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DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE WHEN VOLUNTEERING INTERNATIONALLY: A  
COMPARISON OF STUDENT INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING AND  
VOLUNTARY SERVICE EXPERIENCES

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## **ABSTRACT**

Globalization has sparked the growth of the international volunteering field, which has increased the number of college-aged students volunteering in foreign countries. While the international service-learning and voluntary service fields have experienced significant growth, a notable gap in research comparing these two primary forms of international volunteering exists. Specifically, there is limited research that studies how guidance affects the volunteer experience of students who participate in international service-learning and voluntary service trips. Providing volunteers guidance throughout the volunteer experience has been found to benefit both the volunteer and the volunteer host organization. Therefore, this research studies the student volunteering experience by drawing on survey data and comparing the experiences of students who participated in international voluntary service and international service-learning trips. The survey separates volunteering into three components: before volunteering, during volunteering, and post volunteering. The survey asks a series of questions to gauge the level and extent of guidance and preparation the student received before, during, and after his or her volunteer experience. Survey responses are used to study how the guidance received by students in either international service-learning or voluntary service trips affected the student volunteer experience. Ultimately, this study serves as a comparison between student international service-learning and international voluntary service experiences with respect to the role guidance plays throughout the trip.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The summer following my sophomore year at Penn State, I completed a ten-week experience as a volunteer intern in southern Uganda with The Uganda Village Project (UVP). When I returned to campus, my family and peers frequently asked about my summer. I responded with a variation of the following: “Volunteering abroad was a great experience, however, I felt underprepared and found it more challenging than I expected.” I hesitated responding in this way because it felt wrong to criticize a volunteering program. To my surprise though, many of my peers who also had volunteered internationally understood and shared my sentiment. Shortcomings in the guidance we received throughout our volunteer experiences were a common theme amongst our discussions, and we believed greater preparation and guidance would have better allowed us to manage challenges and complete our volunteer hosts’ missions. My own volunteer experience, and the discussions with my peers who had also volunteered internationally, encouraged me to design a thesis project to better understand student international volunteering experiences.

This thesis explores student international volunteering by examining the experiences of students who have participated in the two predominant forms of international volunteering: international service-learning and international volunteer service. International service-learning refers to the integration of classroom learning with service to a foreign community, which culminates with a reflection period. International voluntary service trips refer to an organized

volunteer experience in a foreign country sponsored by a public or private organization through which the volunteer receives no monetary compensation (Sherraden, 2001). Using both survey responses and academic literature, I study student experiences through the two primary forms of volunteering in order to examine whether differences in level and type of guidance affects the volunteer experience. This thesis studies the inputs that create international service-learning and international volunteering experiences in order to see how it may affect the student's experience. Inputs in the context of this thesis refer to the volunteer's preparation before the volunteer experience, the host organization's structure, and the guidance during the volunteer experience, and the reflection period during and after the volunteer experience. I analyze the volunteer experience temporally by dividing my analysis into three parts: before volunteering, during volunteering, and after volunteering. Specifically, this thesis explores how the guidance and preparation the student receives throughout the volunteer experience affects the in-trip volunteer experience by comparing student international voluntary service and service-learning experiences.

### **Personal Narrative**

Whether they brought me along to our temple or community center, my parents helped foster my interest in service from a young age. Throughout high school, I volunteered with my local library and hospital. While I enjoyed my experiences volunteering, I frequently spoke with volunteer coordinators about training, volunteer development, and how to improve the program. It was satisfying to take a macro-view on volunteering and discussing ideas that could benefit both the volunteer host and the volunteers while continuing to accomplish its mission.

My interest in volunteering led me to participate in the HOINA (Homes Of The Indian Nation) service-learning program offered by the Schreyer Honors College. This was my first experience volunteering in a foreign country. The four-weeks spent volunteering in India was sandwiched between a two-credit preparatory and a one-credit reflection course. The fluid blend



of academic material and volunteering made this program service-learning in the truest sense. Before leaving for India, the volunteers and our two instructors leading us on the trip spent sixteen two-hour classes studying aspects of Indian culture, history, language, environment, government and what to expect in India. We spoke to students who had also volunteered at HOINA and spent an extensive time discussing the challenges, cultural differences, and struggles we might experience. With the thorough preparation we received before leaving for India, I had established well-educated goals and expectations before departing. In India, I often referred back to the preparation in order to manage the challenges I faced. It is impossible to prepare for every single challenge that might arise, but the exhaustive preparation we had received allowed me to approach challenges without feeling overwhelmed. Our preparation had discussed cultural differences towards how India valued time differently than the United States. Throughout the experience, I understood why projects started late, schedules were rarely followed, and activities did not always follow plan. For those challenges that I could not handle or questions I was unable to answer, the international service-learning structure provided outlets for students on the trip to discuss amongst issues amongst us or with our instructors. For the more difficult questions that lingered after returning home, we discussed them through the reflection class that the fall semester.

My positive experience with HOINA influenced my decision to participate in another international volunteer trip. The following fall, I attended an information session about the Uganda Village Project (UVP), an independent non-governmental organization that a Penn State alumnus was involved with. I learned more about this organization through past volunteers and the UVP directors, and applied for an international voluntary service experience as an unpaid intern for the UVP that summer. Compared to the thorough and comprehensive preparation I had received before leaving for HOINA, the preparatory component for the UVP trip was cursory and lacking. I would later learn that the differences in preparation might have stemmed from the UVP

being an international voluntary service experience while HOINA was a service-learning course. Before departing, the UVP emailed eight documents outlining suggested packing list, information about the living conditions, health and safety concerns, language lessons, and emergency procedures. Upon arrival, the UVP offered a one-day crash course orientation on challenges, potential problems, and issues that may arise. The interns and I moved into our respective villages and started our community initiatives. As we developed our community initiatives and created programs, we had very limited contact with the host organization. We received little to no guidance regarding our work and the UVP offered no structured manner for interns to discuss challenges we faced and our experiences. The UVP gave us our tasks, location, and set us free to make change happen. The summer culminated with a half-day closing meeting to discuss challenges we faced that summer. Not surprisingly, we barely skimmed the surface. Our experience ended abruptly and we left Uganda with so much left unanswered and frustrations left unresolved.

During that internship, I administered a child feeding survey used by the World Health Organization. I spoke with mothers in the Ugandan Igangan districts and weighed their children in hopes to study factors that affected childhood malnutrition in that area. While I took preliminary steps toward developing a thesis to complete my Penn State degree, I never felt strongly towards this topic. Instead of exploring childhood malnutrition, I was fixated on how different my experience with the UVP was compared to my experience at HOINA. In India, I was aware of challenges I would face, prepared for the ones that arose, and guided through those I could not handle. In Uganda however, I had minimal set of tools that I could rely on to handle challenges and I was often left to resolve other challenges on my own. I shared these frustrations with my peers, who had also volunteered internationally in the past, and our conversations easily devolved into what difficulties we faced and what could have been done differently to improve our volunteer experiences.

I changed my thesis topic from nutrition because I felt there was little tangible knowledge I could contribute to that conversation. I could not help but think the disparity between my two experiences may have resulted from the differences between service-learning and voluntary service programs. My interest in exploring student international volunteering experiences consequently provided a more realistic honor's thesis project. After conversations with my peers, I decided that studying the role guidance plays in international service-learning and voluntary service experiences was a topic to which I could contribute. This thesis became my opportunity to delve into the issue and take action.

### **Background**

The growth and development of globalization has driven significant change in the past three decades. Improved avenues of communication and access to information have raised global awareness levels amongst many North Americans. These advances have helped develop a global community by creating a more interconnected world (Braman and Sreberny, 1996). Globalization has opened new markets where it is now easier for organizations and individuals to engage with communities in other countries. Ease of travel and greater interconnectedness has fostered the growth of volunteer organizations with international foci that recruit volunteers (Lewis, 2006). The majority of this volunteer influx has come from two sources: universities and non-governmental organizations (Haskal-Leventhal et al, 2010; Lewis, 2006). Historically, universities have emphasized student service as part of their mission, because it benefits both the institution and the student. Service and volunteering increases a student's level of civic engagement and academic achievement (Astin and Sax, 1999). Universities have also encouraged their students to travel. Exposure to different cultures can improve the student's cultural acceptance, response to challenges, and academic performance (Nokes and Nickitas, 2005). While domestic service has historically helped fulfill universities' mission to instill civic purpose into its students, globalization has expanded the scope for how universities can accomplish this

goal (Jacoby, 2003). Universities have responded by increasing the number of international service-learning and international voluntary service opportunities offered to its students (Jackson, et. al, 2012).

Also closely connected to the onset of globalization is the growth of international non-profit and non-governmental organizations. The aforementioned global interconnectedness provides organizations more access to international communities and greater ability to implement community specific change (Lewis, 2006). While large multi-national organizations such as the United Nations spend considerable efforts spearheading development work, their efforts cannot reach every community. Globalization provides smaller organizations a greater capability to aid international development and serve communities as well (Brown et al., 2000). The barriers of entry that historically prevented small groups from entering foreign communities decreased, which resulted in a proliferation in organizations focusing on improving development, health, education, and other issues around the world. As more non-governmental organizations have formed, they have relied heavily on volunteers completing international voluntary service to accommodate this growth (Dolnicar and Randle, 2007).

The number of students who volunteer internationally either through service-learning or voluntary service is growing (Lewis, 2006). The growth in international volunteering, however, has not been matched with a corresponding development of research outlining best practices for international volunteering as a whole, let alone service-learning or voluntary service more specifically. As colleges and non-governmental organizations continue to encourage students to volunteer internationally, increased research on best practices in each form of volunteering is necessary to see improvement in the growing volunteering field (United Nations Volunteers, 1999).

The benefits volunteering provide to the individual is one reason to further research in the international volunteering field. A survey and focus group study involving 22,246 undergraduate

students found students who participated in service-learning had improved academic performance, self-efficacy, racial cultural competency, and leadership skills (Astin et. al, 2000). Smith and Laurie (2013) found that volunteering internationally instills a greater sense of responsibility, both in terms of civic responsibility and global citizenship. Whether the volunteer experience is through service-learning or voluntary service, the act of volunteering has been linked to the volunteer's personal development. Eyler's (2002) study found that two factors determine the extent to which students benefit from volunteering; the student's interest in the work and the extent to which the student was encouraged to process the volunteer experience during preparation before the trip, while volunteering, and after volunteering. While certainly relevant, the former factor reinforces a fairly predictable argument that students choose volunteer organizations for which they are drawn to due to their personal interests, and consequently feel as though they benefited from the experience. Also notable for this thesis, Eyler argued that students who are encouraged to process the organization's purpose, volunteer successes, community challenges, and volunteer hardships through discussion and reflection experienced heightened benefits. The discussion Eyler describes is often part of the volunteer's preparation before volunteering.

While the aforementioned factors focus on benefits to the volunteer, the host organization can also gain from improving the volunteer experience (Devereux, 2008). Since the host organization incorporates volunteers to accomplish its mission, more capable volunteers better serve the host organization. Therefore, training volunteers and equipping them with necessary skills to accomplish the volunteering goal benefits both parties. Volunteers with poor language, cultural, and technical skills are more costly and can even prove a burden to the organization (Schroeder et al., 2009). Cultural knowledge and skills that are location-specific result in volunteers who are more aware of the impacts and consequences of his or her actions (Schroeder et al., 2009). Therefore, offering guidance to volunteers before beginning the volunteer work

benefits both the individual and the host organization. Such guidance and training allows the host organization to better complete its mission, while allowing the volunteer to benefit from the volunteer experience (Devereux, 2008; Astin, 2000). The growing prevalence of students volunteering internationally through service-learning and voluntary service, combined with the potential benefits that international volunteering holds, suggests the value of learning more about the volunteer experience.

This thesis studies the student volunteering experience by drawing on survey data and comparing the experiences of students who participated in international voluntary service and international service-learning trips. The survey separates volunteering into three components: before volunteering, during volunteering, and post volunteering. The survey asks a series of questions to gauge the level and extent of guidance and preparation the student received before, during, and after his or her volunteer experience. This information is used to study how the guidance received by students in either international service-learning or voluntary service trips affected the student volunteer experience. Further aspects of this study include finding components of preparation that benefit the student volunteer experience, methods that allowed students to better accomplish goals while volunteering, and practices that aided post-trip reflection. Ultimately, this study serves as a comparison between student experiences in the two most common forms of international volunteering: international service-learning and international voluntary service experiences with respect to the role guidance plays in each of these types of trips.

### **Methods**

While literature on implementation and outcomes of international volunteering trips exists, I found there was limited research addressing on the volunteer in-trip experience. To address this gap in the literature, I administered a survey to Penn State students who had completed an international volunteering experience during their college career. Following my

international volunteering trips, I was interested in learning more about other students' experiences to learn if there were trends and similarities amongst these experiences. I decided to administer an online survey, because that method best allowed me to compare the responses and complete data analysis. I used Google Forms as the survey platform, mainly because of my familiarity with the program and ease of survey distribution. The Google Forms software also summarized and analyzed the data into a single spreadsheet. In order to administer the survey, I originally believed I would need to receive approval from the International Review Board (IRB). I completed an application and submitted my research proposal and survey through the IRB system. The IRB reviewer determined the survey I administered did not contain any identifiable or private information, and therefore did not require IRB approval.

Students eligible to complete the survey were required to meet the following criteria; current Penn State students or students who graduated no earlier than Spring 2010; students who participated in an international volunteer program; and students who received no salary or profit from the international volunteer trip. Consequently, Penn State students belonging to the class 2010-2016 were eligible for the survey. Multiple factors went into the decision to set the survey parameters. When constructing a survey, Stone (2003) argues that the importance of finding a representative sample of the population. The survey maker consciously determines how wide or narrow the population sample shall be (Saris and Gallhofer, 2009). Notably, the population for this survey was fairly narrow because it only included Penn State students who attended University Park within a six year range. Choosing a narrow range limits the chance of outliers and variability by selecting a population from the same generation. By limiting the age range, all participants would have completed their volunteer experience in a similar time period. The final criterion ensured participants had completed an unpaid volunteering experience or internship as opposed to a salaried position. This requirement was to combat the possibility of financial gain or salaries creating a conflict of interest in regards to volunteer motivation and personal goals for the

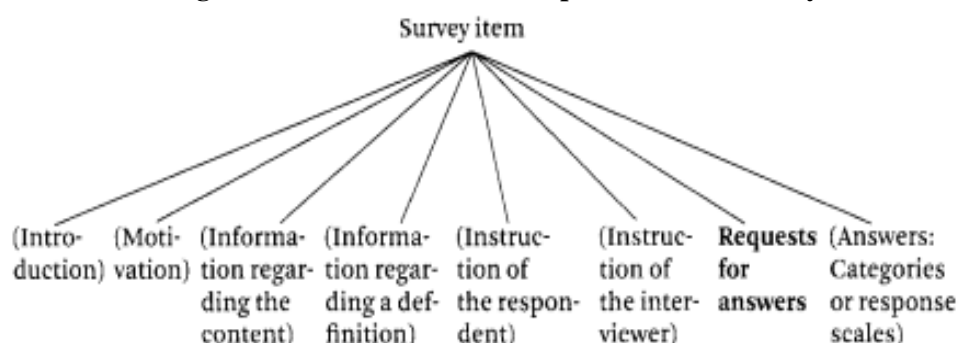
trip. Those who had received financial aid or scholarships to fund their travel were eligible, however. While financial aid and scholarships might seem a motivating factor, I learned through the research process that students apply for financial aid and scholarships after they are already accepted, sign up and committed to the trip.

I then distributed the survey to two types of Penn State student organizations; those whose mission included an international volunteer trip and Penn State academic courses that include an embedded travel component. Initially, I hoped to distribute the survey to an equal number of students through student organizations and academic courses; the former usually perform international volunteering trips, while the latter tend to be service-learning trips. Upon identifying groups to receive the survey, I compiled a list of eighteen Penn State organizations that facilitate international voluntary service trips, and asked each of their presidents to send an email to their organization with a description of my survey. Seven organizations responded in the affirmative and agreed to send the introductory email to their list-serve. However, the remaining eleven organizations did not feel comfortable with my proposed idea. These organizations did not allow non-members to advertise personal agendas through their list-serve, and also worried that members would perceive additional email traffic as a nuisance. I also compiled a list of Penn State's service-learning courses with international travel and asked the instructors to pass on the introductory paragraph and survey link to their past students. Four of the eight contacted programs agreed to do so. The organizations that did not agree felt uncomfortable asking alumni of the program to complete a survey from a student not involved with the program.

While creating the survey, I followed Frank M. Andrews's survey structure. Andrews, a social psychologist who studied surveying and questionnaires, defines surveys as, "items consisting of three components: namely, an introduction, one or more requests for an answer and a response scale" (Saris and Gallhofer, 2009). This definition can be further categorized into eight basic components, as seen in Figure-1 below



**Figure-1 Frank Andrew's Components Of A Survey**



Utilizing Andrew's model, a survey's introduction includes its topic, purpose, explanation and structure (Saris and Gallhofer, 2009). The survey's goal is to gather data on student international volunteering experience. The survey contained three sets of questions that addressed three temporal components of the international service experience: before departing for volunteering, while volunteering, and upon returning from volunteering. Each question set sought to learn about the level and type of guidance during the three stages of the volunteer experience. The survey was designed to include clear topic and purpose statements, with a structure that corresponded to the student's volunteering experience.

The survey consisted of a variety of question types: ordinal, nominal, scalar, and open response. Using multiple forms of questions encourages both greater response and survey satisfaction by the participant while improving response quality (Stone, 2003). While there are benefits to varying the question types, providing clear instruction for the participant regarding how to answer the varying question types creates challenges (Saris and Gallhofer, 2009). While the survey utilizes open-ended questions, 73 of the 80 questions were closed, nominal, ordinal, or scalar. Open-ended questions do allow for participant response without parameters set by the survey maker, thereby allowing the participant to apply his or her own cognition. When assessing student experiences, it was helpful to allow the participant to share his or her experience, because

it provided an answer that goes beyond an option I provided within the survey. However, relying heavily on introspective open responses offered a variety of answers to code and analyze, thus creating challenges when drawing conclusions (Saris and Gallhofer, 2009).

The survey incorporated the following tenets of survey design: appropriate, intelligible, unambiguous, unbiased and omniscient (Stone, 2003). While all five of the aforementioned attributes lead to good survey design, the last two are especially crucial when relying on closed questions. Closed questions can fall prey to designer bias (Carroll, 1994). Design bias can include failing to provide options for the entire spectrum of answers or only offering options that represent one viewpoint. Therefore, maintaining omniscience, the ability to elicit all appropriate responses, was a priority in the design of the survey (Carroll, 1994). After creating the questions, I sequenced the questions in a manner so that each question built upon the previous. While not applicable throughout the entire survey, sequences regarding questions that addressed preparation prior to the trip, challenges during the trip, and reflection following the trip intended to operate cumulatively.

The first set of questions focused on the time period before the student departed for their volunteer destination. The initial question separated the participants into international service-learning and voluntary service groups. The survey explicitly stated the definitions of each form of volunteering beneath the question and asked the participant to classify their experience. The major focus of the pre-departure question set was on the preparatory component before volunteering. These questions asked about the basic details of the trip as well as the depth, content, and length of the preparatory component, as well as goals of the upcoming experience.

The next question set corresponded with the time the student was volunteering. These questions asked about program structure, student activity, and challenges in the field. The final question in this second set addressed challenges that students faced during their volunteer experience. These questions were significant, because they were designed to establish

connections between how the student's preparation might have affected his or her in-trip experience.

The final set of questions focused on the time following the student's return from volunteering. On the whole, these questions were more reflective and sought to encompass the entire experience. The broad nature of the theme meant that this question set included questions divided into topics and included questions that addressed the effectiveness of the in-trip guidance and support structure, opportunities for reflection sessions, and possible changes to the volunteer experience. This final question set was designed to examine how the student's expectations before the volunteer experience remained consistent or changed once the volunteer experience was completed.

Between November 2013 and January 2014, 43 eligible participants completed the survey through Google Forms. When I began data analysis, however, I found that the Google Form data spreadsheet displayed survey responses in a manner that was not the appropriate format for data analysis. I then downloaded the survey data into an Excel Spreadsheet and uploaded that data into a Minitab spreadsheet. In MiniTab, I recoded the survey responses using a binary zero one system. I recoded every question using a zero one system, which made the data more suitable for data analysis. The goal of the data analysis was to find similarities or patterns amongst international service-learning trips, international voluntary service trips, or international volunteering trips as a whole. For the scalar questions asked in the survey, I employed independent and paired t-tests in order to determine statistical significance between the two subpopulations. For multiple-choice and select all that apply questions, I utilized chi-squared table tests in order to analyze how different sub-populations answered survey questions.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This review examines the origins and development of service-learning and voluntary service both domestically and internationally. I begin by focusing on the history and development of service-learning from its origins to its present day state. I then provide a similar background for voluntary service and examine its growth from domestic to international voluntary service. This review then shifts focus to the challenges and critiques of volunteering internationally as a whole. I examine literature that includes critical viewpoints that apply to both international service-learning and volunteering. I conclude the review with literature that outline best practices and procedures that international-service-learning and voluntary service organizations can follow in order to improve the volunteer experience without compromising the host organization's goals.

As mentioned in the introduction, universities and independent organizations have helped make international volunteering more common. From large national organizations such as the Peace Corps to smaller university led volunteer trips with an embedded classroom component, the number of college students who are volunteering in foreign countries is rising (Lough et al, 2009). The increase in international volunteering has been accomplished through two major forms of volunteering trips: international service-learning and international voluntary service. While these two methods both result in the student volunteering in a foreign country, they differ in their implementation, execution, goals, and methods.

#### **Introduction to Service-Learning**

The educational views of many notable philosophers shaped the service-learning movement. Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Kant, and Thomas Jefferson all shared variations of the belief that the final goal of education was to produce citizens who would use their knowledge for public disposition, deeper citizenship, civic engagement, and good deeds (Speck and Hoppe, 2004).

While many pioneers contributed to the development of service-learning, John Dewey is considered the first public advocate for the union of education, civic engagement experience, and reflection. In 1938, he published his beliefs in a short book titled *Experience and Education*. Here, he disagreed with the classical education model, which taught students basic facts and knowledge. He insisted that knowledge should better the public, and education should move away from esoteric theory and focus on equipping students with knowledge that would improve society. While Dewey himself did not coin the phrase, the key tenets of service-learning find their roots in Dewey's advocacy for a new style of education (Speck and Hoppe, 2004; Saltmarsh, 1996).

Dewey's views began to trickle into educational circles, but were not immediately translated into action. This was not a result of opposition towards Dewey's beliefs. Rather, there was no impetus to drive service-learning forward. It was not until the early 1960's, when Presidents Kennedy and Johnson stirred interest in public service by establishing the Peace Corps and VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) as part of their campaign platform to show a commitment to public service (Reinhold and Lenkowski, 2010). The resulting fervor towards volunteering served as the spark needed to aid service-learning's development.

In 1969, Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey led a group of educational leaders from the Southern Regional Educational Board and National Society for Experimental Education to see methods by which service and volunteering could be incorporated into education (Stanton et al, 1999). At this conference, educational leaders first coined the word "service-learning" and established its basic pillars. Sigmon and Ramsey believed service-learning's value lay in the combination of community service, intentional academic learning and guided reflection (Berman, 2006).

While service-learning's definition and implementation has become more detailed, it has not evolved beyond the pillars that Sigmon and Ramsey set. The educators at the conference

wanted students participating in service-learning to become civically engaged with an academic focus driving the experience. For example, they not only wanted students to volunteer at the local food kitchen, but to also learn what role a food kitchen plays in the community; the experience would then culminate with the students reflecting on the service, discussing why hunger is an issue in that community and exploring what changes could be made to decrease hunger (Stanton et al, 1999).

Service-learning's purpose can be found by looking critically at its name. The hyphen signifies the union of service and learning with reflection as the link (Eastman, 2010). The integration of these two major activities helps aid student development both academically and civically. Rather than building these skills separately, the combination of service and learning however has a synergistic effect, which makes each more valuable than on its own (Stanton et al, 1999; Eyler and Giles, 1999).

As Saltmarsh (1996) states, there are several components that contribute to effective service-learning implementation. The primary goal is for the instructor to facilitate student learning by linking knowledge to experience without focusing too heavily on the theory behind the academic knowledge or the practical details behind the volunteering. Ideally, the discussion introduces relevant literature and knowledge in order to frame the service in a challenging way. This gives the service greater meaning and instills values of civic engagement in the students. From its inception, guided and purposeful service has been the backbone of service-learning. The service ideally both helps a community and complements the introduced academic material by adding a practical component to the theoretical. The academic portion before volunteering is cyclically beneficial to both the student and the community being served. The positive possible outcomes for the students include but are not limited to increased community engagement, awareness of self, understanding of cultural differences, and academic interest (Eyler and Giles 1999; Speck and Hoppe, 2004).

Reflection is the final step of effective service-learning implementation. Dewey, Sigmon, and Ramsey all stressed the importance of reflection in their research and writing on service-learning. However, none of the three scholars expanded on the topic of reflection. Fortunately, more recent service-learning scholars such as Ash and Clayton (2009) delve deeply into the important role reflection plays in service-learning. They argue that reflection allows students further opportunity to weave the theory they learned before volunteering with the volunteering experience. Ash and Clayton warn, however, that reflection must be a guided experience for the students. Without open dialogue between the students and instructors, the students may strengthen false or incorrect stereotypes and make sweeping generalizations from their recent experience. As Biling and Eyer (2003) explain, the student's limited knowledge and experience may prevent them from fully grasping the complexity or challenges of the volunteer work if left to reflect alone. Through guided reflection, the student is more likely to learn the greatest lessons from service-learning

Eyer (2002) suggests there is no target length or goal for reflection. Rather, the reflection's effectiveness is determined by the instructor's ability to generate meaningful and critical discussion. The instructor should ideally introduce a challenging thinking style to the student early in the service-learning process and encourage the student to constantly process new information. During reflection period, the instructor should guide students to reach the core of challenging issues by helping them through dissecting their experience. The instructor should help guide the discussion to reach the root of challenging issues, but should not force the conversation to reach a certain conclusion. Therefore, the instructor may need to lead multiple reflective cycles to allow the student to continue incorporating new information and viewing the situation from new angles. The reflection process is time intensive and challenging, but helps the student understand the interwoven nature of the academic theory with the volunteer experience. Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) further stress the importance of reflection in service-learning

Following the service, proper reflection allows the student to put the experience in context and study future directions he or she can take to continue serving that community. Not only does effective reflection help students take future action, it also provides students a deeper understanding of each piece of the service-learning experience.

Service-learning began as domestic civic engagement and was limited primarily to the United States. While there were established avenues for students to volunteer abroad, there were very few academic institutions that led service-learning trips internationally. As Lewis (2006) states, the onset of globalization in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century drove international volunteering's growth, part of which has been driven by universities. Research also suggests how volunteering in foreign countries can have many positive effects on students, which include improved academic performance, self-efficacy, leadership, global awareness, and civic engagement (Astin et. al, 2000). The benefits from volunteering helped aid the development of international service-learning as part of many colleges and universities' missions. The newly "flattened" world increased the feasibility for colleges and universities to send students to volunteer internationally and allowed for greater communication between academic and volunteer institutions (Braman and Sreberny, 1996; Jackson, et. al, 2012). With international volunteering more feasible, it became a larger part of universities' missions. While the pillars and goals of international service-learning remained similar to its domestic equivalent, there were more complexities once the service was performed outside the United States.

### **Introduction to International Voluntary Service**

Carson (1999) examines the United States' volunteering history and notes that the shift from informal to formal volunteering represents a major turning point. Before the creation of established volunteer organization, such as the Red Cross or Rotary Clubs, only informal volunteering existed. Individuals or communities were responsible for spearheading possible volunteering efforts, but these projects were rarely long-term projects (Carson, 1999). It was not



until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that formal volunteering, meaning volunteering under the umbrella of a designated service organization, began to emerge. In the following century, World War I and the Great Depression catalyzed the creation of many service organizations that exist to this day including the Rotary Club, Kiwanis, and Lions Club. During this time period, Volunteers of America became the first major national volunteering organization. Through the early 1900's, Volunteers of America grew in size and became increasingly important during the Great Depression and through World War II, as the country's welfare system was stretched to its limits and unable to provide food and shelter to all that needed these services (Volunteers Center: A History of America, 2005; Our History, 2008).

World War II sparked the expansion of American volunteering beyond its national boundaries. United States emerged as a leader of the free world following the war. A heightened sense of responsibility and an increased awareness of foreign countries post war laid the groundwork for volunteering abroad. Resulting from a wave of activism amongst American citizens, the government and independent organizations began to develop opportunities for American citizens to volunteer abroad. In 1948, the United Nations helped develop the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service, which was the first major institution through which U.S citizens could volunteer internationally. The program's success encouraged John F. Kennedy to introduce what would become the Peace Corps as part of his platform in the 1960 election (Hoffman, 2000).

The post-war era also marked the beginning of the non-profit organization boom. Modified tax regulations on non-profit and service organizations encouraged growth within the country's volunteering sector. The majority of volunteer organizations maintained a domestic focus while only a few organizations' missions included volunteer work internationally. Similar to service-learning, it was not until the onset of globalization that non-profit organizations involvement in international work increased (Kiely, 2004).

Aschenbrener (2010) argues that the non-profit sector's exploration in the international market has also increased its reliance on volunteers. The demand for volunteers has been easy to satisfy. With universities making student international travel a greater part of its missions, more students have access to volunteer internationally (Sherraden et. al, 2006). Developing relationships between non-governmental organizations and universities is mutually beneficial. The organization gains access to a naturally replenishing volunteer pool to which it has very easy communication and access avenues available. Conversely, university students are provided the opportunity to engage in international voluntary service through their university (Ashenbrener, 2010).

Sherraden et al. (2008) explains international voluntary service has more loosely defined pillars and goals. Due to globalization, international voluntary service has built upon international movements and developments to supplement the initiatives of national governments and multinational organizations by mobilizing volunteers ready to engage in global service. In its loosest sense, international voluntary service can be defined as individuals choosing to spend a period of time engaging in the global community to contribute towards a service that benefits a community in a foreign country without expectation of compensation (Sherraden et al., 2008). This volunteering form strives to provide humanitarian aid to a community through volunteering, suggesting it places a much lower emphasis on volunteer development, education, and growth compared to service-learning (Sherraden et al., 2006). The primary focus of international voluntary service trips is to accomplish the volunteering host's mission. As Powell (2007) suggests, the volunteer must choose the host organization, because the resulting experience revolves around the host organization's mission. Just because involuntary service experiences places a greater emphasis on the volunteering mission, volunteers can still benefit from completing a voluntary service experience. As McBride and Lough (2010) argue, engagement

with international communities can help volunteers become more informed global citizens by increasing international awareness, cultural differences, and international understanding

### **Critiques of International Volunteering**

While both service-learning and international voluntary service differ through their structure and goals, both are centered on a volunteer experience in a foreign country. The number of volunteers abroad is rising, but there are many who hold reservations about the merits of sending volunteers to lesser-developed countries. Sherraden et al. (2008) argue that volunteering internationally has become a modern day form of imperialism. Historically, imperialism consisted of a powerful country using its political or economic prowess to influence a less powerful country. McBride and Lough's (2010) analysis of United States volunteer demographics suggest the average volunteer is a white, unmarried citizen under the age of 35. Furthermore, a volunteer's income seems to correlate to a higher propensity to volunteer abroad.

Devreux (2008) understands that while these volunteers' intentions may be pure, the act of sending privileged young white men and women to foreign countries to help increase development, improve health, or advance other aspects of a society can be troublesome to the volunteer host and community. When selecting volunteers, volunteer organizations do not have the opportunity to select their volunteer applicant pool. The volunteer's skill and intelligence regarding the volunteering trip's purpose is unknown to the service-learning and volunteer organization. While the volunteers do receive training, they are often limited with what technical, cultural, and language skills they can offer. Sherraden et al. (2008) also examined volunteer motives and found many to be driven by personal motivations that lead them to their particular volunteering experience. Ideally, volunteers with the highest skill and expertise level should be selected to aid the host organization accomplish its goal. However, volunteers are disproportionately first world and financially stable individuals who do not necessarily possess the cultural and technical knowledge that could benefit the host organization. This volunteer

demographic suggests imperialistic undertones (Devreux, 2008). The current volunteer selection process does not ensure the most skilled volunteers are selected to serve the community. Rather, volunteers with economic stability from politically powerful countries engage in voluntary service experiences where they travel to serve the less economically and politically powerful. Furthermore, volunteers are brought to developing countries under the notion that the basic training they receive and their inherent advantages that come from living in developed countries will adequately allow them effectively serve the community. Using volunteers from first-world countries with basic training over local citizens suggests organizations believe that the local citizens with the equivalent training could be less capable than the foreign volunteer (Devereux, 2008).

Moreover, research suggests poor training may result in increased separation between the volunteer and the community (Bickford and Reynolds, 2002). The volunteer's limited language and cultural knowledge is often responsible for creating the divide between the volunteer and community. Those with basic language skills still have very limited fluency that restricts the extent of their cultural integration (Sherradan et al., 2008). The structure of volunteer trips may contribute to this gap. By training and welcoming volunteers to accomplish a specific goal, the mentality of us [volunteers] improving their [host] community can create a gap between the "helpers" and those being "helped" (Sherraden et al., 2008).

Growth in the voluntourism field, a troubling offshoot of international volunteering has further perpetuated this gap. Voluntourism, a play on words combining volunteering and tourism seeks to create an experience including volunteering, travel, and tourism (Brown, 2005). While only a limited number of organizations explicitly market themselves as voluntourism services, the possibility of voluntourism's culture seeping into the volunteering field is a concern (Brown, 2005). As Schroeder et al. (2009) state, well-intentioned volunteers can have unintended negative impacts on a community when they seek to experience adventure and travel while also trying to

serve a community. Combining multiple goals can result in conflicts of interest for the voluntourism host organization, because they become responsible for serving a community while providing their client, the volunteer, an adventurous vacation and a fulfilling volunteer experience. The organization's increased focus on the volunteers takes away from their ability to serve the community. Also, the concept of privileged first-world citizens paying to serve a community for a limited time has imperialist overtones as well; first-world citizens temporarily visit a developing country to volunteer, and leave to return home (Kass, 2013). While host organizations can change its structure or prepare volunteers differently to reduce imperialistic tones surrounding these trips, the responsibility falls heavily on the volunteer's shoulders to be conscious and aware of his or her actions. Even an infinite amount of training would not prevent all possible negative consequences without conscious decisions and reflection by the volunteer regarding clothing, conversation, money use, and behavior (Tyron, 2008).

Tyron's critique extends beyond the concerns of imperialism; simply the decision to use volunteers can limit a host organization. The volunteer's ability to impact community is dependent on his or her skill and knowledge base, which is often a result of the training the volunteer receives. Providing the volunteer training is further problematic, because the process can be time and resource intensive, which may detract from host organizations ability to focus on the community. Continuity is one of the keys to effective change. While the staff and full-time volunteers are constants through the process, Tyron argues that volunteer training becomes a low-yield investment due to the high volunteer turnover. With the short volunteer trips and the high investment, the host organization is forced to spend significant resources to train volunteers who will only benefit the host organization for a limited time period. The frequent volunteer turnover, limited cultural knowledge, and weak language skills can prove disruptive to the community and limit the work of the host organization. Rather than using low-skill volunteers, organizations

Devereux (2008) argues that organizations could hire local citizens who could provide continuity, on top of their strong cultural and language knowledge.

Despite volunteer limitations and challenges associated with volunteer training, preparation however is not for naught. Effectively training a highly motivated volunteer with a strong altruistic drive maximizes a volunteers' contribute to the community. Studies have found, however, that very few volunteers are guided purely by altruism and most volunteers have other ulterior motives (Sherraden et al., 2008). Like voluntourism, the desire for travel, adventure, soul-searching experiences, or to assuage American privilege are all examples of self-serving volunteer motivations. Frequently, personal goals and motivations that extend beyond the volunteer's mission can interfere with the training and preparation, because the volunteer will often try to fit the new knowledge into a pre-constructed framework or mind-set (Schroeder et al., 2009). Another troubling development for host volunteer organizations are how favorably employers view applicants who have volunteered internationally. Studies have found employers view applications with international volunteering experience as a desirable trait. Many volunteers have acknowledged that a motivating factor for their volunteer experience was that the volunteer experience would provide a positive addition to their resume and make them more attractive to employers (Dolnicar and Randle, 2007). The more personal goals and motivations the volunteer may have, the further his or her focus may stray from the organization's mission. This ultimately harms the student's capability as a volunteer and the host organization's drive to accomplish their mission (Sherradan et al., 2008; Chang et al., 2011).

While literature critical of international volunteering exists, it is not nearly as thorough as its domestic equivalent. This gap in research is partially due to the field's short history. International volunteering grew rapidly with globalization, meaning there has not been as much time to develop international critiques of service-learning and volunteering to supplement the existing domestic literature. Therefore, the existing critiques, such as the ones utilized in this

review, are often exploratory or the first to study a specific aspect of volunteering internationally. The heterogeneity of the field is also limiting. Comparing organizations is challenging when trying to study a single variable; such as the effect that reflection or structure can have on volunteering experiences. Therefore, many studies, including Chang's, select small sample sizes in order to limit possible variables. The limited available literature may also be a deliberate decision. Many organizations depend on donations and sponsorship from third-party donors and philanthropic groups to fulfill their fundraising needs. Consequently, organizations are cautious regarding participating in projects that might critically assess the success of the volunteer organization, the outcomes of its projects, the effectiveness of its structure or anything that might put a large donor's willingness to continue its support in jeopardy (Devereux, 2008). Therefore, the international volunteering field still has the ability to continue improving. The volunteering field has certainly progressed faster than its assessments and critiques, so it may be possible to see development that improves the volunteering experience, volunteering outcomes, and community benefit (Lough et al., 2009). While there is an admitted gap in the amount of critical literature towards the international volunteering field, there is limited research outlining positive practices in international service-learning and voluntary service.

### **(Best) Practices in International Service-Learning**

Following Dewey's vision, service-learning requires a preparatory academic phase, a volunteer phase and a reflection phase. As Eyler et al. (1997) claim, service-learning's overall success depends on executing and blending all three phases in hopes they build upon one another. Therefore, the instructor plays a key role throughout the process. During the preparatory phase, the instructor is responsible for helping the students place their upcoming experience in context and introduce academic literature relevant to their service. This is often accomplished by engaging the class in discussion and challenging students with questions about the community and organization they will be volunteering with. Along with helping students learn what they will

be doing, research suggests that it is important to prepare students for the community and culture that they will become a part of (Tyron, 2008). Schroeder et al. (2009) admits, however, that even well intentioned volunteers can have negative impacts on a community if not made aware of possible challenges and consequences of their actions. The instructor can help students avoid potential mishaps by making students aware of appropriate behavior through discussion of the country's culture during the preparatory component.

The preparatory time period can also be well utilized by equipping the student with skills that would be helpful when volunteering. If the student will be helping build homes, the student should learn how to use the local tools. If the student will be helping improve village health, he or she should learn about how to give presentations that would be suitable for the community. Task relevant training can save the host organization time and resources to better serve the community (Tyron, 2008). While volunteering, the instructor should continue nurturing the student's learning by connecting the service back to the academic materials taught in the preparatory phase. Establishing the role the academic component plays in the volunteer portion of the experience gives the students greater purpose in their volunteering and makes them more aware of their impact (Schroeder et al., 2009).

Similarly to how the academic component of service learning supplements the service component, Eyler (2002) stresses the importance of reflection as part of successful service-learning. She believes it is both underutilized and underappreciated as a tool. Rather than limiting reflection to the end of the experience, she argues that continuous reflection throughout the volunteer experience allows students to continually process new information in a healthy and critical lens rather than having to retroactively process after volunteering. Continuous reflection also prevents the student from separating learning and volunteering into two separate experiences. Reflection helps blend the two processes together and give each more meaning. The goal of service-learning is not to have a singular volunteering experience but to study future projects or



possibilities that could further help the community. International service-learning is not only meant to advance a community, but international service-learning also strives to help transform the student into a more aware and knowledgeable global citizen. While service is the backbone of the experience, the student's maturation and learning is equally important when assessing a service-learning experience.

### **(Best) Practices In International Voluntary Service**

The primary difference between international service-learning and international voluntary service experiences is the level of focus placed on volunteer development and growth. As explained before, learning is one of service-learning's primary goals, so there is conscious effort to teach the volunteer before and throughout the volunteer experience. International voluntary service differs, because the experience places significant emphasis on the host organization's mission rather than on the volunteer (Powell, 2007).

Despite the different foci international volunteering trips may have, voluntary service experiences can benefit from many of the same practices described above that improve service-learning experiences. While voluntary service trips focus primarily on the volunteer mission, training and preparing its volunteers remains a beneficial practice. As Chang et al. (2011) state in his paper, training the volunteers makes them more capable of completing the host organization's mission. While there are fewer short-term incentives to encourage reflection throughout the volunteer experience, international voluntary service organizations' do have incentive to lead reflection periods for its volunteers.

### **Gaps In The Literature**

When examining the literature addressing international service-learning and voluntary service, there are many unexplored areas. Both practices have existed domestically since the mid 1900's, which have led resulted in literature outlining positive practices for program

implementation (Kiely, 2005; Billing, 2000; Hatcher and Bringle, 2004; Holland 1997; Sundeen and Raskoff, 1994; Wilson, 2000).

The literature exploring the international equivalent is less developed however. As mentioned, the gap may partially be due to international volunteering's short history, organizations' hesitancy to cast negative shadows over its programs or the difficulty of exploring trends in a very heterogeneous field. Furthermore, the existing internationally based literature focuses mainly on outcomes and shortcomings, which is understandable because outcome analysis is one of the most effective ways to improve programs and examine the effectiveness of various practices. While academics have written analyses of international volunteering programs, it has mainly focused on the host organization or the community. There has been less focus on the student volunteer's point of view or the student volunteer experience.

Within the subset of international volunteering literature, there is a niche regarding students' experiences. The majority of the research, however, focuses on outcomes and results. Kendall and Knapp (2000) studied ways to measure a volunteer organization's performance and impact in a community to explore its strengths and areas for improvement. Astin (2000) performed a study involving 2315 student volunteers in order to examine what positive change students experienced through volunteering. Hunter and Brisbin (2000) studied whether volunteering helps develop civic engagement amongst students and faculty. The common theme between these and other outcome-based studies is the focus on the change that occurs before and after volunteering. There is significant focus on the difference volunteering can make, but not nearly as much attention is paid to what occurs during the volunteering process.

This thesis explores the in-trip volunteer experience by utilizing surveys in order to compare student international service-learning with student international voluntary service trips. Its focus however is the role of preparation and guidance before, during, and following the volunteering experience. The literature establishes the importance guidance plays in both forms

of volunteering, and this thesis research explores its effect in student volunteer experiences by Penn State students. While the volunteer's goal is often to benefit a community, improving the volunteer's experience allows them to better serve. Therefore, this thesis explores whether practices in either international service-learning or voluntary service are effective in improving the student volunteer experience.

## Chapter 3

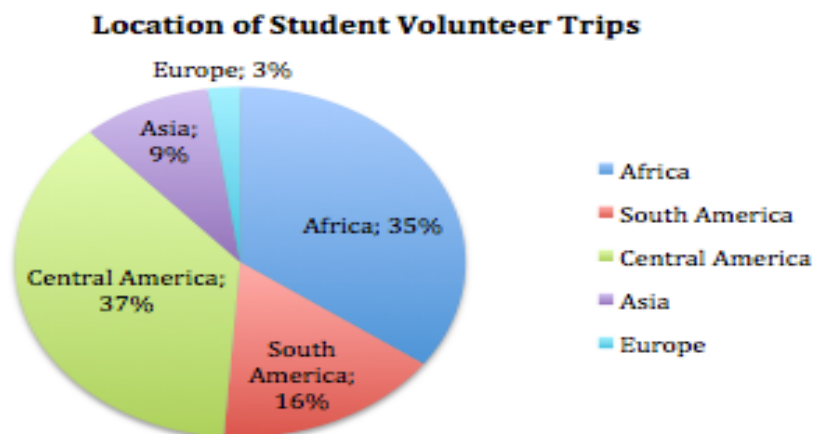
### Data and Discussion

The goal of data analysis in this chapter is to examine components of the student volunteer trips to study how they affect the volunteer experience. First, the survey participant demographic is established to categorize the data set. Then, the analysis focuses on descriptive statistics that include all participants to establish patterns that apply throughout. Next, the analysis shifts to comparative statistics in order to compare possible trends between students who completed international service-learning trips with those who completed international voluntary service experiences.

#### Demographic Findings

Between November 2013 and January 2014, 43 students completed this survey. 44 % of survey participants were male, 51% were female, and one participant did not state their gender. The survey asked participants to categorize their volunteer experience as international service-learning or voluntary service. 18 respondents participated in international service-learning trips and 25 completed international voluntary service trips. Figure-2 shows the location of student volunteer trips, which spanned 5 continents.

**Figure-2 Location of Student Volunteer Trips**

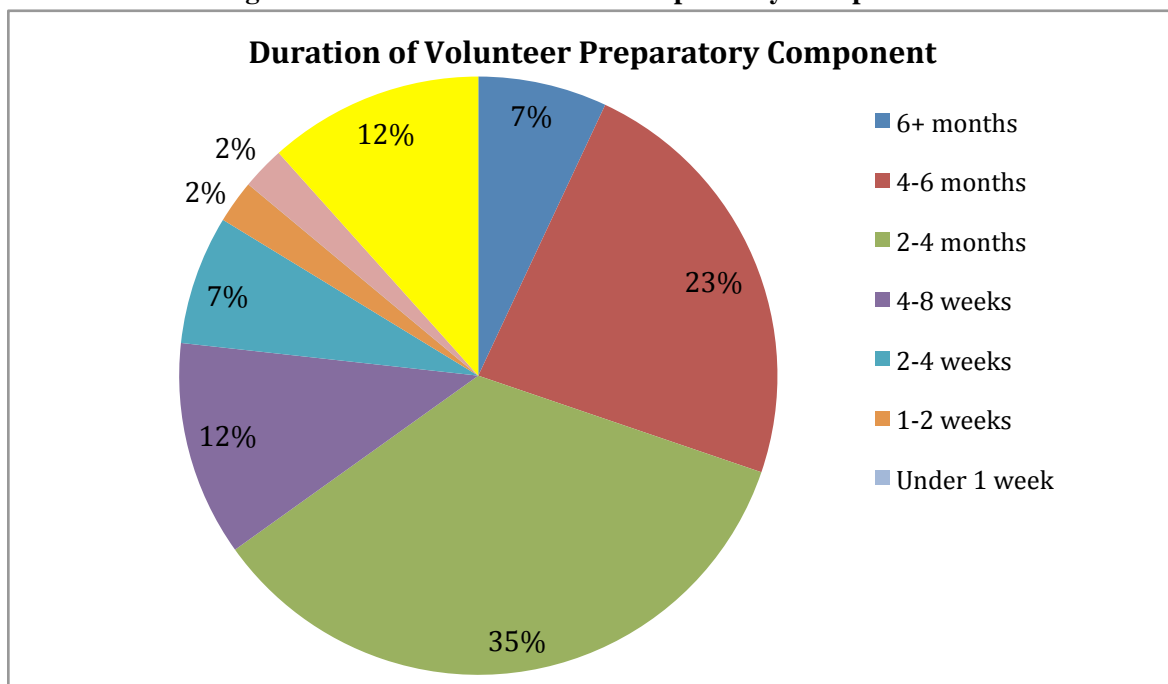


Of the 43 participants, students volunteered with 14 different organizations in a variety of different programs. The most common organizations were Global Brigades and Penn State's Humanitarian Engineering programs. 9 students volunteered with Global Medical Brigades, 4 with Global Water Brigades, 2 did not specify a specific branch of Global Brigades and 5 volunteered with the Humanitarian Engineering program. Further classifying these programs, 51% of students volunteered through a Penn State student organization or club. Equal numbers of the remaining students volunteered through Penn State Programs, non-governmental organizations, and Penn State courses.

### Descriptive Statistics: Preparation

All participants received some form of preparation for their volunteer experiences, but the duration of each varied significantly as shown in Figure 3

**Figure-3: Duration of Volunteer Preparatory Component**



While volunteers from different volunteer organizations received different training, there were common topics covered through participants' preparation. Over 60% of preparatory

components included discussion on the country's socioeconomics, geography, history, and language. Over 85% covered the country's cultural norms, customs, and travel details regarding the trip. While 33 students' preparation covered information specific to the community in which they would volunteer, 90% of those students learned about the country's language, culture, customs, traditions, and socioeconomic status before beginning to volunteer.

Continuing with student preparation, 83% of participants' learned about challenges they would face on their volunteer experience and 91% of those participants said their preparation made them aware of possible challenges they had not expected. All scalar questions in this survey utilized a 9-point scale. The survey asked students to what extent the volunteer felt prepared for their upcoming volunteering experience. With 9 meaning feeling completely prepared, participants responded ( $M=7.32$ ,  $SD 1.56$ ), suggesting comfort with their preparation level. Regarding personal goals, over 80% of volunteers had personal goals that supplemented the volunteer mission. There were an equal number of personal motivations, which included traveling to a foreign country, volunteering abroad, and learning new cultures.

While 65% of students received preparation lasting longer than two months, the high variance between preparatory lengths was notable. Each volunteer experience is different and requires different levels of preparation, but it was surprising to see 9% of participants' preparation began less than one month before volunteering. Sherraden et al. (2008), Eyer (2002) Devereux (2008) and Dolnicar (2007) stress how important volunteer preparation is not only to the volunteer but the host organization. However, nearly all participants learned about challenges to expect while volunteering which is essential when volunteering internationally Sherraden et al. (2008). Overall, the participants reported feeling very prepared for the upcoming volunteer experience, which

### **Descriptive Statistics: In-Trip**

Upon arriving to their volunteer location, participants were not surprised by their living conditions and situation. With 9 meaning full awareness of living conditions and 1 meaning full unawareness, participants responded ( $M=7.77$ ;  $SD=2.00$ ). The participants however were more surprised by their activities as volunteers. With 9 meaning full awareness and 1 meaning full unawareness, participant response suggested ( $M=5.32$ ,  $SD=1.77$ ) they were somewhat aware of their day-to-day activities as volunteers. When asked to gauge the level of structure to their volunteer experience, 54% of participants reported their day-to-day activities to have average to low structure, which meant their daily activities were either explained to them each morning or created throughout the day. When asked about their level of efficacy while volunteering, 76% of participants reported having moderate to low levels, suggesting they did not have significant control of their activities. When asked if they would have added more structure to the volunteer experience, participants however did not show a significant desire for any change. With 9 meaning desiring more structure and 1 meaning desiring less structure, participants' response ( $M=5.549$ ;  $SD=1.12$ ) did not suggest so.

When asked whether their volunteer experience contained significantly more (9) or significantly fewer (1) challenges, participants reported facing slightly fewer challenges than they had expected to face while volunteering ( $M=4.04$ ;  $SD=2.06$ ). While volunteering, participants were either fully surprised (9) or not surprised at all (1) for the challenges they did face when volunteering ( $M=4.37$ ;  $SD=1.25$ ). When asked to what extent volunteers believed their preparation helped them manage the challenges they did face on the trip, with 9 meaning the preparation was extremely helpful and 1 meaning it was extremely unhelpful, participants suggested their volunteer did prove beneficial ( $M=6.33$ ;  $SD=1.38$ ). Along with aiding them to manage challenges while volunteering, the preparation also helped 74% of participants accomplish their personal goals.

When asked in what ways the preparation helped while volunteering, the participants most commonly said preparation helped set expectations, expect what challenges to face, and manage frustrations that stem from challenges. Participants stated that learning about the community's culture and from past volunteers' experiences were the most useful parts of preparation. If participants could have added topics to their preparation, 51% would have put a greater focus on learning the country's language and understanding their daily activities as volunteers.

During their volunteer experience, 76% of participants had daily or nightly debriefs with their volunteer leader or coordinators. When asked if they would prefer more (9) or less (1) structured discussion and conversation during their volunteer experience regarding their volunteer work and challenges faced while volunteering, participants stated desiring more ( $M=6.78$ ;  $SD=1.12$ ). Despite this, when participants were asked to rank feeling frustrated and overwhelmed throughout the trip due to challenges from often (9) to never (1), participants responded ( $M=4.12$ ;  $SD=1.68$ ). When asked if having greater in-trip discussion and guidance would have helped accomplish the host organization's mission to a greater extent (9) or not helped (1), participants do not believe it would have accomplished this ( $M=5.02$   $SD=1.52$ ).

The responses in this section were nearly all positive towards the volunteering experience. The participants as a whole did not report feeling overwhelmed, surprised, or unprepared for their volunteer experience. Participants reported they utilized information from their preparation when volunteering. Even though volunteers would have preferred a more structured discussion and conversation, the participants did not report any direct negative consequences or difficulties that resulted during the volunteer experience.

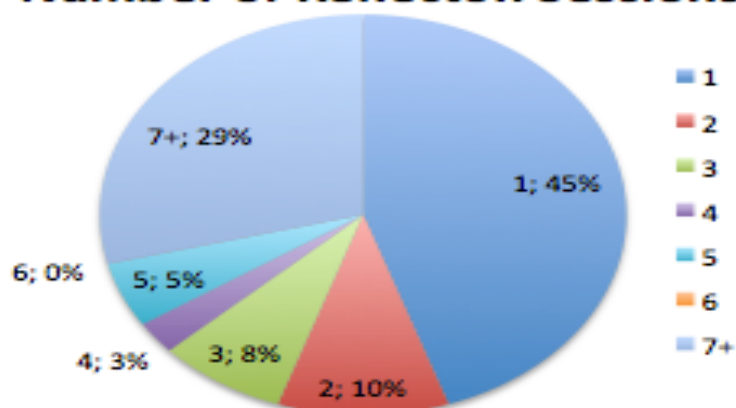


### Descriptive Statistics Post-Trip

79.0% of students participated in post volunteering reflection. However, only 36% of those participants engaged in 3 or more reflection sessions. 83% of those students however engaged in over 7 sessions. Figure-4 summarizes this information.

Figure-4 Number of Reflection Sessions

#### Number of Reflection Sessions



On average, students experienced in 7.93 hours of post-trip reflection. When asked if they found the reflection very beneficial (9) or not (1), participants believed it did help them process their volunteer experience ( $M=6.98$ ;  $SD=1.24$ ). Discussing their experience then allowed students to better understand the purpose of their work. Upon completing their volunteer experience 93% of students said they would be willing to return to continue working with the country in which they volunteered, but only 52.3% of those students would want to continue working with that volunteer organization and continue accomplishing its mission. When asked to rank their volunteering experience, participants expressed their trip was an above average experience ( $M=7.73$ ;  $SD=1.43$ ).

It was surprising to see that 1 of every 5 participants did not partake in reflection. Of the remaining students who did engage in reflection, 45% of those students only partook in one reflection session. Eyler (2002) and Chang (2011) stress the important role reflection plays in

helping the volunteer contextualize the experience and instilling civic engagement values. For those students who did participate in multiple reflection sessions however, the average reflection time suggests engagement in many hours of reflection. Furthermore, it was notable that almost all participants were willing to return to the volunteer host country, but only half stated they would volunteer with the same organization a second time. The overall ranking of the volunteer experience was very favorable, but not surprising considering how positive the in-trip responses were.

### **Comparative Statistics**

This section moves from looking at the participant pool as a whole and studies sub-populations within the dataset by focusing on comparisons between international service-learning and international voluntary service experiences. Each student received preparation before beginning the volunteer preparation, but the settings through which they were completed differed. Eyler (2002) believes preparation with an instructor leading a small group of volunteers is the most effective form.

Table 1 examines the volunteer preparation settings, but no patterns emerged. Table 2 then compares the number and length of preparation between the participants who engaged in each respective volunteer trip type. 72.22% of both groups had classroom setting preparation with instructor training. Web-based preparation can place a larger onus on the individual to drive his or her volunteer preparation and may leave the instructor a smaller role in preparing students (Anderson, 2008).

**Table 1- Setting of Students' Preparatory Component**

	<b>Web Based</b>	<b>Classroom setting &gt; 20 people</b>	<b>Classroom setting &lt; 20 people</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>International Voluntary Service</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 2 continues to examine the student preparation by comparing differences in preparation length for students from both volunteer program types. Service-learning students completed a higher number of sessions and longer preparation than students who completed international voluntary service. This pattern was not surprising. Service-learning is meant to contain an academic portion where the students learn about the volunteering project as well as other related topics relevant to the community and volunteering. While voluntary service trips also prepare their volunteers to thrive, they are more likely to contain information directly related to the upcoming volunteer experience.

**Table 2- Length of Student's Volunteering Preparation**

	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Number of Sessions</b>	<b>7.277</b>	<b>5.65</b>
<b>Hours</b>	<b>13.07</b>	<b>8.13</b>

Table 3 summarizes what topics were covered in the volunteer's preparation for the upcoming trip. The table below lists all 10 topics the survey question listed. The percentage value in each box reports the percentage of service-learning or voluntary service courses that discussed that topic. For example, 83.33% of international service-learning trips covered language during its preparation. Table-3 shows a consistent trend where international service-learning preparation covers a wider range of topics than international voluntary service preparation. Service-learning preparatory components covered 7.355 of the 10 listed topics while voluntary service preparatory components covered only 5.26 topics on average.

**Table 3- Coverage of Topics Relevant to Volunteer Host Country**

<b>Overall prep question</b>	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>83.33%</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Culture</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>Tradition/Customs</b>	<b>88.89%</b>	<b>64%</b>
<b>History</b>	<b>61.11%</b>	<b>42.11%</b>
<b>Government</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Gender Role</b>	<b>55.56%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Geography</b>	<b>72.22%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Socioeconomics</b>	<b>77.78%</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Travel Details</b>	<b>94.44%</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Economics</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>36%</b>

Table-4 is similar to Table-3, but the table summarizes what topics were covered in the volunteer's preparation specific to the community in which the volunteering experience took place. Similar to Table-3, Table-4 displays the same trend. Just like topics specific to the volunteer experience, service-learning preparation covered more information specific to the community. International service-learning preparatory components covered 4.06 of the 6 topics on average while the voluntary service equivalents covered only 2.36 topics. Just like topics related to the volunteer experience as a whole, service-learning experiences place a greater focus learning about the volunteering as well as the community as a whole while voluntary service trips focus more on the volunteering itself.

**Table 4- Coverage of Topics Relevant to the Volunteer Specific Community**

<b>Location Specific Question</b>	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>72.22%</b>	<b>52.00%</b>
<b>Culture</b>	<b>88.89%</b>	<b>68.00%</b>
<b>Traditions/Customs</b>	<b>61.11%</b>	<b>44.00%</b>
<b>History</b>	<b>50.00%</b>	<b>12.00%</b>
<b>Economics</b>	<b>38.89%</b>	<b>20.00%</b>
<b>Socioeconomics</b>	<b>88.89%</b>	<b>40.00%</b>

Table 5 utilizes the same calculation to see what percentage of preparatory components that discussed behavioral expectations. Similar to the trend seen in the previous two tables,

international service-learning preparatory components were more likely to discuss the topics displayed in Table-5.

**Table 5- Coverage of Volunteer Behavioral Expectations**

	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Gender Roles</b>	<b>50.00%</b>	<b>40.00%</b>
<b>Money and Spending</b>	<b>94.44%</b>	<b>68.00%</b>
<b>Travel</b>	<b>83.33%</b>	<b>52.00%</b>
<b>Meals and Food</b>	<b>66.67%</b>	<b>48.00%</b>
<b>Speaking/Conversation</b>	<b>66.67%</b>	<b>48.00%</b>
<b>Body Language/Gestures</b>	<b>55.56%</b>	<b>48.00%</b>
<b>Alcohol/Drugs</b>	<b>66.67%</b>	<b>36.00%</b>

The survey asked participants to rank how adequately they felt prepared for their upcoming volunteer experience. The question utilized a 9-point scale with 9 indicating the volunteer felt fully prepared. International service-learning students' average response was (M=7.75 SD=1.03) while the average international voluntary service participant responded (M=6.61; SD=1.10). Using a 2-sample t-test, a p-value of 0.048 suggests a statistically significant difference at the 5% level between these two values. This difference suggests the more frequent, longer, and thorough preparation international service-learning students received led to them feeling more prepared for their upcoming volunteering experience.

Tables 1-5 summarized data from the before-volunteering section of the survey. Overall, participants' responses suggest a clear difference between the preparation service-learning students and voluntary service students received. While no clear patterns emerged for the volunteer preparation setting in Table-1, Tables 2-5 displayed the same trend. International service-learning preparation was longer. Furthermore, its preparation included discussion towards a greater number of topics than international voluntary service preparation. Service-learning preparation on average placed a larger emphasis on teaching the student not only what was relevant the volunteering, but also the community the student would be entering.

The next section analyzes participant responses about their in-trip experience. Table 6 examines participant responses to a series of scalar questions in this section of the survey. Similar to the scalar questions above, they all are based on a 9-point scale. Along with the average response from both groups, the third column displays the p-value for the 2-sample t-test.

**Table 6- In-Trip Volunteer Responses Using 9-point scale**

<b>Question</b>	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>	<b>P-value for t-test</b>
<b>How did you feel about the level of in-trip guidance? [Fully Prepared=9/Fully Unprepared=1]</b>	<b>5.64</b>	<b>6.50</b>	<b>0.046</b>
<b>To what extent were you able to communicate with the community? [Completely Fluent=9/Could not communicate=1]</b>	<b>7.11</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>0.076</b>
<b>To what extent did you accomplish your personal goals? [Fully Accomplished those goals=9/Fully Did Not Accomplish Goals=1]</b>	<b>7.64</b>	<b>7.00</b>	<b>0.159</b>
<b>To what extent were you surprised to the number of challenges? [Very Surprised=9/Not Surprised =1]</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>4.32</b>	<b>0.186</b>
<b>To what extent to you believe a more structured trip would have helped you overcome challenges? [Would have Greatly Helped =9/Would not have helped=1]</b>	<b>4.71</b>	<b>5.42</b>	<b>0.201</b>
<b>To what extent did you feel overwhelmed during your volunteer [Frequently=9/Never=1] experience?</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>4.71</b>	<b>0.208</b>
<b>To what extent did the living conditions match what you expected [Fully Matched =9/Did Not Match Expectations=1]?</b>	<b>7.29</b>	<b>6.29</b>	<b>0.211</b>
<b>To what extent were you aware of your day-to-day activities? [Fully Aware=9/Fully Unaware=1]</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>5.125</b>	<b>0.228</b>
<b>To what extent did in-trip challenges matched expected challenges? [Fully Matched =9/Fully Did Not Match=1]</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>4.56</b>	<b>0.266</b>
<b>To what extent would you have preferred your experience to have greater structure in daily activities/program? [Would have preferred more =9/Would Not Have preferred more=1]</b>	<b>5.71</b>	<b>6.12</b>	<b>0.335</b>
<b>To what extent did you understand the host organization's mission? [Fully Understood=9/Did Not Understand=1]</b>	<b>8.174</b>	<b>8.40</b>	<b>.628</b>
<b>To what extent did you accomplish the host organization's mission? [Fully Understood=9/Did not Understand=1]</b>	<b>7.53</b>	<b>7.79</b>	<b>0.679</b>
<b>To what extent did your preparation help in response to challenges? [Was Very Helpful=9/Was Not Helpful=1]</b>	<b>6.35</b>	<b>6.45</b>	<b>0.868</b>

The p-values for 12 of the 13 questions were greater than 0.05, suggesting the differences were not statistically significant. This was due to the very small sample size, which resulted in high variance and standard deviation levels within the data set. The questions are arranged in table 6 in order of the most statistically significant differences to the least. At 95% confidence, the question asking the participants to rank their in-trip guidance was statistically significant. Voluntary service students on average felt more satisfied with the level of in-trip guidance than service-learning students. This difference is supported further in the data set. Only 44% of service-learning students had structured systems to discuss their thoughts and frustrations while 57.14% of voluntary service-students were provided the opportunity. Furthermore, 83.33% of voluntary service students reported volunteer leaders frequently or occasionally reached out to them to ask how they were processing the volunteer experience while only 71.18% of service-learning participants reported the same. Structured systems for volunteers to discuss their thoughts and initiative by volunteer leaders led to a higher satisfaction with in-trip guidance.

The only other question with a 90% confidence difference was the extent to which the volunteer could communicate with the community. This difference matched the data shown in tables 2 and 3, because a greater percentage of service-learning preparatory components covered language. The remainder of the questions had p-values greater than 0.15, making the differences statistically insignificant. Therefore, the final 11 questions in Table 6 suggest similar rankings by both groups. However, it is notable to see participants reporting equal levels of preparedness to face challenges, awareness of day-to-day activities, and understanding of the volunteer host's mission, when service-learning students reported feeling more prepared for their experience.

Table 7 uses a format seen in Tables 2, 3, and 4. This table displays how students believed their preparation helped them during their volunteer experience. Table 7 displayed no significant differences between how service-learning or voluntary service students benefitted

from their volunteering. Even though service-learning students reported feeling more prepared for their volunteer experience, it did not help service-learning students more than the voluntary service students.

**Table 7- How Preparation Helped Participants While Volunteering**

	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Help Expect Challenges That Arose</b>	<b>55.66%</b>	<b>52.00%</b>
<b>Help Find Solutions To Challenges</b>	<b>22.20%</b>	<b>28.00%</b>
<b>Help Manage Frustration</b>	<b>50.00%</b>	<b>36.00%</b>
<b>Helped develop plans to manage potential future challenges</b>	<b>66.67%</b>	<b>48.00%</b>
<b>Helped gauge expectations for the volunteer experience</b>	<b>38.89%</b>	<b>40.00%</b>

Table 8 examines the ways participants believe they could have been more prepared for their volunteer experience. This table further supports the idea that service-learning preparatory components were more thorough and detailed. For the possible changes, a greater percentage of voluntary service students would add 4 of the 5 suggested changes. This suggests the service-learning students were more satisfied with their preparation and would not supplement it further, while voluntary service students would do so.

The survey included an open response question asking how preparation aided participants in accomplishing their personal goals during the volunteer experience. The most common theme was that preparation allowed the volunteer to better develop a set of goals. One student wrote, “The preparation allowed me to focus on helping women at the clinic rather than worrying about details like food and housing.” Another student wrote, “Learning about the culture helped me set realistic expectations and goals.” Many other students echoed that preparation aided them establish realistic and more specific goals. Without the preparation, students would have been less aware of what to expect, which makes it challenging to set realistic goals.



**Table 8- Ways Participants Could Have Felt More Prepared**

	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Begin Preparation Earlier</b>	<b>5.56%</b>	<b>24.00%</b>
<b>Learn more about the country's culture and customs</b>	<b>5.56%</b>	<b>32.00%</b>
<b>Learn more language</b>	<b>55.56%</b>	<b>68.00%</b>
<b>Learn more about the daily tasks</b>	<b>33.33%</b>	<b>40.00%</b>
<b>Learn more about the volunteer organization</b>	<b>44.44%</b>	<b>20.00%</b>

Table 9 builds upon Table 8, by asking what the benefits of any of the proposed changes. Just as more voluntary service students believed changing the preparatory component would have served useful, they also felt there were greater benefits to the proposed changes.

**Table 9- Benefits of The Changes Suggested in Table 8**

	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Better Accomplish Organization's Goals</b>	<b>27.78%</b>	<b>52.00%</b>
<b>Better Accomplish Personal Goals</b>	<b>27.78%</b>	<b>40.00%</b>
<b>Better Respond to Challenges</b>	<b>27.78%</b>	<b>52.00%</b>
<b>Better Learn The Country's Culture</b>	<b>33.33%</b>	<b>60.00%</b>
<b>Better Overall Volunteer Experience</b>	<b>33.33%</b>	<b>40.00%</b>

The survey also asked participants what changes they would have implemented to their volunteering experience through a free response question. While there was a large spread of responses, the most common proposed change was adding structure to the volunteer experience. Participants expressed having excessive amounts of unstructured free time that they were unsure how to utilize. They cited that greater structure would help to overcome poor planning from negatively harming their volunteer mission and confusion towards accomplishing volunteer goals. Many students also took personal responsibility and wished they had taken more time to learn the language and culture. For example, one student wrote, "I would have prepared more for exactly how to build the tank [the volunteer mission] beforehand." Echoing the response of many students, one student wrote, "I would have spent more time learning the language." These

changes were inwardly directed towards the student to place a greater focus on preparation rather than on the instructor or organization to provide more.

The following section analyzes the period following the participant's time volunteering. Table 10 displays the number and length of reflection sessions each group of volunteers completed post-trip. Similar to the trends seen when measuring duration of preparation for the upcoming volunteer experience, service-learning students participated in slightly more reflection sessions and engaged in more total hours of reflection after the trip was complete. Service-learning experiences are expected to place a greater emphasis on reflection as one of its three components.

**Table 10- Length of Student Reflection Period**

	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Number Sessions</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>3.24</b>
<b>Hours</b>	<b>7.28</b>	<b>6.27</b>

Table 11 studies participant reflection responses to examine what limitations students felt while volunteering. The table suggests neither group experienced more limitations while volunteering. Limitations while volunteering cannot always be mitigated by preparation or guidance. This chart however shows that neither group's experience was significantly more challenging than the others.

The survey asked participants how reflection changed their perception of their volunteer experience. There was no significant difference between the general responses from service-learning and voluntary service students. Two general trends did emerge from the responses, however. Only 16% of students stated the reflection changed very little and had a minimal effect on their volunteer experience. Some participants complained that reflection taught them very little and felt that repetitive conversations occurred while volunteering. Surprisingly, there was very little middle ground where students felt indifferent to the reflection period. The majority of students found their reflection period very helpful and meaningful. Participants commonly stated

how reflection placed their volunteering in perspective and gave them a greater understanding of the impact the volunteering had. Reflection allowed students to share their thoughts and experiences with their fellow volunteers and learn from each other. Reflection did not however result in a positive change. 5 participants said the reflection made them aware of possible negative impacts they might have had on the community. Reflection led 3 students to question how little their volunteer trip had actually accomplished.

**Table 11- Limitations Felt By Participants While Volunteering**

<b>Limitation</b>	<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>International Voluntary Service</b>
<b>Knowledge Of Country's Culture</b>	<b>33.33 %</b>	<b>28.00 %</b>
<b>Academic Knowledge To Apply to Volunteering</b>	<b>11.11 %</b>	<b>24.00 %</b>
<b>Language Barrier</b>	<b>55.56 %</b>	<b>60.00 %</b>
<b>Volunteer Organization Structure</b>	<b>38.89 %</b>	<b>36.00 %</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>22.22 %</b>	<b>20.00 %</b>

Looking further into post-trip reflection, there were not very many differences between the responses of international voluntary service participants and international service-learning participants. Both subgroups found the reflection to be a helpful practice that further helped them understand their volunteering experience. Table 12 looks at volunteer responses towards their volunteer experience as a whole. Using the same 2-sample t-test, neither before and after volunteering comparisons yielded significant results. The survey asked participants in what ways, if any, did their perception of the organization change after volunteering. Of the 19 participants who answered this question, 10 expressed positive change and 9 expressed negative change. Students frequently stated how they gained respect for their organization after volunteering because they gained a greater appreciation for their mission and their impact on the community. Conversely 4 students were disappointed with the level of disorganization in their volunteer experience. The other 5 students expressed volunteering with the organization made them realize their personal beliefs differed from the volunteer organization's mission.

It is notable to see that service-learning students reported a lower perception of the organization after volunteering while voluntary service participants' ranking remained the same. However, service-learning students ranked their volunteer experience higher than voluntary service students.

**Table 12- Participant Perception of Volunteer Experience**

	<b>Perception of Volunteer Organization Before Volunteering</b>	<b>Perception of Volunteer Organization After Volunteering</b>	<b>Overall Ranking of Volunteer Experience</b>
<b>International Service-Learning</b>	<b>7.35</b>	<b>6.76</b>	<b>8.00</b>
<b>International Voluntary Service</b>	<b>7.20</b>	<b>7.13</b>	<b>7.63</b>

### **Survey Analysis**

Multiple themes arose through data analysis of the survey responses. The first was the difference between the preparatory components of international service-learning and voluntary service students. All 10 country topics and 6 community specific topics were more likely to be covered in service-learning preparation opposed to voluntary service. The same can be said for behavioral expectations. This pattern was not particularly surprising. Preparation before volunteering is one of service-learning's pillars.

As Speck and Hoppe (2004) explain, the preparation in service-learning is not only meant to teach the student information relevant to the upcoming volunteering, but also to help the student learn, grow, and gain perspective surrounding the volunteer experience. Voluntary service however treats preparation as a necessary step to complete the upcoming volunteer experience. Therefore, it is less likely to discuss topics and information that are directly related to the volunteer work.

The survey results however did not suggest the more thorough preparation gave service-learning students any additional advantages over voluntary service students when volunteering. Through the series of scalar questions asked in the survey, there was no significant difference

between either group's volunteering experiences. As Table 6 summarized, both service-learning and voluntary services students provided similar in-trip responses.

The more structured in-trip volunteering the voluntary services students received may have balanced the more thorough preparation the service-learning students received before volunteering. Conversely, the similar in-trip volunteering response and overall volunteer trip rankings may suggest preparation and in-trip guidance may not have a significant effect on the volunteer experience itself.

Another explanation for the similarities of the student in-trip experiences may be the challenges that arise during a volunteering trip may be uncontrollable and difficult to prepare for. In service-learning experiences, the instructor leads preparation for when the students interact with the host organization and community. Difficulties with the host organization may not be in the instructor's control. Through voluntary service, the host organization may prepare its volunteers for difficulties they might have working with the community, but any resulting challenges are difficult to control or prepare for.

The claim that guidance and preparation may not directly result in an improved volunteer experience is not unprecedented. During her exploration of service-learning, Tyron (2008) expresses despite all the instructors' efforts, the effectiveness of service-learning may depend on the student's willingness to learn. Providing a student with the knowledge to thrive in a volunteering experience is the first step, but the student must utilize these tools for it to improve the volunteer experience.

For preparation and guidance to have a tangible impact, it may be necessary for the volunteer to display high levels of maturity. A review written about Peace Corps volunteers lamented the lack of maturity some of its volunteers displayed. Beyond the negative impacts on the community, the instructors and leaders felt it negated the Peace Corps' investment into the volunteer training (Collins et al., 2002). A survey respondent in Barnhart's (2012) research on

international volunteers stated volunteers must possess an internal maturity to cope with volunteer's stress and to utilize a support system effectively. In Lough and McBride's (2010) research, a participant claimed the challenges she experienced propelled her to take personal steps to overcome them.

The purpose of including these examples is to suggest greater responsibility may fall on the volunteers themselves to manage challenges and affect their own volunteer experience. The instructors and host organizations are invested in guiding and preparing the student, but they are unable to control the volunteer experience. They can provide guidance and suggestions that may help the volunteer throughout the trip, but the volunteer is ultimately responsible for acting upon this advice.

### **Limitations and Shortcomings**

Utilizing an online survey proved helpful for data analysis, but there were limitations in using this method as my only source of data collection. The survey did not include an adequate number of outcome-based questions that could be used to judge the volunteer experience. The survey questions placed a disproportionately large focus on the inputs that create a volunteering experience, but did not contain satisfactory questions to judge the inputs' effects. This was a flaw in survey design that stemmed from my failure to establish a clear and narrow direction for this research when designing the study. As I continued to research international volunteering, I gained a deeper understanding of the topic and wished I could have altered my survey. By this point however, participants had begun to take the survey and it was too late to make changes.

Continuing with limitations with the survey, I believe the survey was too long. At the time, I believed the long survey would provide me with more data from which I could draw conclusions. The length however might have been detrimental to the research. I heard from participants that they lost interest mid-way through the survey and tried but found it a hassle to complete. While only a handful of individuals explicitly told me this, I believe there were many

individuals who might have started the survey and failed to complete it due to its length. The length may have discouraged individuals from completing the survey, which reduced participants.

Ideally, I attempted to recruit an equal number of service-learning and voluntary service organizations in hopes of having equal participants from each form of volunteering. There were 18 participants who participated in service-learning and 25 who participated in voluntary service. The inequality resulted in each service-learning individual's response having a larger effect than a voluntary service individual. The limited number of participants further affected the research through the high variance in responses. While not necessarily negative for respondents to vary in their answers, variation amongst the limited number of participants led to very high standard deviation values. The large values suggested very little unity amongst the participants and made it challenging to draw conclusions that were statistically significant.

With hindsight, I would have selected a 5-point scale instead a 9-point scale for scalar questions. Using Saris and Gallhoffer's (2009) survey design as my guide, I utilized a 9 point scale in order to provide participants with the opportunity to express degrees of agreement or disagreement. The 9-point scale however resulted in the data being negatively or leftward skewed. The leftward skew bunched the data, which was not conducive for statistical analysis.

This study was a result of the differences between my two volunteer experiences. I had spent a significant amount of time comparing the two trips. The survey had a large focus on aspects that positively or negatively affected the volunteer's experience. I believed that was an important part of studying the student experience. However, I did not factor that many of the participants might only have one international volunteering experience. Without having multiple experiences to compare, it is challenging for participants to know how certain aspects of the trip affected the volunteer experience as a whole. It was only with two international volunteer experiences I could critically analyze my trips, so having participants with only one such experience could have skewed the results.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Conclusion**

The volunteering field has experienced notable growth since the onset of globalization, which opened the doors for international volunteering through greater communication and travel within the world. University students are at the forefront of international volunteering's growth. Students have greater access to international volunteering with universities placing a larger emphasis on student service in foreign countries and independent organizations recruiting through universities to fulfill its volunteer demand. The two most common forms of international volunteering college students engage in are international service-learning and international voluntary service. Both result in the student serving a community in foreign country, but differ in their respective goals and implementation. The act of volunteering, whether through international service-learning or international voluntary service has many inherent benefits to the volunteer, including but not limited to improved academic performance, leadership, civic engagement, and cultural understanding. The combination of its increasing popularity and ability to benefit students made studying the student experience while volunteering internationally a relevant topic.

I implemented a survey to collect data for this research. 25 students who completed international volunteering trips and 18 who had engaged in service-learning experiences completed this study's survey. The survey asked a series of questions about the student's volunteer experience by separating the trip into three segments: before volunteering, while volunteering, and after volunteering. The questions asked about the guidance the student received throughout the volunteer experience, to understand if differences in guidance affected the student's volunteer experience.

The results showed students who had completed international service-learning experiences received more thorough and comprehensive preparation before volunteering. When



compared to students who completed international volunteering trips however, more detailed preparation did not result in any clear advantages or benefits to the service-learning students' volunteer experience. Both groups of students had similar abilities to respond to challenges; complete their personal goals, accomplish the volunteer organization's mission, and manage other aspects of their volunteer experience. After volunteering, service-learning students engaged in longer reflection and discussion of their experience. This too did not result in any significant change between the two groups. Students from both volunteer forms ultimately reported similar rankings of their volunteer experience.

While there are many components that help create a volunteer experience, the volunteers themselves might be the most important input. The volunteer's ability to manage challenges, handle frustration, and execute the volunteer work and thrive while volunteering may be aided by other parties. This thesis however could not confirm differences between service-learning and voluntary service experiences with regards to preparation, in-trip guidance, or reflection had any significant effect on the student's volunteer experience. While the preparation and guidance can be tools to utilize while volunteering, the student may ultimately be responsible for utilizing them and shaping his or her volunteer experience.

### **Future Directions**

I believe research in the international volunteering field still has significant room to grow. The motivation for this thesis was to explore the components of student international volunteering trips. I had participated in an international service-learning trip to India and an international voluntary service experience to Uganda. I had believed the dissimilarities in the two experiences were due to the differences in preparation and guidance. I chose to implement this research project to test this belief by studying the international volunteer experiences of other students. Using this research as a base, it would be valuable to continue comparing and contrasting international service-learning with international voluntary service. However, the participant pool

should consist of students who have completed at least two international volunteering experiences. A similar study could include students who have completed one of each experience. Instead of focusing on the complete volunteering experience, future research could select one of the three stages of volunteering and analyze how it affects the student experience as a whole.

An additional future direction for research in the field of international volunteering can shift focus and include student motivations for volunteering. I attempted to explore that facet in this research, but did not place enough emphasis on student motivations to yield any notable results. As Schroeder et al. (2009) discuss, individuals with personal motivations to partake in a volunteering experience that do not directly relate to volunteering can have a negative impact on the host organization and community. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to examine the personal motivations of service-learning and voluntary service volunteers to understand how personal motivations affect the volunteering experience. Overall, the purpose of this research was to study the student experience while volunteering. I believed that was a gap in the volunteering literature worth exploring and continues to be a relevant area of research.

As international volunteering continues to become more attractive to students, valuable to host organizations, and beneficial to many people, the benefits of researching how guidance throughout international service-learning and international voluntary service trips affects the volunteer experience will extend beyond the just the volunteer.

## Appendix A

### Survey

#### International Volunteering and Service Learning Survey

The purpose of this study is to better understand student experiences in international service learning and volunteering. This survey is part of the research being conducted by Nishant Pandya for his senior thesis at The Pennsylvania State University Schreyer Honors College.

The on line survey should take about 10-30 minutes to complete. Nishant Pandya will keep your answers confidential. Participation in this survey is fully voluntary and if you reach any question you do not want to answer, you may skip it or stop at any time. There are no risks in participating in this survey.

The last question of the survey will ask if you are interested in participating in a one on one interview with Nishant Pandya to speak further about your volunteer experience. If you would choose so, you may provide your contact information to arrange this interview. The additional interview is fully voluntary.

Please contact Nish Pandya at [nxp5065@psu.edu](mailto:nxp5065@psu.edu) or 484-866--3438 if you have any questions or concerns.

#### Pre-Departure Questions

##### What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

##### In what category do you believe your volunteer experience belongs to? **\*Required**

International Service Learning is a volunteer experience that includes an academic or learning component. Trips of these natures strive to complete the mission of the volunteer organization and to use service as a tool to aid learning. International Volunteering involves volunteering for a host organization. The mission of these trips is identical or nearly identical to that of the host organization.

- International Service Learning
- International Volunteering

##### What type of organization did you volunteer through?

- Penn State Course
- Penn State Program
- Organization/Club
- Independent/ Non-Governmental Organization

##### What was the name of this organization?

##### What region was your volunteer experience in?

- South America
- Central America
- Europe
- Middle East
- Asia
- Oceania
- Other:

**What was the duration of your trip?**

- Less Than 1 Week
- 1-2 Weeks
- 3-4 Weeks
- 4-6 Weeks
- 6-8 Weeks
- Greater Than 8 Weeks

### **Pre-Departure Questions**

**How long before the trip did you begin receiving formal preparation?** Classes, seminars, webinars, or any planned preparation for the upcoming volunteer experience.

- 6+ months
- 4-6 months
- 2-4 months
- 4-8 weeks
- 2-4 weeks
- 1-2 weeks
- Under 1 week
- 1 day
- After reaching volunteer destination

**Who was responsible for this preparation?**

- PSU Faculty/Staff
- Fellow Student
- Volunteer/Employee of Host Organization
- Other:

**Did this person accompany you on your volunteer experience?**

- Yes
- No

**Had the person responsible for your preparation participated in this volunteer experience before?**

- Yes
- No

**In what setting was this preparation conducted?**

- Classroom setting with under 20 people
- Classroom setting with over 20 people
- Web based (videos, online chat, Skype)
- One-on-one with instructor
- Other:

**Did you partake in preparation with all the students or volunteers you would be traveling with?**

Was preparation done together or in groups?

- Yes
- No

**How many preparation sessions did you partake in before beginning your trip?**

Number of sessions

**How many total hours of preparation did you receive before beginning your travels?**

**What topics were covered in your preparation for the trip?**

About the country or volunteer experience

- Language
- Culture/Cultural Norms
- Customs/Traditions
- Gender Roles
- Socioeconomic status
- Geography
- History
- Government
- Religion
- Economics
- Travel details
- Other:

**Did your preparation cover the specific community, town, or village you would volunteer in?**

- Yes
- No

**What information did you cover about the specific location of volunteering?**

- Culture
- Traditions
- Language
- Socioeconomic Status
- Economics
- History
- Other:

**What issues did your preparation cover in regards to actions and behaviors?**

- Gender roles
- Money and spending
- Travel
- Meals and eating customs
- Speaking/Conversations
- Gestures and body language
- Value of time
- Clothing and dress
- Alcohol and drugs
- Other:

**Did your preparation cover challenges you may expect to see on the trip?**

- Yes
- No

**Did your preparation make you aware of challenges you had not expected or already thought of?**

- Yes
- No

**What sorts of challenges had your preparation covered?**

- Living situation challenges
- Cultural transition challenges
- Volunteer work challenges
- Language challenges
- Travel challenges
- Gender role challenges
- Other:

### Pre-Departure Questions

**Had you done any additional preparation by yourself beyond the provided formal preparation?**

- Online research about host country
- Online research on host village/city/town
- Practicing language
- Speaking to past volunteers
- Contacting the host volunteer organization
- Other:

**How did you feel about your preparation before you began your volunteer experience?**

I felt completely unprepared to begin my  
volunteering experience

I felt completely prepared for my  
volunteer experience

### What goals did you have for your volunteer experience?

Personal goals

- Travel to another country
- Sightsee
- Volunteer in a foreign country
- Learn a new language
- Learn a new culture
- Other:

**What motivated you to travel to this country?**

All that apply

- Desire to help that specific location
- Personal connection to the location
- Interest in the country's culture and tradition
- Interest in the country's language
- Desire to travel internationally
- Desire to visit that specific country
- Comfort with that specific country
- Desire to volunteer for a specific volunteer organization
- Interest to aid that specific country

**What do you believe the mission of your host volunteer organization was?**

1-2 sentences

**To what extent do you feel you understood the host organization's mission before departing?**

---

I was unaware of what the volunteer organization was trying to accomplish

I was fully aware of what the host organization was trying to accomplish

---

### **In-Trip Questions**

**To what extent did the living conditions at the host country match your expectations of your living situation?**

The living conditions was much harsher than I had expected

The living conditions provided much more accommodation than I had expected

---

**To what extent were you able to communicate with the local citizens?**

I could not communicate at all

I could effectively communicate independently

---

**Was the person(s) in charge of your preparatory component with you in the host country?**

- Yes
- No

**Was there an additional supervisor on the trip?**

- Volunteer/Employee of host organization
- Citizen of the host country
- A different PSU Faculty/Staff
- Other:

**To what extent did you were you aware of your day-to-day tasks before departing for your trip?**

I had no idea what I would be doing on a day to day basis

I knew exactly what I would be doing each day

---

**To what extent were your activities structured?**

- Very High- every day's activities were known ahead of time broken down by hour]
- High: [The day's activities were known before the volunteer experience began]
- Average: [The leader reported each activities/duties daily]
- Low: [The days activities were planned during the day]
- Very low: [volunteers were in charge of planning their day's activities]
- Other:

**To what extent did you as a volunteer control how you spent your day?**

- High [made the majority of your decisions]
- Moderate [could choose from a pool of decisions]
- Low: [activities were assigned]



**To what degree would you have preferred your volunteer experience to be structured?**

Much less structured than it was

Much more structured than it was

**What, if any, challenges did you face during your volunteer experience?**

- Implementing the volunteer organization's mission
- Accomplishing your own personal goals
- Intended volunteer goal ultimately failed
- Frustrations with fellow volunteers
- Frustration with host organization
- Frustration with structure of the volunteer organization
- Frustration with host country's culture
- Frustrations with local citizens
- Difficulty in living situation
- Difficulty in adapting to new culture
- Homesickness
- I did not face any challenges
- Other:

**Were you surprised by the number of challenges you faced?**

I was not surprised at all by the challenges

I was very surprised by the challenges I faced

**How did the challenges you faced correspond to the challenges you expected to face?**

I expected to face many more challenges

I expected to face many fewer challenges

**To what extent do you believe your preparation helped you respond to challenges?**

The preparation did not help me respond to challenges at all

The preparation was extremely useful in responding to challenges

**In what ways did your preparation help you respond to challenges?**

- Helped me expect challenges I would face
- Helped me find solutions to challenges
- Helped me manage frustrations that result from challenges
- Helped me develop gauge expectations for the volunteer experience
- Helped me develop plans that would minimize potential future challenges
- Other:

**What aspect of your preparation did you find most helpful in responding to challenges?**

- Language

- Culture
- Customs/Traditions
- Gender Roles
- Socioeconomics
- Geography
- History
- Government
- Religion
- Economics
- Past Volunteers' Experiences
- Volunteer Host Organization
- Other:

**How do you believe you could have been more prepared for your trip?**

- Beginning the preparatory component before the trip
- Learning more about the host country's customs/culture
- Learning more about the host country's language
- Learning more about what you would be doing on a day to day basis
- Learning the country's language better
- Learning more about the volunteer organization's structure
- Learning more about the volunteer organization's mission
- Other:

**What do you believe would be the benefit of having this additional preparation?**

- Greater ability to accomplish personal goals
- Greater ability to accomplish the organization's goals
- Greater ability to respond to challenges
- Greater ability to learn the country's culture and language
- More enjoyable volunteering experience
- Learning more about the volunteer organization's mission
- Other:

### **Post-Trip Questions**

**What limitations did you feel as a volunteer?**

- Limited by knowledge of the country and culture
- Limited by academic education

- Limited by a language barrier
- Limited by structure of volunteer organization
- Limited by volunteer and peers
- Limited by citizens of the host country
- Limited by the challenges faced during the experienced
- Other:

**To what extent did you accomplish what you had hoped to accomplish during your volunteer experience?**

Did not accomplish anything you had hoped

Accomplished everything you had hoped

**Did your preparation help you better accomplish your personal goals?**

- Yes
- No

**In what ways did your preparation help you accomplish your personal goals?** 1-2 sentences max.

**Did your preparation help you accomplish your organization's goals?** 1-2 sentences max.

- Yes
- No

**To what extent do you feel your trip as a whole accomplished the mission your volunteer organization had set forth?**

Failed to accomplish mission

Accomplished the mission to the fullest extent

**In what ways did your preparation help you accomplish your organization's goals?** 1-2 sentences max.

- Comfort with culture, customs, and traditions
- Familiarity with language
- Comfort with living situation
- Familiarity with the organization mission's goal
- Familiarity with the day to day tasks
- Challenges faced during the trip were not surprises
- Ability to respond to and overcome challenges
- Other:

**Did you have daily/nightly debriefs with your trip supervisor/leader?**

- Yes
- No

**Was there a structured system for you to express frustration or challenges to a supervisor or leader?**

- Yes
- No

**How often did your volunteer leader or superior reach out to you to ask you how you were processing your experience and handling the challenges?**

- Frequently asked
- Occasionally Asked
- Rarely Asked
- Never Asked

**How did you feel about the level of in trip guidance you received?**

I would have preferred much less discussion, debriefing, reflecting and conversation about challenges

I would have preferred much more discussion, debriefing, reflecting and conversation about challenges

**To what extent did you experience feelings of being overwhelmed and flustered when responding to challenges on this trip?**

I never felt overwhelmed

I frequently felt overwhelmed

**Do you believe more structured methods of discussing challenges would have helped you manage the challenges you faced?**

Greater discussion would not have helped me better face challenges

Greater discussion would have greatly helped me better face challenges

**Did you participate in a post trip debrief or reflection?**

- Yes
- No

**How many sessions of debrief did you partake in?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7+

**How many total hours of debrief/reflecting did you partake in?**

**Did you find group reflection helpful for processing your volunteer experience?**

Not helpful at all

Very helpful

**Did post trip reflection change the way you viewed the trip?**

---

I viewed the trip much more negatively  
after reflection

I viewed the trip much more positively  
after reflection

---

**How did reflection change the perception of your trip?** 1-2 sentences max.

**Would you return to the country in which you volunteered?**

- Yes
- No

**Why would you return?**

- To continue accomplishing the organization's mission
- To return to that specific country
- To continue living in the country's culture
- To work further with your specific volunteer organization
- Other:

**Why would you choose not to return?**

- You would not choose to continue volunteering for that specific organization
- You would not want to return to that specific country
- You would not be interested in volunteering internationally
- Other:

**How would you rank your perception of your volunteer organization before your trip?**

Very poorly

Very Highly

---

**How would you rank your perception of your volunteer organization after your trip?**

Very poorly

Very Highly

---

**How, if applicable, did your perception of the volunteer organization change?** 1-2 sentences max.

**How would you rank your volunteer experience?**

I was very dissatisfied with my  
experience

I was extremely satisfied with my  
experience

---

**What, if anything, would you change about your volunteer experience to improve it?**  
1-2 sentences max.

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The Pennsylvania State University Schreyer Honors College  
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## **Honors and Awards**

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## **Association Memberships/Activities**

- Family Relations Chair (2011-2012) and Donor Alumni Relations Chair (2012-2014) for Springfield, Benefitting THON
- Penn State Lion Ambassadors (2012-2013)
- Volunteer for HOINA (Homes of the Indian Nation) program (2011)
- Volunteer intern for the Uganda Village Project