience.

**What will be done during this research study?**

- You will be asked to participate in an individual interviews, lasting approximately 90 minutes. The sessions could go shorter or last longer depending on the flow of the conversation. The interviews will be captured on video and audio to ensure that all data is captured in its entirety. All video will be deleted after the researcher gathers the data. All audio files will be encrypted, labeled with an identifying number, and stored in a locked cabinet.
- Since the nature of the study focuses on the authentic experiences and perceptions of the participants, the research will facilitate follow-up interviews where the women will be given transcripts of the individual interviews to assess prior to our meeting. The researchers' preference would be to have the follow up interviews in person, but will offer to facilitate via Zoom, WhatsApp, or Facebook messenger as an alternative to face-to-face interviews. During the sessions, the researcher will provide the participant with a copy of the transcript from the initial interview and ask the participant whether the information is accurate and if there is anything they would like to add. If the interviews are conducted in person, the researcher will follow all local and state Covid-related protocols, to include but not limited to wearing a mask, providing hand sanitizer, and keeping social distance measures of at least 6 feet.
- Per Table I in the Statement of Methodological Intention, I may develop an interview guide, where fitting, with questions that I ask of all research participants, and I may also develop specific instruments to engage individuals or subgroups in the research. I may

use the questions in table 1 to design a workshop, a focus group, an observation protocol, an arts-based method, or other instrument (in addition to interviews) that is relevant to the needs of the researcher and the research in the moment that it is needed.

- There will be a possibility that contents of your feedback will be quoted in presentations and/or articles resulting from this work. An alias will continuously be used to protect your identity.

**How will my data/samples/images be used?**

- The data collected during the interviews could potentially be used in future research studies. You will be given the option to make the choice on whether you wish to allow your confidential data to be stored indefinitely for further analysis or other potential research studies.

**What are the possible risks of being in this study?**

- There may be a possibility that you might become emotional during the interview. We will do our best to avoid any discomfort to you and that there will be minimal risk to you from participating in the study. If any form of discomfort occurs, please ensure that you inform the researcher if you wish to have a recess or stop the interview.
- You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions being asked. If you find yourself uncomfortable, you are under no obligation to answer and can request to skip to the next question.

**What are the possible benefits to you?**

- Everything learned about you will be used to help create a better understanding of the partnership between the women's group and universities and institutions that provide international service-learning programs and projects. While we cannot guarantee that you will benefit from participation in this study, you may gain an understanding of how you can better work with your community and other institutions and organizations.
- Depending on the outcome of the study, a potential change in the facilitation of international service-learning projects between your group, the community, and international higher education institutions.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

- Depending on the outcome of the study, a potential change in the facilitation of international service learning at higher-learning institutions.

**What will being in this research study cost you?**

- There is no cost associated for being a participant in this study.

**Will you be compensated for being in the study?**

- There is no compensation for participation in this study.

**How will information about you be protected?**

- Everything you have learned about yourself in the study will be confidential. The published results of the study will not identify you in any way. The only individuals who will have access to the data is the researcher, the faculty advisor, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB), or any other party required by law. If the results of the study are published, you will not be identified in anyway unless you provide explicit permissions.
- All video data will be deleted, and all audio data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's private residence and will only be seen by the researcher and the faculty advisor during the duration of the study and for up to 10 years after.

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

- At any time, you can make the choice to withdrawal from participation in the study. Your decision to participate in the study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or opt out, this will not affect your current or future status with the researcher or the University of the Incarnate Word.
- If you decide to end participation in the study, the researcher will ask if the data already collected may be used.

**What should you do if you have a problem or question during the research study?**

- If you experience a problem as a direct result of participating in this study, please immediately contact the researcher or the faculty advisor.
- If you have any questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have additional questions about your rights or wish to report a problem that may be related to the study, please contact the University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board office at 210-805-3036 or 210-805-3565.

**Consent for future use of data**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for my deidentified data to be used in future research and analysis. I understand that no additional informed consent for this use will be sought. I understand that my deidentified data can be stored indefinitely.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for my data to be used for the study only. I do not give permission for my data to be used in future research or analysis. I understand that my data will be destroyed within 10 years of completion of the study.

**Consent for use of contact information to be contacted about participation in future studies.**



Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to allow the researcher to use my contact information collected during this study to contact me about participating in future research.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to allow the researcher to use my contact information collected during this study to contact me about participating in future research.

**Consent:**

Your signature indicates that you (1) consent to take part in this study, (2) that you have read and understand the information given above, (3) that the information above was explained to you, and you have been given the chance to discuss and ask questions. You will be provided a copy of the consent form for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

## Appendix B:

## Participant Consent Form: Spanish

**Documento de Información de Consentimiento**

El individuo acepta ser parte en un estudio de:

Igualdad de la Voz de la Comunidad en Proyectos Internacionales de Servicio y Aprendizaje:  
Una Indagación Narrativa

Universidad del Verbo Encarnado

**Personal Autorizado de Estudio:**

Investigadora: Mónica D. Hernández, Aspirante de PhD  
Dreeben School of Education (Aspirante de PhD)  
Teléfono: 210.669.8309  
Email: [mhernal8@student.uiwtx.edu](mailto:mhernal8@student.uiwtx.edu)

Investigador Asociado:  
[Personal Information Removed]

Asesor de Facultad: Dr. Alison Buck  
Teléfono: 210.442.4568  
Email: [mbuck@uiwtx.edu](mailto:mbuck@uiwtx.edu)

**Información Clave:** Su consentimiento es solicitado para un estudio de investigación facilitado en Chimbote, Perú. El estudio propuesto busca recopilar data de participantes clave intencionalmente seleccionados para identificar las percepciones y experiencias en grupos de mujeres sobre un proyecto internacional de servicio y aprendizaje. Si usted está de acuerdo de participar en este estudio, el proyecto implicará lo siguiente:

- Los procedimientos requerirán a los participantes y al investigador realizar una entrevista individual. Cada entrevista tendrá un conjunto fluido de preguntas y durará aproximadamente 90 minutos de largo.
- Las reuniones durarán aproximadamente una hora y media, proporcionándole suficiente tiempo para que se ubique. El investigador podría solicitar una reunión adicional para asegurarse de que haya recolectado suficiente data.
- Hay riesgos mínimos asociados con este estudio.
- Usted no será compensado por su participación.
- Su participación es voluntaria y puede decidir no participar en cualquier momento.

**Invitación:**

Se le invita a ser voluntario como uno de los sujetos de estudio en el proyecto de investigación mencionado anteriormente. La información en este formulario está destinada para cubrir la naturaleza de su participación y obtener su consentimiento pleno. Si tiene alguna pregunta, por favor no dude en hacerla antes de firmar.

**¿Por qué se le pide estar en este estudio de investigación?** Se le pide estar en este estudio porque el investigador siente que usted por ser parte de Pushaq Warmi y también por ser un participante directo en un proyecto inicial de Photovoice conducido durante el 2018-2019 con el investigador, usted podrá proporcionar Información detallada sobre sus percepciones personales y experiencias con el proyecto internacional de servicio y aprendizaje.

**¿Cuál es la razón para hacer este estudio de investigación?** El propósito de esta investigación narrativa es para explorar las percepciones de un grupo de mujeres en Chimbote, Perú, de sus interacciones e implicaciones con los proyectos internacionales de servicio y aprendizaje y su empoderamiento y sentido de eficacia. El investigador quiere ofrecer una oportunidad al grupo de mujeres para igualar sus voces dentro de un proyecto internacional de servicio y aprendizaje y de compartir sus experiencias.

**Si usted está de acuerdo de participar en este estudio, el proyecto implicará:**

- Los procedimientos para este estudio implicarán la participación en una entrevista individual de 90 minutos de duración. Durante la entrevista, a usted se le harán preguntas referentes a su participación y sus percepciones sobre un proyecto internacional de estudio y aprendizaje. Si usted acepta participar en el estudio, es posible que se le pregunte sus creencias sobre las mejores prácticas para proyectos internacionales de servicio y aprendizaje y como podrían servir potencialmente para los mejores intereses del grupo Pushaq Warmi y para la comunidad. Las entrevistas serán idealmente realizadas en persona, pero de no ser posible, una alternativa a esto es que sean facilitados vía conferencias Zoom en una fecha y hora programada a su conveniencia.

**¿Qué se realizará durante este estudio de investigación?**

- Se le pedirá que participe en entrevistas individuales, con una duración aproximada de 90 minutos. Las sesiones pueden ser más cortas o durar un poco más dependiendo de la fluidez de la conversación. Las entrevistas serán captadas en video y audio para garantizar que toda la data sea captada en su totalidad. Todo video será borrado después de que el investigador reúna la data. Todos los archivos de audio serán cifrados, etiquetados con un número de identificación y almacenados en un gabinete con seguro.
- Dado que la naturaleza de estudio se enfoca en las experiencias y percepciones auténticas de los participantes, la investigación facilitará entrevistas de seguimiento donde las mujeres recibirán transcripciones de las entrevistas individuales para evaluar antes de nuestra reunión. La preferencia de los investigadores sería tener la entrevista de seguimiento en persona, pero ofrecerá facilitarla a través de Zoom, WhatsApp o Facebook Messenger como una alternativa para las entrevistas cara a cara. Durante las

sesiones, el investigador proporcionará al participante una copia de la transcripción de la entrevista inicial y preguntará al participante si la información es adecuada y si hay algo más que les gustaría agregar. Si las entrevistas se llevan a cabo en persona, el investigador seguirá todos los protocolos locales y del estado sobre el COVID, para incluir, pero no limitarse a usar una mascarilla, proporcionar alcohol en gel y mantener el distanciamiento de por lo menos 1.5 mts.

- Según la Tabla I en la Declaración de Intención Metodológica, pueda desarrollar una guía de entrevistas, donde se acoplen, con las preguntas que hago a todos los participantes en la investigación, y también pueda desarrollar instrumentos específicos para involucrar a los individuos o a subgrupos en la investigación. Puedo usar las preguntas de la Tabla I para diseñar un taller, un focus group, un protocolo de observación, un método basado en las artes u otro instrumento (además de entrevistas) que sea relevantes a las necesidades del investigador y la investigación en el momento que se necesite.
- Existe la posibilidad de que los contenidos de sus comentarios sean citados en presentaciones y/o en artículos resultados de este trabajo. Un alias será utilizado continuamente para proteger tu identidad.

#### **¿Cómo se usarán mi data/muestras/imágenes?**

- La data recopilada durante las entrevistas podría ser usada potencialmente en futuros estudios de investigación. Se le dará la opción de escoger si desea permitir que su data confidencial sea almacenada indefinidamente para análisis posteriores o para otros estudios de investigación.

#### **¿Cuáles son los posibles riesgos de ser parte de este estudio?**

- Puede haber una posibilidad de que se ponga emocional durante la entrevista. Trataremos de hacer lo posible para evitar cualquier molestia para usted de que haya un riesgo mínimo si usted participa del estudio. Si se produce algún tipo de molestia, por favor asegúrese de informarle al investigador si usted desea tener un receso o detener la entrevista.
- Es posible que se sienta incómodo con alguna de las preguntas realizadas. Si se encuentra en esa situación, usted no está bajo ninguna obligación de responder y puede solicitar omitir a la siguiente pregunta.

#### **¿Cuáles son los posibles beneficios para usted?**

- Todo lo aprendido sobre usted será utilizado para ayudar a crear un mejor entendimiento de la asociación entre el grupo de mujeres y las universidades e instituciones que brindan programas y proyectos internacionales de servicio y aprendizaje. Si bien no podemos garantizar que usted se beneficiará de la participación en este estudio, usted pueda ganar entendimiento de como usted puede trabajar mejor con su comunidad y otras instituciones y organizaciones.

- Dependiendo del resultado del estudio, un cambio potencial en la facilitación de proyectos internacionales de servicio y aprendizaje entre su grupo, la comunidad e instituciones internacionales de alta educación.

**¿Cuáles son los posibles beneficios para otras personas?**

- Dependiendo del resultado del estudio, un cambio potencial en la facilitación del aprendizaje de servicios internacionales en instituciones de educación superior.

**¿Qué le costará a usted por ser parte de este estudio de investigación?**

- No existe un costo asociado por ser participante de este estudio.

**¿Será compensado por ser parte de este estudio?**

- No existe una compensación por participar en este estudio.

**¿Cómo se protegerá la información sobre usted?**

- Todo lo que haya aprendido sobre usted mismo en el estudio será confidencial. Los resultados publicados del estudio no lo identificarán de ninguna manera. Los únicos individuos que tendrán acceso a la data es el investigador, el asesor de la facultad y la Junta de Revisión Institucional (JRI) o cualquier otra parte requerida por la ley. Si los resultados del estudio son publicados, usted no será identificado de ninguna manera, a menos que usted proporcione permisos explícitos.
- Toda la data de video será borrada y toda la data de audio será almacenada en un gabinete con seguro en la residencia privada del investigador y solo será visto por el investigador y por el asesor de la facultad durante la duración del estudio y para los próximos 10 años.

**¿Qué pasará si usted decide ya no ser parte de este estudio de investigación o decide dejar de participar una vez ya haya comenzado?**

- En cualquier momento, puede tomar la decisión retirarse de la participación en el estudio. Su decisión de participar en el estudio es voluntaria. Si usted decide no participar u opta por salir, esto no afectará su estado actual o futuro con el investigador o con la Universidad del Verbo Encarnado.
- Si usted decide poner fin su participación en el estudio, el investigador le preguntará si la data ya recopilada pueda ser usada.

**¿Qué debe hacer si tiene un problema o pregunta durante el estudio de investigación?**

- Si experimenta algún problema como un resultado directo por la participación de este estudio, por favor contacte inmediatamente con el investigador o el asesor de la facultad.
- Si tiene alguna pregunta ahora, no dude en consultarnos. Si tiene preguntas adicionales sobre sus derechos o desea reportar un problema que pueda estar relacionado con el estudio, por favor contáctese con la Universidad del Verbo Encarnado – Oficina de la Junta de Revisión Institucional al (01) 210-805-3036 ó (01) 210-805-3565.

**Consentimiento para el uso futuro de la data**

Ponga sus iniciales en una de las siguientes para indicar su elección:

\_\_\_\_\_ Doy mi permiso para que mis datos identificados se utilicen en futuras investigaciones y análisis. Entiendo que no se buscará ningún consentimiento adicional informado para este uso. Entiendo que mis datos identificados pueden ser almacenados indefinidamente.

\_\_\_\_\_ Doy mi permiso para que mis datos se utilicen solo para el estudio. No doy permiso para que mis datos se utilicen en futuras investigaciones o análisis. Entiendo que mis datos serán destruidos dentro de 10 años de haberse completado el estudio.

**Consentimiento para el uso de Información de contacto para ser contactado sobre la participación en futuros estudios.**

Ponga sus iniciales en una de las siguientes para indicar su elección:

\_\_\_\_\_ Acepto permitir al investigador que use mi información de contacto recolectada durante este estudio para que me contacte para participar en futuras investigaciones.

\_\_\_\_\_ No acepto permitir al investigador que use mi información de contacto recolectada durante este estudio para que me contacte para participar en futuras investigaciones.

**Consentimiento:**

Su firma indica que usted (1) consiente ser parte de este estudio, (2) que usted ha leído y entiende la información brindada previamente, (3) que la información previa fue explicada a usted y que se le ha brindado la oportunidad de debatir y hacer preguntas. Se le facilitará una copia del formulario de consentimiento de sus registros.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Participante

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Participante

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Investigador

aprobación # 21-05-004

Fecha Aprobada: 5/24/2021

## Appendix C:

### IRB Protocol

#### WGC/Pushaq Warmi Photovoice Project

This new aspect to the IRB protocol in Peru will further provide information regarding the group dynamics of our partner organization in Chimbote, Peru (Pushaq Warmi) to better guide the women's cooperative towards becoming a more cohesive, effective, and sustainable organization. Ultimately, we are gathering information pertaining to their current state as a working group to better identify ways to aid them in meeting their collaborative objectives.

This is part of our ongoing mentorship and sponsorship of the women's group, Pushaq Warmi, in the Ancash region of Peru; an initiative that Women's Global Connection (WGC) has dedicated itself to since 2012. Our projects with Pushaq Warmi have consisted of providing informational workshops regarding nutrition, economic development, personal development, and early childhood education with material then provided to heighten participant knowledge and usage of the material. Additionally, in accordance with our current IRB, WGC has collected data through assessment surveys.

For 2019, UIW Dreeben School of Education doctoral student Monica Hernandez participating in an internship with WGC under the direction of her professor and advisor, Dr. Alfredo Ortiz, will conduct research regarding the group sustainability of Pushaq Warmi. Monica Hernandez will be interviewing the members of Pushaq Warmi, in English, in Chimbote during the WGC Peru Immersion Trip in May 2019. Yesenia Alcala, a UIW doctoral student who will be participating on the trip will be translating in Spanish. Her primary role is serving as a Spanish translator. A recording of the interviews will take place. Participants will answer the questions detailed below regarding the PhotoVoice activity the group has carried out since last summer's WGC Peru Immersion Trip where Monica Hernandez conducted a workshop training the group on how to carry out Photovoice. Monica Hernandez will collect data from the participants, obtain informed consent, or access identifiable human subjects' data. She is the primary researcher for the Photovoice activity and its planning, designing, analysis, and recommendations.

#### Interview Questions: In English and Spanish

##### English

1. Do you feel the Photovoice project and photos accurately show what you are doing as a group towards the social issue it is addressing?
2. How do you feel this action research method helps to fulfill your mission?
3. What do you hope this project and community exhibit will accomplish?
4. What steps will you take as a group to use this activity or method in your training and workshops to come?
5. What are your expectations for further collaboration with WGC and how does using Photovoice help support this?
6. What further knowledge, skills, or resources do you need WGC to assist you in for the sharing or training of Photovoice out in your community?

### Spanish

1. ¿Siente que el proyecto y las fotos de Photovoice muestran con precisión lo que está haciendo como grupo en relación con el problema social que aborda?
2. ¿Cómo crees que este método de investigación-acción ayuda a cumplir tu misión?
3. ¿Qué esperas que logre este proyecto y la exposición comunitaria?
4. ¿Qué pasos tomará como grupo para utilizar esta actividad o método en su capacitación y en los próximos talleres?
5. ¿Cuáles son sus expectativas para una mayor colaboración con WGC y cómo el uso de Photovoice ayuda a esto?
6. ¿Qué conocimientos, habilidades o recursos adicionales necesita el WGC para ayudarlo a compartir o capacitar Photovoice en su?

### Photovoice Activity:

This tool will be used in a positive and illuminating way to encourage and foster individual understanding by the members as a group so they can become more aware of any organizational problems or concerns emerging out of their own stories and/or what they have captured on film. PhotoVoice is a participatory research methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997) which provides a process for individuals to “identify, represent, and enhance their community” (p. 369) through photography. The women interviewees who consent will photographically capture representations of their everyday lives and their roles as part of Pushaq Warmi. The activity is designed to provide the researchers with insights into often invisible practices, in order to better help this community engage in critical dialogue about their problems and opportunities.

The student interviewer will re-introduce and provide any necessary training on the activity so that the participants will be fully knowledgeable about the activity. The student will explain the purpose of the project and make it clear that the photos will not be used or publicized or made public in any way without the endorsement of WGC, Pushaq Warmi, and each individual photographer. The objective is to provide each participant a supportive environment to show and share their photos. These pictures will be on display at a follow up workshop and community exhibition with Pushaq Warmi to be held during the WGC Immersion Trip to Peru in May 2019. Given the consent required, information provided, and assurances offered for taking and sharing photos, the risks to the participants are considered minimal. Disclosure of the photos taken by the participants is not expected to place them at risk of civil or criminal liability, or damage their employability, reputation or financial standing.

### Project Timeline

- Photovoice Project: May 2018-August 2019
- Learn about Photovoice and start to design your project- Name: Monica Hernandez Date: Spring 2018
- Recruit participants-Name: Pushaq Warmi women Date: Spring 2018
- Arrange a meeting with potential participants: May 2018; Peru Immersion Trip
- Schedule and conduct participant training session(s): May 2018; Peru Immersion Trip
- Take photographs/Allow participants enough time to capture a meaningful photograph: Summer 2018



- Schedule and facilitate Photovoice discussion meetings/sharing session(s): Pushaq Warmi; Fall 2018
- Decide upon a target audience: Spring 2019
- Develop a plan for social action: May 2019; Peru Immersion Trip
- Exhibit the Photovoice project: May 2019; Peru Immersion Trip
- Evaluate the Photovoice project: Summer 2019

#### References

- Lykes, B., & Sheib, H. (n.d.). The artistry of emancipatory practice: Photovoice, creative techniques, and feminist anti-racist participatory action research. In *The Sage Handbook of Action Research* (pp. 131-142).
- Mensa Torras, M. & Grow, J.M. (2015). Creative women in Peru: Outliers in a machismo world. *Communication & Society*. 28(2), 118.
- Swantz, M.L. (2015). Participatory Action Research: Its origins and future in women's ways. In *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research* (3rd ed.).
- Wang, C. & Burris, M. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387.

Appendix D:  
IRB Approval

July 13, 2021

PI: Mrs Monica Hernandez

Protocol title: Equalizing Community Voice in International Service Learning Projects: A  
Narrative Inquiry

Monica:

Your request for revisions to Expedited protocol 21-05-004 was approved. The following  
revisions to your protocol have been approved:

Addition to the investigative team

Consent form(s)

The stamped consent form has been uploaded to the Correspondence section in the Research  
Ethics Review system. Please only use this version of the  
consent form.

Please keep in mind these additional IRB requirements:

Either a study status update (for exempt studies) or a request for continuing review (for  
expedited and full Board studies) must be completed for projects extending past 1 year, and  
closure of completed studies must be reported. Use either the IRB Study Status Update, IRB  
Continuing Review Request or

IRB Closure form.

Changes in protocol procedures must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Use the IRB Amendment Request form.

Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others must be reported immediately.

Approved protocols are filed by their number. Please refer to this number when communicating about this protocol.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current, approved protocol.

Congratulations and best wishes for successful completion of your research. If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school or the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects Operations.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Bilicek

Research Compliance Coordinator

University of the Incarnate Word

(210) 805-3565

[bilicek@uiwtx.edu](mailto:bilicek@uiwtx.edu)