THE MOTIVATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS IN

ALTERNATIVE BREAK PROGRAMS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

OF U.S. AND NIGERIAN PARTICIPANTS

By

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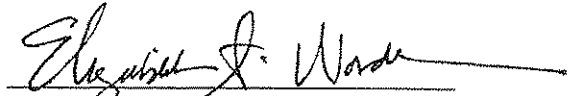of American University

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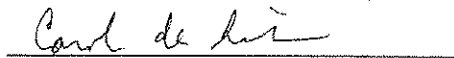the Requirements of the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

Study abroad has been a significant educational experience for many years impacting student development and intercultural competence. Over the years, however, the traditional study abroad experience has transformed and expanded offering more students different opportunities to travel and learn abroad. Specifically, the emergence of international service learning (ISL) and short term, international alternative break programs have addressed the needs of students looking for more "hands-on" experiences as well as those students seeking short term opportunities that may better suit their financial and educational needs. These new developments, however, must be examined in order to maintain ethical standards of practice while offering students the best learning opportunities available. In order to address this need, universities are responsible to investigate the motivations and outcomes of the different stakeholders included in the different study abroad programs, namely the student participants and the host communities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, study abroad has taken many forms and served numerous

functions that have varied from cultural exchange to more specialized subject studies

such as language acquisition. By further investigating student motivations to study abroad

it has been determined that students are interested in a range of influencers that augment

their decision to participate such as: a desire to travel, meet new people, develop

intercultural competencies, and increase their marketability in the workforce (Daly &

Barker, 2005). Over the past ten years, however, study abroad has seen some significant

shifts in practice with students and universities seeking less traditional forms of

international education. Platter, Jones, Bringle, and Clayton (2009) addressed this arguing

that universities are now, more than ever, faced with engaging students and

internationalizing across institutional missions through offering new opportunities.

Recent research, as discussed in later chapters, illustrates that study abroad has been

paired with volunteer work in the hopes of addressing these new opportunities and

advancing student learning through hands-on cultural experiences. These experiences

have been designed to enhance the traditional learning environment and encourage "non-

traditional" students to study abroad. One variation has included the short-term,

international alternative break experiences. While not generally associated with the study

abroad canon, the growing popularity of these programs has steadily increased as national

levels of participation have gone from 35,000 student participants in the year 2004 to

72,000 participants reported in 2010 (Lipka, 2004; Break Away, The Alternative Connection, Inc, n.d.). However, regardless of the increased popularity, the impact of these programs on the communities and students has not been fully researched (Lough, McBride, & Sherraden, 2009). As with all emerging fields, the overall success and the perceived success must always be monitored and evaluated. Thus, to better connect how students understand this field of study abroad education, my research aims to deconstruct how students' personal motivations shape their individual understandings of the stated purpose of alternative break programs and, subsequently, how participants position these different opportunities within their own educational pursuits and life goals through a comparative analysis.

Conducted at two universities, one in the United States and one in Nigeria, I sought to analyze student understandings of community service and how these understandings influence student desires to participate in different community service programs available at the university level. The two participant groups had different types of service opportunities available to them; however, both types of programs were solely based on volunteer participation. No academic credit was received and neither population was offered any form of compensation for their participation. The U.S. students interviewed were comprised of alternative break participants, while the Nigerian students interviewed strictly participated in local community service. As this research intended to specifically focus on the alternative break process, Nigerian students were asked to comment not only on their own motivations for participating in local community service projects, but to further comment on how they perceived the benefits and impacts of alternative breaks. They were also asked, if given the opportunity, whether they would

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like to participate in an alternative break and why. This aspect of my research discussed how a potential host community understood their own role in community service in conjunction to how they felt about U.S. students participating in international service. This distinction allowed me the opportunity to both analyze how student motivations impacted the ethical orientation of alternative break programs and research how cultural heritage influenced student motivations by comparing the responses of both participant groups.

Within the contexts of my research locations, participants from the United States and Nigeria described similar motivations for participating in general community service, such as giving back to the community or feeling an obligation due to their societal status as upper or middle class. However, Nigerian students gave more well-informed answers surrounding the long term effects of service on different communities. This comparison specifically examined the differences in how cultural heritage shaped attitudes and motivations towards community service. I further examined how motivations influenced how both populations viewed the perceived outcomes and benefits of alternative break programs. I found that students from the U.S. consistently chose to participate in an alternative break only partially to partake in any form of community service, and subsequently to benefit society. Rather, U.S. students were more likely to look at the international and education aspect of alternative break programs, which led them to programs that would augment their personal growth rather than aligning their participation with the service objective. Conversely, when discussing international service opportunities, the Nigerian students displayed an interest in how these programs would allow them the opportunity to bring knowledge back to their own country in the

pursuit of strengthening communities. Subsequently, the comparison highlighted how the U.S. student population was motivated to participate in the international community service opportunity for personal benefit before community development, which ultimately circumventing the ethical underpinnings these programs claim to address.

<div align="center">Scope and Significance</div>

The analysis was completed in a three-stage process. First, I examined how the U.S. students' motivations, as defined by their personal histories and their emotional and intellectual development, impacted their individual perceptions of the stated purpose of the intended program, and how these motivations determined their participation. I further examined the responses from Nigerian participants in order to understand their motivations for participating in local community service and how their personal development and environment effected that decision. Second, I analyzed these results to further understand how the participants, both from the United States and Nigeria, translated these experiences into their own educational pursuits and or life goals. I also examined how participating in these programs shaped students' desire to continue working with community service projects in the future. I finally examine how the Nigerian students interpreted and processed the concept of an alternative break, which focused on their desire to participate in a similarly styled program, but more specifically focused on their emotions and thoughts towards students from the United States who traveled great distances to participate in community service projects. This provided me with insight regarding how these programs are viewed by a developing nation so as to more fully grasp the ethical implications surrounding the decision to go abroad to participate in community service.

This research was guided by four main research questions: (1) How do the motivations of student participants in community service programs inadvertently determine the purpose of the program as a whole? (2) How does participation in this type of program, either as a form of study abroad or at a local level, benefit the participants, universities, and communities? (3) In what way does the alternative break program offer students an opportunity to study abroad while contributing to their personal development during his or her time at a university or college, and what are the subsequent ethical implications? (4) How do students from a developing country perceive the assistance offered by these programs?

To guide this research, I collected qualitative data, which will be divided in the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Literature Review: In this chapter, I will first offer an introduction to the changes in the field of study abroad followed by a discussion of student development theory and its application to study abroad. I will follow this by a review of the historical emergence of community service and community service learning. I will end the chapter with a discussion of the development of international service learning and alternative breaks. This final section will focus on the theoretical outcomes of these types of programs in relation to student and community development so as to illustrate how universities promote these programs for students.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures: In this chapter, I will discuss the methods used to collect data including a detailed account of the interview process with both U.S. and Nigerian students, and the limitations of the research.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis: In this chapter, I will detail the different types of community service options available to the two student groups. I will then include the findings from the United States, Nigeria, and a detailed comparison of the two subject groups. I will further discuss the impact this data has on the field of study abroad and service learning.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations: I will finally draw conclusion based on the literature and the findings of the research. I will further address recommendations for the field as they arise.

The significance of this study is that it examined how student motivations for participating in international service projects can impact the overall outcome of the different projects, which is lacking in current research. This study further offers a new point of view when examining the design of alternative break projects by including the field of study abroad in the discussion. By gaining a full understanding of student motivations, practitioners will be able to design programs that are most beneficial to the development of the student. Further, by examining the perceived benefits offered by both the U.S. and Nigerian participants, practitioners will be able to address the underlying ethical implications of combining service with these short-term international experiences. McBride and Mlyn (2012) argued that, "A poorly managed service trip or service-learning course can hurt the communities that are letting us in and their views of our institutions and the country or countries we represent" (p. 3). In order to avoid this fate it is imperative that students, universities, and practitioners work together to produce ethically sound and responsible international service programs that benefit the community and student alike.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research examined student motivations to participate in community service

oriented programs. Specifically, the research aimed to examine these motivations in

connection to the combination of service with study abroad through alternative breaks. In

order to understand these motivations it is first important to understand the current

dialogue around internationalization and the student experience while in college. It is

further important to examine the emergence of community service in the United States

and the current trends in university service oriented programs. The literature surrounding

study abroad and international service learning (ISL) is growing as the two fields

continue to increase in popularity. However, research surrounding the alternative break

phenomenon, specifically, is limited. In this chapter, I will first explore the evolution of

study abroad and the introduction of community service to the field. I will then discuss

student development theory as it applies to the field, followed by a thorough examination

of the current data on ISL and alternative break programs. Finally, I will discuss possible

ethical dilemmas throughout the sections, which may be encountered when pursuing this

type of study abroad program.

The Evolution of Study Abroad over the Past Ten Years

According to the Institute of International Education Open Doors Data (2011) for

the 2009/2010 school year, the popularity of study abroad programs has steadily

increased. Over the last ten years, study abroad participation has increased from over

154,000 participants in the 2000/2001 school year to a most recent calculation of 270,604 participants.[1] Within these numbers, participants in study abroad programs, lasting 8 weeks or less, has increased from 7.4% in the 2000/2001 school year to 11.9% of participants choosing to study abroad through short-term programs. This increase in popularity is even more striking when paired next to the more traditional semester and yearlong programs. Rather than growing alongside the popularity of study abroad in general, these more traditional programs are steadily declining in student participation. In fact, semester long programs have dropped from a 38.5% participation rate ten years ago to a 35.8% participation rate in the last academic year while yearlong programs have decreased from 7.3% to a staggering 3.1% participation rate. While this data does not explain the large decrease in the participation of more traditional study abroad experiences, it can be inferred that student motivations and perceived benefits of the field have changed. Students and universities are still seeking international learning opportunities to develop different competencies on both a local and international scale, but they now appear to be seeking a less traditional route (IIE Open Doors Data, 2011, U.S. Study Abroad: Duration of Study Abroad).

One explanation for this increased interest in these new study aboard opportunities is that, as universities continue to encourage students to study abroad, more students from varying fields and economic backgrounds have become interested in the opportunity, which has shifted the previous focus while also unearthing new motivations. Further, students are seeking opportunities that are more skill based and less theory based

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[1] For a full account of the Open Doors data, please refer to the annual Institute for International Education Open Doors Data retrieved from http://www.iie.org/opendoors

in order to be the most prepared when entering the workforce. Universities are subsequently tasked with creating more options from which students are able to choose. In order to address this shift, it is evident that universities are no longer seeking to singularly address the traditional educational goals and time frames when developing study abroad programs. Instead practitioners have sought new mediums to engage students, one of which has been the recent pair with service learning in order to address what Plater, Jones, Bringle, and Clayton (2009) referred to as, "an urgent attention to global interactions" (p. 485). These researchers, specialists in the field of international service learning, suggested that it is the duty of universities and students to address globalization through hands on learning which can further incorporate civic engagement.

From a university perspective, the combination of study abroad and service learning allows students both the increasingly valued international experience with a hands-on application of learning. Research further indicates that these ISL programs have been designed to enhance the traditional learning environment, increase student enrollment, promote civic responsibility, and encourage students to pursue the different opportunities present at the university level (Plater et al., 2009). While it is indicated that the application of service should be defined from institution to institution based on individual university missions, research states that these programs are designed with both the student and community in mind (Plater et al., 2009). This shift in the field assumes that applied learning will augment traditional learning by allowing students the opportunity to practice what they have learned in the classroom in an international arena. Theoretically, students will gain relevant work experience in combination with intercultural competencies while giving back to the community at large. Bringle and

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Hatcher (2011) argued, "As a result, the international service experience provides opportunities for additional learning goals, activities and relationships that are not available in the same domestic service learning course or in a traditional study abroad course" (p. 11). This argument underlines the theory that the increased popularity of short-term service oriented programs addresses new motivations of students and universities who are seeking to increase both global competence and skill acquisition.

A weakness in the research surrounding the incorporation of service with study abroad is that, while community benefits are consistently discussed, they are not explicitly explored. Rather, research appears to assume that communities will benefit through service as a peripheral addition to the priority goal of student development. Service learning is predominately described more in relation to the learning than the service. This is underlined by Wessel's (2007) definition as applied to an international service learning program: "As a general rule, service learning is intended to link theory with practice, provide opportunities for active learning, and supplement the classroom experience" (p. 76). While theory states that both the student and the community benefit from ISL, continued focus on student development and learning appears to overshadow community development.

Student Development Theory

The underlying assumption throughout this research is that the opportunity to study abroad is beneficial to the emotional and intellectual development of students while attending college. As a result, in order to understand the benefits of study abroad, and the subsequent motivations that arise out of these assumed benefits, it is first important to understand how students develop while in college. For a university to claim that study

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abroad is beneficial to the student population it must illustrate what growth takes place while students are participating in the different programs offered. Subsequently, a strong understanding of student development theory must be examined. While there is not one theory of development that is more right than any other, many are formed on the foundation of Perry's Intellectual and Cognitive Scheme of Student Development.

Evans, Forney, Guido-DiBrito, Renn and Patton (2010) discuss the background of Perry's theory noting that it was developed in the 1950s and 1960s while William G. Perry Jr. was the director of Harvard University's Bureau of Study Counsel to address a lack of research on the adolescent to adult hood transition within cognitive and ethical development (Evans et al., 2010). Perry's theory of Cognitive and Ethical Development, or Perry's Scheme of Development, focuses on four major stages: duality, multiplicity, relativism, and commitment to relativism. The theory assumes, though does not require, students to begin at the dualistic stage upon entering the university system. Baxter Magolda further pushed Perry's Scheme of Development by examining how students reason when facing the different experiences of being a university student (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006). Specifically, in her theory, Magolda underlined that, "From a developmental perspective, it is assumed that learners actively attempt to interpret or make sense of their experiences" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p.627). As students experience the world around them, be it on or off campus, they reach different levels of development, which change from experience to experience. In relation to the goals of study abroad, namely the acquisition of cultural competence, students experience their new international arena and transition through stages in order to fully comprehend and address their surroundings.

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Before continuing, Perry's Scheme of Development is lacking in some areas. Specifically, the original data collected by Perry came from a uniform participant group of predominately white, middle class males attending Harvard in the 1950's (Evans et al., 2010). This has disallowed Perry's theory to be applied across cultures and, at times, does not fully incorporate the differences between genders. However, this does not disqualify his research. Instead, it is important to also examine researchers such as Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule, also researchers in the field of student development, these theorists created the development theory Women's Ways of Knowing, which incorporates more cultural and gender diversity at the onset of the research. Importantly, this new theory of development did not reject Perry's research but instead built on it. Specifically, the theory still develops on a scale and the different stages are parallel to Perry's Scheme (Merriam & Cafferella, 2006). With this knowledge, Perry's data should be questioned; however, his research is the foundation of student development and can and should be applied to study abroad.

At the onset of Perry's theory is dualistic thinking. In this stage, students find that there is right or wrong answer and the authority—be it a professor, parent, administrator or any other control figure—has the answers (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006, p. 330). Students in this stage are not yet capable of discerning different value systems and see the world more dichotomously or as right and wrong, black or white (Evans, et al. 2010). While in this phase it is not ideal for a student to study abroad as they may have a difficult time accepting the values of a new society. Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman addressed this concern in their research measuring the development of intercultural sensitivity. They found that, while studying abroad, students are likely to move on a

pendulum of development in the following stages: Denial, Defense Reversal, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and lastly Integration. A student in the dualistic stage of Perry's Scheme would unlikely be able to move out of denial, which can be categorized as: "Denial of cultural difference is the state in which one's own culture is experienced as the only real one" (Hamer, et al., 2003, p. 424). Due to the nature of the dualistic stage and the need for right and wrong answers, students are less capable of understanding the nuances and subtle differences between cultures. It therefore becomes difficult for these students to accept the tensions and struggles when there may not be a definitive answer.

Rather, a student rooted well within the multiplistic stage of development, wherein they have the ability to acknowledge that different opinions exist and are valid, is an ideal starting place. Evans et al. (2010) explained this stage: "In reality, Perry characterized multiplicity as honoring diverse views when the right answers are not yet known" (p. 86). In this stage, students are able to view problems set before them and seek out answers rather than assuming the unique existence of right and wrong. This is not to say that students who have achieved the multiplistic stage of development will bypass the denial stage in intercultural development. Instead they are able to understand that different values exist and are able to critically examine them. Hammer et al. (2003) argued,

> According to the constructivist view, experience does not occur simply by being in the vicinity of events when they occur. Rather, experience is a function of how one construes the event. The more perceptual and conceptual discriminations that can be brought to bear on the event, the more complex will be the construction of the event, and thus the richer will be the experience. In the case of intercultural relations, the "event" is that of cultural difference. The extent to which the event

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of cultural difference will be experienced is a function of how complexly it can be constructed.

Considering this argument, it is evident that a student who has reached multiplicity, who is able to view complex issues and acknowledge the existence of the unknown, is more capable of experiencing cultural difference and continuing to develop intercultural competence, moving forward on the development scheme.

Perry's final two stages, relativism and commitment to relativism, focus on a student's ability to support opinions and making choices in context (Evans, et al., 2010). Students who have reached these two stages are not only capable of understanding different value systems they are also able to articulate the relevance and legitimacy of differing opinions. Students within these stages of development are ideal for study abroad programs as they would be most capable of committing to acceptance, adaptation, and finally, integration. It is also largely why many students are encouraged to postpone study abroad until they are older and better established at the university. These stages of development fall into ethno-relativism or, more precisely, this is part of development where the student is able to experience their own culture within the context of another culture without becoming defensive of either value system (Hammer et al., 2003). The argument underlines that, because the students at this stage of development are able to recognize and welcome different opinions they would be more capable of maintaining their values while appreciating the values of other cultures and peoples. Further, Perry underlined that these later stages moved away from strict cognitive development into ethical development (Evans et al., 2010). Subsequently, a student that is already

committed to relativism would be more capable of viewing and acclimating to cultural differences and would comfortably adjust to study abroad.

The argument for study abroad, however, is not to send students who are already well developed into situations where they may be comfortable. Their current development must be taken into consideration but not more so than their potential for future development. Dr. Rial W. Nolan (2009) a professor of anthropology at Purdue University and specialist in international development, cross-cultural adaptation, and applied anthropology, argued for promoting study abroad as a means to facilitate learning and, subsequently, student development. He stated:

> To live—and succeed—in the world as it is today, we need to develop new ways of thinking. And to do this, we need to develop new ways of learning. It's no longer enough for our students to "know the material." They need to know *what to do* with the material in a changing, diverse, and often contradictory global environment. (p. 268)

While being in Perry's final stages of development would be the ideal for a student to travel abroad, that is not always the best way to facilitate their learning or complete development. Further, to claim that a student must be in these final stages in order to participate in study abroad activities would eliminate a large portion of the student body, especially younger students. In fact, participating in a learning experience outside of one's comfort level may lead to faster and stronger development. Che, Spearman, and Manzade (2009), discussed the importance of study abroad in relation to student development in their research on study abroad in less-familiar destinations. They found that, "These implications are that learning… directed at one's current level of development are inadequate, and that development involves struggle and dissonance"

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(Che et al., 2009, p. 102). In order to facilitate development, a university should encourage students to step outside what they would consider comfortable.

While student development theory offers a strong argument in support of study abroad, it is an area where more research is required, especially on a more long-term scale. The research completed by Hammer et al. (2003), while expansive testing nearly 600 participants, requires a larger investigation into the long-term effects of study abroad. The researchers believed that there were six major areas that required more research: (1) do the levels predict less cultural stress among study abroad participants, (2) is there more satisfaction with living and working abroad or in a different culture, (3) is job success in different cultures higher, (4) do these levels illustrate lower occurrence of prejudice, (5) is there less resistance to diversity initiatives post return, and finally, (6) does study abroad encourage less violence towards people from different cultures? Further, the research conducted by Che et al. (2009) is largely based in theory and does not offer a great deal of empirical research. They urged that researchers focus on why students are seeking study abroad opportunities as well as a more nuanced investigation into why more women than men are studying abroad and what locations attract different students based on field of study and gender.

Study Abroad Discourse and Motivations

The relevance and impact of study abroad has been debated by numerous scholars over the years, and rightfully so. Why is study abroad a useful educational tool? Skelly (2009), whose sociological work is rooted in peace and conflict as well as personal constructions of reality in connection to peace and conflict, addressed this concern in his research on the role international education plays in developing students' role in society:

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> At a very basic level, students choose to study because they want new understandings and new experiences; this is especially true for students who choose to study in a society and culture other than the one where they underwent primary socialization. (p. 28)

The underlying argument in Skelly's research is that a university experience, for any student, is a new means of socialization and understanding of the world around them. Theoretically, as societies are becoming increasingly internationalized, it is considered important for the upcoming generations of students to expand their socialization efforts and for universities to include a global aspect; study abroad intrinsically meets this need and can be connected to the motivations students have for traveling to new destinations to pursue educational opportunities. With this in mind, Skelly (2009) continued, "It should be a requirement at higher education institutions that all students engage in a significant period of study abroad in order to help them see the globe as the context, and fundamental referent, for their lives" (p. 22). This argument for study abroad claims that new experiences, which shape students' cultural awareness happen while studying at the university level as students develop within the context of their living and learning environment; however, the research further stipulates and assumes that internationalization and the growth of students' global comprehension is best met through hands-on global experiences, such as study abroad.

The debate surrounding study abroad is further coupled with the concept of global citizenship and its connection to intercultural competence, though little research has been completed that deconstructs this highly western phrase, which specifically stems from the U.S. university system. The concept of global citizenship is regularly utilized in U.S. university marketing as underlined by Zemach-Bresin (2009) from Yale University who

specified, "Students are told that they can purchase not only international travel itself, but also cross-cultural understanding, global citizenship, personal advancement, and adventure" (p. 305). Highly influential in student motivations, this prescribed method of obtaining a global perspective is sold to students through marketing to their desire to become more active participants in globalization. Daly and Barker's (2005) research focused on student participation in study abroad with a detailed discussion of student motivations. The researchers specifically commented throughout the study that developing intercultural competence was a major influence in students' decision to participate in study abroad opportunities so as to become more aware global citizens. The chance to obtain the status of global citizenship, a passage to adventure and travel, is interweaved throughout the literature on study abroad. It seems impossible to open a discussion about study abroad without mentioning the concept of global citizenship. The research completed by Zemach-Bresin (2009), however, highlighted the privileged assumption that is aligned with this sentiment:

> Indeed, by asserting that global citizenship is gained through study abroad, mission statements and advertisements inadvertently establish global citizenship as a privilege available only to those who have access to higher education, mobility, and relative economic comfort. (p. 316)

Without a comprehensive discussion surrounding the assumption that global citizenship is something that can be awarded, student perceptions, and subsequently motivations, will continue to be influenced by this discourse. The discussion surrounding global citizenship has further misgivings as far as ethical standards when interacting with host communities. Specifically within service oriented programs, which run the risk of granting this global

citizenship to students for participating in service, but not to the host communities who are not traveling for any assortment of different reasons.

Rather than focus on global citizenship, then, it would be beneficial for study abroad practitioners to focus on global and, more significantly, cultural competence that can be fostered by the experiential opportunity offered by the field. Bhauk and Brislin (1992), cited in Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003), argued, "To be effective in another culture people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for people and other cultures" (p. 422). This research does not claim that there is a token obtained through education and privilege. Rather, it focuses on the development of cultural awareness that can be fostered through interest and action. In order to be interculturally competent one must be open to the interpretations and values of different cultures. With all this in mind and the purposes of this research, intercultural competence is loosely described as an ability to understand and appreciate cultures outside of ones own native culture, without sacrificing personal values and customs. In discussing this development in their research on the conceptualization of intercultural competence, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) stated, "Interactants progress from a monoculture worldview to more differentiated, complex, and sophisticated multicultural views" (p. 21). In theory, when students participate in international experiences, their ability to adopt this multicultural vantage point is significantly increased allowing them to become more prepared for living in a global society.

Community Service Learning

In order to understand the emergence of ISL as a field, it is first important to

briefly introduce the field of community service learning (CSL) at the national and

university level. While a form of service learning, as clearly denoted in the title, it is

important to note that ISL is a combination of study abroad and CSL, which lead to

different goals through a similar theory and practice. Therefore, to understand the

motivations and concepts behind ISL, it is first necessary to understand the origins of

CSL and in what way it shapes learning.

As defined by the National Service-Learning Clearing House (NSLCH), service

learning is, "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community

service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic

responsibility, and strengthen communities" (NSLCH, What is Service Learning, 2012).

Many examples of CSL exist, with some dating from the early 20th century with John

Dewey's movement towards intellectual and service based learning opportunities

(NSLCH, Historical timeline, 2012). One predominant and recent example of the rising

popularity of community service efforts, however, can be found in legislation signed by

President, George H. W. Bush. The legislation, The National and Community Service

Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12501 *et seq.* (1990) was created to address "...the unmet

human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs" in the United Sates. Since

then, the nation has seen a continued political movement to promote community service

efforts across all wakes of life including: President Bill Clinton's National and

Community Service Trust act of 1993, leading to the creation of organizations such as

AmeriCorps, Vista, and Learn and Serve America, and President George W. Bush's

founding of the 2003 President's Council on Service and Civic Participation as a way to recognize the contributions made by volunteers across the nation (NSLCH, Historical Timeline, 2012). These efforts, in part, further encouraged the promotion of community service linking with education as states also began to encourage students to participate in outreach with organizations such as Kiwanis and The Points of Light Foundation.

As noted by Kenworthy-U'Ren (2008), "Regarding integration into higher education, the past decade has seen the wide-spread emergence of service-learning as a teaching tool used across a variety of disciplines, educational levels, and universities around the world" (p. 812). In regards to student development and university incorporation of CSL, this style of learning is defined as experiential in nature, which allows for hands-on application of classroom pedagogy as discussed by Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning. Kolb's theory is one of the most widely accepted approaches to understanding how development is affected by learning that is based in action (Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, & Colby, 1996). His theory focuses on concrete experiences in education, which he linked to previous work completed by Dewey (1958), Lewin (1951), and Piaget (1971) with specific focus on learning styles (Evans, et al., 2010). Within Kolb's theory (1984), he outlined four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. He further defined learning as, "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). However, at the university level the application of CSL may be linked to different means and goals of achieving this development. For example, the demographics, size, and general characteristics of any university such as a religious affiliation, or even more specifically degrees and colleges within universities such as

business, may determine how CSL is implemented and for what reason universities seek to engage and develop their student body.

Regarding these different types of university characteristics, the motivations for promoting service may be different. For example, Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, and Colby (1996) discussed CSL in relation to business schools' incorporation of service as a pedagogical tool. In their research, Kolenko et al. (1996) determined that, "When the goal is to apply skills directly toward social or ethical issues, service learning can be successful as an elective course" (p. 137). This research determined that business schools might seek to engage their students in service in order to reinforce learning surrounding an ethical understanding of business in a real world setting. This is a sentiment further illustrated by Anderson and Sungur (1999) who argued in their research on service learning and math education—specifically statistics—that, "The primary benefit of service learning for students is that they are analyzing real data in a local context" (p. 132). Students' education is reinforced by an opportunity to see how their education is applied to the real world and they are motivated by the practical skills learned in connection to theory.

Conversely, other research, such as that conducted by Flannery and Pragman (2007), has determined, "We believe service learning can accomplish both goals of educating students for their professions and for preparing them to be engaged and ethical citizens" (p. 466). Flannery and Pragman's (2007) research also focused on business education, but included consideration for the future civic engagement of students post-graduation. Current research across disciplines illustrates that CSL is most often designed with this latter inclusion of civic engagement in mind. The expectation is that students

who participate in service activates are more likely to continue participating in service throughout their education and life. In describing the goals of CSL, Parker-Gwin and Mabry (1998) specifically illustrated this assumption:

> Two primary goals of service learning for students are positive civic and academic outcomes. Most research has emphasized the first of these goals; that is, how service learning promotes positive attitudes toward volunteering and citizenship and enhances students' sense of social responsibility. (p. 277)

Again, citizenship education is underlined as a driving force in CSL opportunities at liberal arts institutions.

It can be assumed that, while university characteristics such as curricular development do play a determining role in the mission of CSL, institutions and administration implementing the programs will individually determine the overall goal of any CSL program and, subsequently, any development achieved within these programs. Specifically, as noted by Wessel (2007) in her research on the development and implementation of a sociological service learning opportunity abroad, "The literature on service learning is so diverse that it is difficult to reach a definite characterization of exactly what service learning entails" (p. 76). Instead, it is the responsibility of the university and the practitioners to determine and underline the goals of CSL as well as to research the long-term and short-term effects these programs have on development. What is currently lacking in this field is definitive research that monitors the theory that students who participate in these programs become more civically engaged. Rather, practitioners have fueled the field with anecdotal evidence (Myers-Lipton, 1998). Also, the current research illustrated that with education acting as a driving force in these

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service-oriented programs, there appears to be a movement away from the humanitarian aspect of service towards student development and skills acquisition.

International Service Learning

Late in the year of 1960, President John F. Kennedy addressed a group of students at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, asking how many of them would be willing to work in the Foreign Service. With an overwhelmingly positive response of more than 25,000 letters from students, the Peace Corps was created less than a year later (JFK Presidential Library and Museum, n.d.). Both professionals and non-professionals from the U.S. have been working and teaching abroad since as early as 1901 with the intent, while naive at times, of encouraging development and diplomatic relations between countries (Zimmerman, 2006). The spirit of these types of programs is evident in the goals and structure of ISL. As previously illustrated, the 1990s and into the 2000s has seen a wide spread emergence community service and outreach. Further, the connection of community service to experiential learning at the university level has encouraged students to pursue service opportunities that are augmented by their educational background. In theory, these programs offer students the opportunity to develop through hands-on experiences that further their civic engagement and future participation in their communities. Coupled with this service movement, universities are focusing on internationalizing their campuses; as a result, the intersection of study abroad and service learning was immanent. As discussed above, study abroad practitioners are currently faced with engaging students across disciplines and financial stability. The addition of service to study abroad was one form that met these needs.

International service learning, like study abroad, has many forms. Traditionally, these include university led opportunities such as those discussed by Bringle, and Hatcher (2011), wherein students participate in traditional study abroad experiences with the added component of a community service project. These opportunities, however, should not be mistakenly categorized as singularly international volunteer experiences similar to those led by private organizations such as *Cross Cultural Solutions* and *Global Visions International*[2]. While these organizations do offer the opportunity to engage students and even collaborate with universities, their programs are generally focused on international volunteering and not specifically on international learning. Rather than simply providing for volunteer opportunities overseas, ISL offers the extra component of a formal learning environment. The program created by Nancy Wessel illustrates an example of the combination of service, learning, and study abroad. Wessel is a professor at a university in Eastern Washington and researched the university's LINK program for sociology and/or social service majors (Wessel, 2007). In describing the program, Wessel (2007) wrote, "The central component of the program was the quarter in Mexico in which students combined sociology classes and service learning with intensive Spanish-language classes" (p. 78). Wessel (2007) continued to explain that the program was ultimately designed to integrate Spanish-language and sociology learning in connection

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[2] These organizations do offer individuals the opportunity to travel and participate in international service; however, they are not specifically created inline with university curriculum or student participants in mind. Specifically, these organizations function much to the same degree as a third party study abroad office or as an opportunity for individuals to volunteer or intern abroad. Affiliation with a university is not a requirement for participants upon applying to the programs offered through these organizations. Further, these programs are generally privately run, non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations dedicated to the volunteer experience.

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to cultural and community understanding so that the students would be able to better relate to the growing Mexican population in the area. As defined by Plater, et al. (2009), this addition to the international volunteering experience is, "When well designed and effectively implemented, [ISL] is a transformative pedagogy that synthesizes the benefits of both study abroad and service learning" (p. 486). The LINK program described by Wessel (2007) was considered successful as students expressed positive attitudes immediately after returning as well as in follow-up evaluations. Hence, what makes for a successful ISL program is not merely the opportunity to participate in international volunteer work, but is the combination of travel, learning, and reflection through the structure of both a formal course and engaging civic activity.

Plater et al. (2009) further differentiate ISL from community service learning (CSL), as completed on a national level. They asserted, "While domestic service learning can, and increasingly does include cross-cultural learning and global conceptions of citizenship, international service learning inherently calls upon participants in a comparative, if not collective, framework" (p. 486). The researchers assume that ISL provides an opportunity for students to address social community issues through a naturally occurring cross-cultural or global lens provided by the international arena of the programs. It further assumes that this opportunity will ultimately be a useful tool as students develop and make the transition from an academic environment to the post-graduation working environment. In theory, as students become more aware of cross-cultural interactions, they will be more prepared to face the diversity of the workforce. As this is advertised to students, their motivations are subsequently linked to the success of the underlying theory.

It is further argued that the service component of ISL allows students an

opportunity to engage in a hands-on community life style that is most often reserved for

the host community. It is supposedly in this second form, the service component, wherein

ISL seeks to reach beyond the goals of study abroad and into a new realm of student

learning. The goals of ISL are not only to echo those of study abroad, the desire to travel,

meet new people, further cultural development or increase global competence. Rather, the

theory behind ISL is that students are given the opportunity to transcend the traditional

learning environment in the hopes of creating a deeper impact on student participants and

the communities with which they work. Brown (2011) specifically noted:

> Service learning unites academic study and volunteer community service in such
> a way that the one reinforces the other. The service makes the study immediate,
> applicable, and active; the study, through the knowledge and reflection informs
> the service. (p. 58)

With this service component, students are given the chance to break away from their

traditional roles as university students studying in a new environment to become more

engaged citizens in the world around them. Former research by Zemach-Bresin (as cited

in Bringle and Hatcher, 2011) concluded that "traditional study abroad failed to convince

students that "they had become global citizens by studying abroad because they felt that

they had not developed the skills of a global citizen'" (p. 17). The pervasiveness of global

citizenship is, again, offered as a benefit of service learning in the international arena,

though the term is still not deconstructed. Here, it is assumed that global citizenship is an

extension of national citizenship as service theoretically integrates students into a new

community. Considering this association with citizenship development, Bringle and

Hatcher (2011) argued, "Adding a service component provides students with

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opportunities to practice citizenship through community service activities" (p. 18). The

argument presented by Bringle and Hatcher is that global citizenship is attained because

students are participating in what citizens of another country call every day life; this is no

less privileged of an assumption than that highlighted by the previous discussion of

global citizenship. Regardless, the argument remains that while study abroad offers

students the chance to develop into an understanding of cultural relativism as discussed in

regard to student development, in theory, ISL presents students with the opportunity to

develop further and gain stronger competencies through experiential learning. This

understanding both fuels and informs student motivations as the seek different

opportunities.

However, theory and practice do not always coincide as underlined by the

research conducted by Brockington and Wiedenoeft (2009). Structurally speaking, ISL

seeks to engage students for many of the same reasons as study abroad. Students are

motivated by their desire to participate in an international opportunity to increase the

potential and success of their overall university experience. In their research, Brockington

and Wiedenoeft (2009) investigated the possible outcomes of study abroad programs with

experiential learning and argued,

> Even the most carefully crafted set of international learning outcomes or lavishly
> funded international studies programs won't ensure that students will emerge with
> the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will make them engaged global citizens.
> (p. 122)

Also like traditional study abroad programs, for ISL to engage students and increase their

overall development, Brockington and Wiedenoeft (2009) urged that students be given

the opportunity to reflect for the duration of and after completion of the programs. Again

relying on Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential development, for a student to progress, to reach the final stage in intercultural competence as laid out by Hammer et al. (2003), an ISL program cannot rely exclusively on the theory that students will develop by their presence in an international arena.

Not only is the theory behind ISL subject to scrutiny, the perceived effects in comparison to the actual effects must be measured. As previously stated, Americans have participated in both international work and service since the onset of the 20th century (Zimmerman, 2006). In connection to this international service it is imperative that the ethics and societal benefits for both those interacting and host communities are continually examined. For example, Lough, McBride, and Shrraden (2009) in their research on returned international volunteers, cited that alumni reported concerns with the following challenges while volunteering abroad: cultural misunderstandings, language barriers, inappropriate value exchange (i.e. small villages becoming enticed by the big city placing a drain on traditional culture), resource consumption, dependence, cultural imperialism, gender and racial tensions, and a dichotomous power structure between the privileged volunteers and the host communities. Referring to ethical implications, these challenges were not focused on the development of the volunteers, but instead addressed to the relationship between the volunteers and the host communities.

These challenges are not easily addressed or solved, nor can they always be avoided. Using music as an example, Zimmerman (2006) noted in his discussion of teaching abroad and the Peace Corps that, "To these teachers, the problem with the music lay not in sex per se, but in culture: like other imports, rock and roll made their students more Western than they should be" (p. 205). Zimmerman predominately focused on the

naivety of the Peace Corps volunteers' assumption that culture is static, which goes against the cultural exchange aspect of study abroad. In fact, the acquisition of cultural differences is often hailed as a positive aspect of study abroad as it promotes intercultural sensitivity. However, this cultural tradeoff, when met with the challenges addressed by Lough, McBride, and Sherraden's (2009) study, runs the risk of leaving the host community in the reversal stage of Hammer et al.'s (2003) intercultural development. In this stage, participants are likely to believe that the adopted culture is superior to the individual's primary culture (Hammer et al., 2003). If the goal of ISL is to promote the development of student skills and cultural understanding, it leaves practitioners facing the consequences of not considering the goals and values of the host communities and how the presence of students can bring about negative change in the same way it brings about positive change.

<center>Introduction to Alternative Breaks</center>

One form of international service that has become increasingly popular among college students as it becomes a more international endeavor is the chance to participate in an alternative break program. As previously stated, there is currently a distinct lack of research surrounding the development and implementation of alternative break programs with a specific lack of research critically examining the perceived outcomes of these programs. Subsequently, the current research on alternative breaks is very closely related to previous discussions of CSL and ISL with slight differences in the design. Most notably, alternative break programs are generally designed to last one week (Break Away, The Alternative Connection, Inc, n.d., Frequently Asked Questions). Other differences range from curriculum to age range of participants. Alternative breaks are not required to

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be credit bearing leading them to be more centered on the service than the learning. This also allows for a wider array of students to participate.

Alternative break programs seek to promote opportunities for students to participate in national and international service projects, without taking time away from their studies at their home institutions. Rather, the learning environment augments the volunteer service during school breaks through preparation and reflection before, during, and after the completion of the volunteer project. In regards to student development theory, this style of program lends to Kolb's (1984) discussion of experience and reflection promoting development, much in the same way as CSL and ISL and promotes movement on Perry's Scheme through challenging students cultural values. While alternative breaks are not clearly classified as service learning, they encompass many of the same values. Break Away (n.d.), a leading national non-profit organization created in 1991 dedicated to the alternative break experience, defines the field as:

> An alternative break is a trip where a group of college students (usually 10-12 per trip) engage in volunteer service, typically for a week. Alternative break trips originated with college students in the early 1980s as a counter to "traditional" spring break trips. Each trip has a focus on a particular social issue, such as (but not limited to) poverty, education reform, refugee resettlement, and the environment. Students learn about the social issues and then perform week-long projects with local non-profit organizations. Alternative breaks challenge students to critically think and react to problems faced by members of the communities in which they are involved. (Frequently Asked Questions)

Since the induction of alternative break trips in the 1980s, they have expanded from weeklong volunteer trips over spring break to trips during any break in the school year including summer and winter breaks. The most notable difference between service learning and alternative breaks is the lack of a traditional learning environment.

While there is currently not a great deal of research into this field of service, the sheer number of participants underlines the rising popularity of the field. As previously noted, according to statistics collected by Break Away, these programs recruited nearly 35,000 student participants in the year 2004 (Lipka, 2004). These trips, in connection to the recent natural disasters in the last decade, have only seen a surge in popularity with 72,000 participants reported in the year 2010 (Break Away, The Alternative Connection, Inc, n.d., Frequently Asked Questions). This data illustrates the theory that students' motivations for the different opportunities while at school ate changing. They are reaching out for opportunities to participate in hands-on learning activities wherein they can use the skills they have obtained in the classroom in real life experiences.

<div align="center">The Purpose of Alternative Breaks</div>

While different universities generally have their own definitions specific to their particular program needs and goals, one overarching component of the alternative break process is to promote students' civic engagement over their lifetimes within the missions of each separate university. As outlined by Platter et al., (2009), ISL and subsequently alternative breaks, promote the goals of study abroad, such as global competency and appreciation of diversity, while leaving the responsibility and role of citizenship development to the universities discretion and personal missions. According to Break Away, it is the goal of an alternative break not only to provide active volunteering opportunities that address social issues but to also change how the student participants view their own place in society; they illustrate this theorized transformation as the "Active Citizen Continuum" as seen in Figure 1. This continuum explains the change

students are expected to undergo while on an alternative break trip and the necessary

assistance during the process.

The Active Citizen Continuum			
Member	Volunteer	Conscientious Citizen	Active Citizen
Not concerned with his or her role in social problems.	Well-intentioned but not well educated about social issues.	Concerned with discovering root causes; asks why?	Community becomes a priority in values and life choices.

Pre-Break	On-Break	Post-Break
Prepare students for on-site experience and provide basic education about site-specific social issues	*Encourage participants to look critically at the root cause of social justice issues and challenge participants to evaluate the role that they can play in the*	*Help participants find avenues for continued community involvement and support participants' efforts to take the next "action steps"*
Education, Orientation and Training	Strong, Direct service	Reorientation
Pre-break service projects	Ongoing education	Continued education
Icebreakers and group building activities	Community involvement	Reflection about reentry process
Preflection: Goals and Expectations	Daily reflection linked to service activities and education	Challenge to make changes in life choices to benefit the community

Figure 1 The Break Away Active Citizen Continuum (Break Away, The Alternative
Connection, Inc, n.d., Philosophy)

Specifically, Break Away cites data collected by Dr. Pushkala Raman in 2001,

which underlined the development of students' civic engagement. The website reads:

> An impact analysis conducted in 2001 by Dr. Pushkala Raman and her Marketing
> Research Class at Florida State University in conjunction with Break Away
> revealed that there is overwhelming evidence to support the view that alternative

breaks are "indeed contributing to the creating of active citizens." Some highlights of the study include the following:

- Participants show stronger intentions of voting after participation.
- Alternative break participants are inclined to increase the amount of time they dedicate to serving the community after an alternative break experience. (Break Away, The Alternative Connection, Inc, n.d, Frequently Asked Questions)

Most notable in this research is that participants are more likely to continue working in community service after participation in an alternative break program, which specifically follows the design of Break Away's Active Citizen Continuum. However, as noted by research conducted by Rhoads and Neururer (1998), the researchers found that, "Although it is often assumed that increased student involvement in community service is directly related to higher education's mission of producing "good citizens," the benefits of engagement in community service are poorly understood" (p. 100). There is further no specific documentation regarding how this continuum may change when an international element is introduced or if this research even specifically related to international alternative breaks. While the goal of an alternative break includes promoting the growth and development of students' civic engagement, the actual outcomes are poorly understood. Further, there is nearly no empirical research that informs the expectations illustrated in the Active Citizen Continuum.

While further research into the subject of the success of these programs is limited, the current research concludes that students who participate in alternative break projects are more likely to become involved, and subsequently remain involved, in civic duties post participation in service oriented learning. Specifically, Bringle and Hatcher (2011) noted,

In addition to being able to enhance the depth of learning associated with the existing content in a course, a well designed service component integrated into the course content through structured reflection can enhance critical thinking and other cognitive skills, personal development, motivations for civic involvement, a sense of self-efficacy, and the civic development of students. (p. 12)

While this sense of civic duty is not fostered overnight, through the pre-trip training and post trip reflection, these service projects are designed to enhance the current goals of study abroad by addressing social justice issues while exploring the ethos at the heart of civic engagement (Break Away, The Alternative Connection, Inc, n.d.; Plater, et al., 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). In theory, these programs are designed not only to offer students the chance to travel outside of their normal day-to-day lives but also to develop their sense of understanding of the world around them, both at home and on the global front. Motivationally, these programs offer students an opportunity that they may never have the chance to do again by either working within the community on a special project or by going overseas to a country they may otherwise never see.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This research sought to deconstruct student motivations for participating in alternative break programs. Previous chapters have illustrated that, while this field appears to be growing in popularity, there is a distinct lack of literature surrounding student participation in connection to the development of and success of these programs. Two countries, The United States and Nigeria, were chosen due to my ability to access community service offices at local universities. The first set of data, collected in Nigeria, was from a small U.S. style university in a city located at the middle of the eastern border of Nigeria and the second set of data was collected at a small, private university on the east coast of the United States. Additional to my access of these locations, the universities in both countries were willing to work with me to recruit interview participants by emails sent out through the two institutions' offices. Subsequently, I was able to spend two weeks in Nigeria interacting with students through interviews, participant observation, and through my own participation in community service projects. In the United States, I spent three weeks conducting interviews with students preparing to participate in the 2011/2012 alternative breaks offered through the institution.

Participants

The participants for this study were obtained through a criterion purposive sampling of student participants from the two pre-determined locations. This means that student participants were chosen based on pre-determined criteria (Patton, 1990). There

were 13 participants in total with, six U.S. students and seven Nigerian students. The criteria for involvement included either a current standing as an alternative break participant for the students from the U.S. institution or continued participation in the university led community service for the Nigerian students.

Prior to arriving in Nigeria, I arranged for the interviews to be conducted through the Office of Community Service at the university. The Director of Student Activities and Community Service informed students of the opportunity to participate in the research through email. Students then volunteered to participate and a meeting was arranged while I was on site. All seven participants were recruited through the email sent by the Director and met the previously specified criteria. I was also given the opportunity to interview the director, herself, in order to gain a better perspective of the mission and goals of the Nigerian institution and community service office.

The U.S. students were recruited through an e-mail I created that was subsequently dispersed by the office of Alternative Breaks with assistance from the coordinator of the program. The coordinator dispersed the e-mail so as to both attract the most attention and to protect the e-mail addresses and names of any participants that did not wish to participate in the study. This email ultimately resulted in the recruitment of seven participants, though only six were interviewed as one participant became too busy to set aside a time for an interview. As compensation for their participation, all interviewees were given the option of coffee or another beverage of their choice, though

only one student took the offer[3]. The students were selected based on their current

standing as participants in the 2011-2012 alternative break programs. Any previous

experience, while relevant to the analysis of participant responses, was not considered as

criteria for participation during the recruitment process. I noted which participants had

previous experience working with or participating in previous alternative break programs.

I then evaluated how this previous experience impacted their decision to continue

participation in such programs and how these previous experiences influenced the role

they chose to take in their current programs. I also used these previous experiences to

determine how participation in these programs shapes the development of students during

their college years.

The class level of participants from both groups ranges from incoming freshman

to graduate students and represent fields of study across the curriculum, though the range

of fields of study between the two programs was significantly different. While the

Nigerian participants were predominately from technical backgrounds such as computer

science, the U.S. participants predominately represented liberal arts studies such as

international relations, though this is more reflective of the programs of study at each

institution rather than of any leading factor for the participation in the interview or the

community service. The participants brought with them a wide array of prior experience

within community service and service learning programs, which included previous

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[3] Patton (2002) notes that compensation for interviews can create a dilemma if not
considered properly. The offer of a beverage from the university coffee shop was
extended to participants, as I believed it would be create an open and comfortable
environment for the interview.

experience with alternative breaks for some. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each participant and have been illustrated in Figure 2.

Participant Characteristics		
Pseudonym	Site	Type of Service
Kayla	U.S.	Education and Social Justice in Cuba
Andrea	U.S.	African Refugees and the right to Asylum in Israel
Khloe	U.S.	Burmese Democracy through Grassroots Empowerment in Thailand
Avery	U.S.	Empowerment of women and indigenous peoples in Guatemala
Kaylee	U.S.	Youth and Democracy in Kenya
Beth	U.S.	Youth and Democracy in Kenya
Rebekka	Nigerian	Director of Community Service Office-Nigeria
Olabisi	Nigeria	General Community Service (every Friday)
Madu	Nigeria	General Community Service
Abiodun	Nigeria	Regular Community Service (3x per week)
Adejola	Nigeria	General Community Service
Folami	Nigeria	General Community Service
Iyapo	Nigeria	General Community Service
Boseda	Nigeria	Regular Community Service

Figure 2: Student participants and community service information

Participant Observation

While in Nigeria, I was invited to participate in current service opportunities with the Nigerian students. This allowed me to observe how students interacted with the community and to, myself, engage in service. While participating in a project at a local eye clinic, I was always open about why I was there with a positive response from both students and the community. The different members of the community interacted with me on two main levels: first, I engaged with community leaders who were excited to discuss the need for service in the area and, secondly, as patients at the local eye clinic. While all of the students and a majority of the community members appeared comfortable with my

presence, it was apparent that I was not the type of person they had expected to see that day. The students informed me that many of the community members were from rural areas in neighboring villages and I was, more than likely, one of the only if not the first Caucasian person they had ever seen. Community members were often put at ease and easily amused when I attempted to speak Hausa, a regional language. As I was more interested in observing the student participants, I do not consider this a limitation to the research. Rather, it allowed me to watch the students interact with the community first hand.

Interviews

I chose to conduct interviews as this process allows the researcher to understand and inquire into what is on a participant's mind, which is not possible through a survey process. More specifically, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions allowed me to assess the perspectives of the participants and understand what I could not simply observe (Patton, 1990). An interview process further allowed me to notice the non-verbal indicators given by participants offering a deeper understanding of how students felt about the service in which they were participating (Patton, 1990). Therefore, I was able to best comprehend the motivations students had for participating in these types of service oriented programs and was able to further inquire into responses so as to strengthen my own understanding of what was stated.

Both sets of interviews were conducted on site at the respective campuses; the interviews in the United States were conducted at the university library while the Nigerian interviews were conducted in the Office of Community Engagement. This decision was made in order to create a comfortable and welcoming environment for all

participants so as to encourage honesty in the participant responses. Patton (1990) specifically discussed this: "Interview data can be greatly affected by the emotional state of the interviewee at the time the interview takes place" (p 245).

Finally, I preceded the interviews with a detailed research protocol, or opening statement, to inform the participants of the intent of the research and their role as participants in order to gain fully informed consent (Patton, 2002). During the opening statement I also discussed confidentiality and how I would maintain the anonymity of each participant. We also discussed the presence of the recorder and I gained permission from each student to record his or her responses. The interview was further broken down into separate categories, each of which was introduced to the interview participants, so as to address specific areas of understanding. These categories included: Current Knowledge and understanding; Purpose of the service; Understanding of the benefits to participants, universities, and communities; previous experience and suggestions for future programs. While these sections were specified for each participant group, they were similarly structured in their preparation.

<u>Brief History of Nigeria</u>

In order to best understand the motivations these students have for participating in community service with their university, despite the fact that the community service is not connected to the university curriculum, it is first important to understand the history of the region and how this influences students decisions to participate.

Nigeria gained independence from the United Kingdom in October of 1960 with only temporary relief from military control of the government between 1960-1965 and then again from 1979-1983 (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This militaristic dictatorship,

spanning over decades, was detrimental to the growth of Nigeria as an independent nation. With multiple coups and counter-coups, Nigeria was faced with an anti-democratic government that was more interested in maintaining power than it was in protecting the rights of the people with Faola and Heaton specifically commenting, "Military regimes have been very autocratic and authoritarian, and have been more than willing to use violence to silence criticism" (p. 9). Most notable in this struggle for power has been the divide created by both tribal and religious affiliation. Nigeria has three predominant tribes, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, with over 200 ethno-linguistic groups and is split by both Muslim and Christian identity (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Politicians have made a stance by, "taking care of their own, while at the same time growing excessively wealthy and powerful themselves" (Faola & Heaton, 2008, p. 8). This all started to change, however, in 1999 when the first democratic elections in six years took place with a successful transition from military rule to a civilian run democratic government under President Olusegun Obasanjo (Maier, 2000). While Nigeria is still plagued by issues of corruption and violence, this growth in democratic values has continued and offers promise for the growth of Nigeria as a stable nation.[4]

The tribal divide has been perpetuated over the years as the different tribes have used their numbers to influence and shift the politics in favor of their own agendas as opposed to considering what would be most beneficial to all, leading to an influx of

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[4] While I do not afford the time or the space to discuss the divide created by tribal and religious affiliations, nor do I claim to offer an all encompassing explanation of the issues created by this divide, I offer a brief commentary on how the recent history of these issues have shaped the current state of affairs in Nigeria. In addition, I explain some of the current crisis, such as educational issues, currently facing Nigeria. For more information on the history of Nigeria, please refer to the bibliography for sources used to inform this research.

corruption in the political system (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Specifically, the main source of revenue for Nigeria, oil, was taken advantage of by politicians and the wealthy in the area. Faolola and Heaton noted, "Often, government officials would award government contracts or licenses to friends or business partners and would accept a percentage of the contract as a kickback, a reward for securing the contract for a particular person or firm" (p. 185). This abuse of the major export of Nigerian economy has lent to the unequal distribution of wealth and a continued distrust in government officials and familial associations within the government.

The religious, and a subsequent physical, divide has exacerbated the cultural tensions over the years as well with Christians predominately in the south pushing to maintain the current secular law while Muslims in the north press for Sharia law (Maier, 2000). When faced with desperate living conditions, the north began to seek a way out of corruption and for their voices to be heard. Maier (2000) specifically highlights the fear voiced by the northerners stating, "Local politicians, bereft of serious political programs latched on to Sharia as an easy tool to win support from a population desperate for an end to years of frustration, corruption, and more than anything, hopelessness" (p. 144). During the presidency of Obasanjo, this tension peaked and violence erupted in the town of Kaduna on February 21, 2000 (Maier, 2000). The violence was quashed only two days later after Obasanjo dispatched a military intervention to the region, though the issue of religious law still runs strong today.

Currently, Nigeria has maintained a secular government, though the fears of the people have not been fully addressed, causing a continued distrust in the political system and continued violence during political turnaround and elections. The most recent

elections in April 2011 saw little violence compared to previous years and was handled in

a predominantly fraud free environment. This was unfortunately overshadowed, as noted

by Nossiter (2011) from the New York Times who stated:

> While analysts applauded an election largely free of the fraud, ballot-stealing and
> violence that have plagued elections since the country's return to democracy 12
> years ago, the mostly clean vote on Saturday was clouded by what has happened
> since then. (para. 3)

Thousands of youth set out in protest against the freshly announced election of the acting

President and former Vice President Goodluck Jonathan. Nossiter further describes that

the youth of the area set fires and acted out violent protests causing numerous deaths in

the Kaduna region, noted for its previous violence and civil revolt during the Obasanjo

Presidency. Fortunately, this violence was not long lasting and the election was upheld.

Outside of political, religious, and tribal strife, Nigeria is faced with other

challenges common to a developing nation. Falola and Heaton, (2008) pay special

attention to the overcrowding of cities, and lack of development in the economic structure

while other media sources cite health issues: "There are an estimated 3.8 million people

living with HIV-AIDS in Nigeria, which makes it the third-worst affected country in the

world, after South Africa and India" (Nolen, 2005, para. 4). Coupled with these issues of

urbanization, economics, and health, Nigeria is faced with educational issues such as low

level of trained teachers in the classroom, 66% according to data collected by the World

Bank (2010) and a high student to teacher ratio of 32:1. If these issues remain

unaddressed, Nigeria will be saddled with a polluted natural landscape and a poor,

uneducated population unable to function as a strong democratic nation.

Subsequently, the students at this small U.S. style institution wanted to do what they could to give back to the community in order to create a more unified nation. Further, as will be addressed in the upcoming chapters, the students discussed both a sense of obligation to give back to their community and a desire to address the issues faced by the region such as high pollution, low education, and poor access to health care in the rural areas (personal interviews with students). In particular, while observing in the field, one student noted the distress he felt due to the political climate and hoped that he could take what he learned in the villages with him as he pursued his future career goals in the country and, hopefully, internationally (Abiodun, 2011, personal communication). These students are fully aware of their country's history and want to do what they can to change the future. Further, these students were not receiving academic credit for participating in their universities service opportunities. Rather, they had chosen to participate solely based on their desire to see their country grow.

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

This research was completed in line with the rules and regulations outlined by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB). In compliance with these regulations, all participants we asked to sign a consent form before the interview took place. A copy of the consent form for both sets of participants can be found in Appendix A. All participants have been assigned a pseudonym in order to protect the anonymity of the participants and the university locations and names have not been specifically identified.

Coding and Analysis

All interviews were digitally recorded so as to capture the participants' verbatim words. During the interview process, participant responses were flagged for either striking similarities or differences and compared. Further, I noted observations made during the interviews on paper for review during the analysis (Patton, 2002). I then transcribed the interviews word for word and thoroughly analyzed and coded the data in order to group them into reoccurring themes, which were captured in a codebook (Creswell, 2009).

The research was situated using grounded theory with open codes developed through repeated readings of the interviews and an application of the theoretical framework (Patton, 2002). As described by Patton (1990), "Grounded theory depends on methods that take the researcher into and close to the real world so that the results and findings are "grounded" in empirical work" (p. 67). I have allowed, as best I could, for the participant's words to speak for themselves, though I have further used outside literature to augment the impact of the statements. The quotes were selected for their discussion of the impact of these programs and for the clarity with which they underline student motivations for participating in such programs.

Limitations and Research Bias

Limitations to the research were associated with the difference in programs available to each interview group, the length of interviews conducted in Nigeria, and the sample size and demographic. The interviewees were self-selected, which led to participants who were already eager to volunteer for the study and who may have been considered more active in their programs. This also deterred me from diversifying the

demographics of each participant group. Further, both groups represent a small percentage of the population who participate in these types of programs. The U.S. institution sees approximately 200 participants every year while the Nigerian institution commonly seeks to engage the entire student body by offering four types of service ranging from fiscal and material donations to hands-on, physical service.

Both institutions offered different types of service opportunities for the student participants, which will be discussed at length in the following chapter. The main limitation of this difference was that U.S. students were interviewed prior to service and had the option of participating in service at an international location. The Nigerian participants were interviewed during their service opportunity and were only able to hypothetically discuss service in an international arena. To address this limitation, the questions were designed to include a detailed account of previous community service experience, which was more prevalent with the U.S. population, and again focused on motivations and expectations rather than previously experienced outcomes.

There were minor limitations that arose during the interview process in Nigeria. First, the sampling of students was limited as interviews were conducted right before the commencement of the students' summer breaks. While the Director underlined this issue, it did not affect my expected participation levels. Second, I was not allowed to determine the length of the interviews. Instead, the Director set up 15-20 minute time slots with each participant, one after the other. This time constraint was more difficult at times than others as some students preferred to discuss at length the different questions while others were more timid during the process. This is possibly the most significant limitation

addressed by this research; however, the previously discussed participant observation allowed for more time spent informally discussing the topic with the student participants.

The interviews in the United States provided for small limitations. Specifically the demographic information should be taken into account—namely, the range of gender. The participants of my research were all female. While it is possible to view this as a limitation to the research, it can also easily be viewed as a telling factor of who participates in this type of study abroad. The university wherein this research was conducted had an 83% female participation rate in the 2010/2011 school year as illustrated in figure 3. While it would have been ideal to have at least one male participant in the interview pool, the self-selection process of the research did not produce male participants. I do not, however, consider this a major limitation of the research as students did not discuss, nor were prompted to discuss, how their gender influenced their desire to participate or their method for choosing a program location.

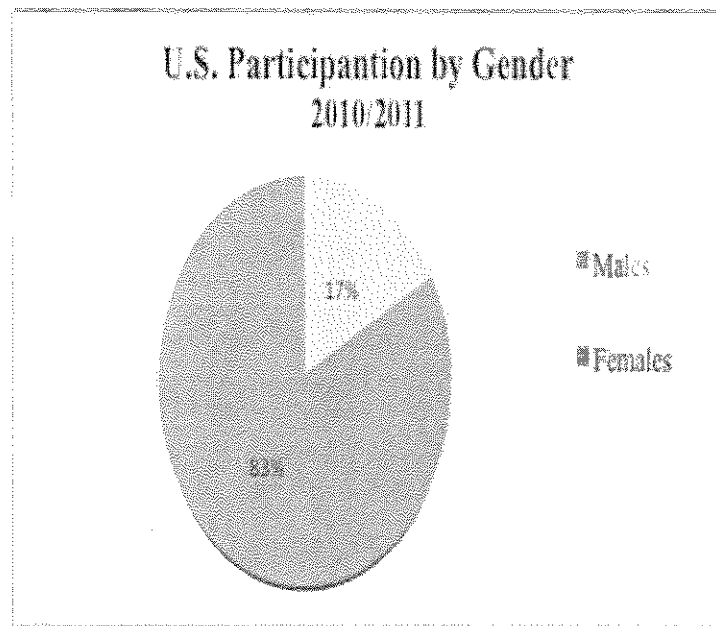U.S. Participantion by Gender
2010/2011

Males

Females

Figure 3 U.S. participant demographic by gender for participation in alternative break programs. This illustrates the demographic data for the 2010/2011 school year.

Another limitation of the self-selection process was that each participant was from an international alternative break regardless of the opportunities also offered in the United

States. I attempted to address this issue with the participants by discussing both their motivation for choosing an international destination and by discussing their perception of the need for alternative break programs in the developed world.

Further, after completion of the analysis process, I determined that the findings surrounding student development in this research would have been better informed if I had the opportunity to interview participants post return from their alternative break programs. Unfortunately, due to time constraints it was not plausible to interview, code, and analyze data from another interview process. This limitation disallowed me to research how participation influenced or changed what students may have said in their original interviews. This, however, would have only been to compare how their participation may have been changed by their overall motivations.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Student motivations for participating in alternative break programs have not been

well documented, if at all; however, the motivations students have listed for study abroad

have not only been documented, they have been used to define advertising in the

university setting at U.S. institutions. Predominately focusing on building global

competence, U.S. universities continue to focus on student development, even in

designing programs that are to be community service centered. Further, students are

clearly seeking out new opportunities within the field of study abroad to meet their

educational needs and personal motivations. International alternative break programs are

becoming a popular trend for students seeking less traditional study abroad opportunities

during their university years. These programs are offered as a short-term international

experience that emphasizes both traditional educational experience prior to departure and

hands-on experience in the field. In this chapter, I first introduce the differences between

the programs followed by addressing how the participants from both countries discuss

their motivations for participating in community service and how those motivations direct

their participation. Secondly, I analyze how these experiences translate to educational and

life goals stated by the participants. The chapter will end with a discussion of how

alternative break programs are perceived as being beneficial with a specific focus on how

participants view the intended nature and ethical implications that arise through this type

of study abroad opportunity.

Nigerian Institution

While speaking to Rebekka, the director of the community service office at the Nigerian institution, I was informed of the different types of service opportunities available to the students. The first category is called general community service. Through the general community service opportunity, students, faculty, and staff have the option of going into the community every Friday to participate in service projects that changed from week to week. The next category is entitled regular community service. In this category, participants go to three specific organizations three times a week and complete service. The three institutions include a local eye clinic, a bank that offers micro-financing opportunities for the local community, and adult tutoring classes. According to Rebekka, "We call it regular service because these organizations need volunteers every time because that is what they do, service" (personal communication, may 2011). The third option is called the special projects service. The special projects option specifically addresses material needs seen in the community. Rebekka highlighted that in order to teach a student, they need chalkboards and chalk. Subsequently, this service was created to supply those goods. Further, this type of service was a way for students to give back without going into the community. None of the interview participants specifically spoke about contributing to this service as they cited either general or regular service commitments. The final category of service was called the Halls of Residents Community Development Project. This final category created a competition between the different resident halls to complete different types of service. Students did projects ranging from building wells in local villages to preparing a library with no fees in one of the resident halls for the community to check out books.

In describing the different opportunities available, Rebekka commented that different locations and types of services were more popular than others not because time or desire to participate was an issue, but because students were reluctant to do what was considered "dirty" work. She stated:

> Some don't ever want to go back, maybe 35% don't actually want to go back and do it again. Then others just want to know what they are doing—if it is picking up trash, cleaning up, taking care of the motherless babies, they don't want to do it. If it is taking kids on a field trip, they will do that. If it is being a big brother or sister to a younger child, they want to do that. They categorize it and say they don't want to do the dirty one. (personal communication, May 2011)

Although each Nigerian participant cited giving back to the community as their personal understanding of doing community service, Rebekka's comment underlines an issue in the design and implementation of doing service that at the university level, regardless of cultural heritage. That is, neither U.S. nor Nigerian populations described community service as participating in a physical or even undesirable activity, though both may be called for at times. Kolenko et al. (1996) specify that, "Community goals and priorities must also be considered in the design of service learning ventures" (p. 136). If students are only choosing to participate in the work that is considered less offensive or difficult, they may not be fully meeting the needs of the community. This is not to say that outreach efforts are poorly conducted by either location; however, it is a general assessment of student participation in community service projects.

<u>U.S. Institution</u>

While the U.S. institution presented multiple community service opportunities, this research focused on the alternative break programs. First, the philosophy of the community service office is to address both global and local social justice issues while

engaging students to learn. Further, the programs are to be designed to influence students to critically reflect on their role as participants in a greater, global community. The alternative breaks at this institution are student led and designed. While this allows for many obstacles, the application process is both rigorous and highly competitive in the hopes of circumventing any issues that may arise. Selby[5], the coordinator of the office of community engagement, commented that before programs are evaluated, student leaders are required to fill out an application discussing their previous experience and leadership skills (personal communication, November 2011). After this has been completed, students are required to fill out an application, which should illustrate the student's knowledge and relationship with the area and the social justice issue being addressed, demonstrate the feasibility and sustainability of the project, and underline the connections with grassroots organizations currently working in the field. Each group leader must also contact and enlist a faculty or staff advisor to accompany the trip and who has experience in both the region and service project.

The U.S. institution hosts alternative break trips that are both national and international. Students applying to participate must choose a destination based on their interest in the social justice issue as well as outline their previous experience in community outreach. The students then go through an interview process with the trip leaders. These programs are further designed to integrate a semester of learning about the social justice issue being addressed and how it has affected the region in question. For example, many students referenced, though none were participants in, a trip to Moldova to address marginalized populations, specifically LGBTQ and Roma populations. For this

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[5] All names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

program, the trip leaders would be responsible to instruct students about the history of

Moldova and how the history influenced the narrative of the social justice issue, as well

as preparing the students to participate in a service effort. In this case, the service was

described as working in a local village to train the community on anti-discrimination

tactics. The break was further designed to introduce students to an anti-discrimination

agency upon returning to their home institution. The U.S. institution further works to

incorporate the Active Citizen Continuum, as described by Break Away, which can be

seen in the basic outline of the Moldova trip: pre-trip training, on-site activities, and post-

trip support/continued engagement.

Findings

The different findings have been broken down into major themes relevant in the

interviews. The first section, motivation, includes: personal benefits versus community

benefits, knowledge and personal understanding, and external influences. Next, the

discussion of educational goals examines long and short-term educational pursuits.

Finally, the last section includes an examination of the perceived global and local benefits.

Personal Benefit vs. Community Benefit

In this research, I define motivations as the personal and social drives that have

led students to pursue their current participation in community service programs offered

at the university. These motivations are positioned as a leading factor for student

participation and can be used to define students' overall understanding of their individual

role as participants in the different service opportunities offered on the two campuses.

While U.S. and Nigerian students had very different opportunities to participate in service

while in school, both groups, however, cited similar reasons for choosing to participate in

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service regardless of the type of opportunity. This is not to say that motivations were identical as many U.S. students spoke to the opportunity to travel abroad in conjunction with the opportunity to participate in service; however, this difference speaks more to the inherent nature of the options available than to lack of desire to travel abroad by the Nigerian participants. Namely, U.S. participants spoke both to personal, at times even egoistic, benefits such as augmenting education and the chance to travel in conjunction with their desire to participate in community enrichment while the Nigerian students focused singularly on the chance to enrich the community, regardless of an opportunity to go abroad. Raman and Pashupati (2002) discussed this motivational difference:

> Helping behaviors that are primarily aimed at benefiting others are termed altruistic motivations. Egoistic motivations are helping behaviors that are performed in the expectation of a personal benefit. Thus, they may be self-serving behaviors. (p. 193)

While it can be argued that volunteering is good even if the service is beneficial to the volunteer, this difference is imperative in the ethical discussion surrounding these trips. If the student's sole reason for participating is personal gain, trip leaders and university administration must consider how that motivation will affect the overall success of the trip. Further, taking the ethical implications into consideration, if service is not a primary benefit of students, practitioners should consider whether or not alternative breaks should be coupled with service or if they should strictly qualify as study abroad.

Some examples listed by participants that are both egoistic and altruistic include: connecting to a participant's cultural identity and/or getting to know another culture; creating opportunities of awareness for themselves and others; giving back to the community; and addressing social justices issues and poverty.

To begin, a specific focus on the alternative break programs illustrated the draw of the international opportunity. Both U.S. and Nigerian participants spoke to the different benefits afforded by an international service trip, however, with different underlying motivations. For example, U.S. participant Beth (2011), an assertive sophomore with very clear goals for her future, stated, "I've never been outside the U.S. and I'm an [international relations] major… It definitely came out of a need for validity in the international experience realm" (personal communication). Here, Beth discusses a desire to improve her education as well as to increase her international experiences so as to feel more validation in her field of international relations. Her motivation to participate in an alternative break was clearly primarily to augment her own education. Service, on the other hand, was a vague addition. This desire to go abroad is not unique to Beth. This desire fore international experience was further illustrated in Lough, McBride, and Sherraden's (2009) study, which underlined the top five motivations listed by participant alumni who had completed international volunteer work. One of the top five listed was the chance to travel or live abroad while another was the ability to gain international experience. Again, the responses sacrificed a clear understanding of the service aspect of these programs to more fully focus on the personal benefits provided by the international opportunity.

This desire to go abroad was further shared by four out of six of the other U.S. participants, each with either freshman or sophomore standing and no previous experience with educational opportunities abroad. For example, Andrea, (2011) a quite freshman with an interest in the humanitarian aid in Sub-Saharan Africa, discussed a desire to go abroad but an inability to do a traditional study abroad program: "I had

originally planned on studying abroad this summer, and then was speaking with my

advisor and if I want to graduate early that's not an option" (personal communication).

While this motivation may impact the decision making process undergone by participants,

as Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) noted, short-term programs offer opportunities that may

otherwise be missed by some students. Andrea, as did Beth, substituted the alternative

break for the more traditional study abroad experience.

When discussing the benefits of an alternative break in regard to the host country,

each of the U.S. participants had a difficult time articulating exactly how these trips

would be impactful. However, the topic that continually surfaced was increased

awareness. The discussion of awareness was two fold: on one side, students discussed

awareness as a means to understand deeper issues that may affect a region or people

while, on the other side, students discussed awareness as the catch phrase for community

benefits through the service programs. For example, Kaylee (2011) is an engaging and

charismatic, first year graduate student with extensive experience in alternative breaks.

She has both previously designed and led courses in conjunction with maintaining an

alternative break office at a university in the southeastern U.S. through work with

AmeriCorps. She commented,

> I think just purely going raises awareness of the issues that are in the area…
> there's no place that has a problem that is just one single problem; problems are
> always cyclical and always greater than they might appear… It's just this whole
> world of issues that somebody might say well there's a hurricane and there's
> some devastation. Once they get on the ground, they can actually see, look at the
> greater impact. (personal communication)

For Kaylee, participating in an alternative break worked to both address the surface level

issues while at the same time becoming aware of the deeper issues that may not be

noticed without the hands-on application of the alternative break. As she illustrated here, she understood that the purpose of an alternative break was not purely for student development. Rather, the programs are theoretically designed to gain a deeper understanding of global issues in order to promote both education and a deeper knowledge of an issue facing a region or population.

Avery (2011), a sophomore, on the other hand, underlined awareness as participatory for both the community and student, "I think it is about collaboration and support. Working together and [the host community] knowing that we're aware and that we care about what is happening" (personal communication). Avery's description of the host community benefitting due to a new found awareness on the part of the U.S. participants borders on the ideology that volunteers are going to save the less fortunate. While her intention was to offer support and underline that some communities may not have the opportunity to voice injustices taking place, her comment removes their agency in the process. It further does not actually address how the community benefits from the presence of student volunteers. It instead falls into the trap of using such a broad term that attracts attention to these programs without fully explaining the need for service in the community. The inability of students to discuss benefits for host communities, regardless of their statements of being motivated by the opportunity to give back, underlines a serious disconnect in relating theory to practice. It can further be connected to similar issues behind the global citizenship discussion. A belief that the presence of U.S. students raises awareness is both naive and imperialistic in nature. It assumes that only the privileged peoples of the developed world, namely the U.S. are aware of global issues and are able to solve them.

The Nigerian students more definitively discussed the motivation of gaining

international experience as an opportunity to learn how other nations address community

service so as to better address the same issues in their own country. They discussed

international service by both focusing on international students traveling to Nigeria and

Nigerian students traveling elsewhere to do service. First, students unanimously stated

that international students traveling to Nigeria would address the needs of the community

by bringing in new ideas to approaching different issues and would simply answer a need

for more physical bodies to assist in the different service opportunities. Second, Nigerian

students discussed how going to the United States would allow them the chance to learn

how the people and government address similar service issues and how they can then

transport what they have learned back to Nigeria. More concisely, Nigerian students often

spoke about an exchange of ideas. For example, Iyapo (2011) was excited at the prospect

of creating an exchange with all students preparing different ideas as he stated, "Ideas

would be welcome because they could enhance our own community program here.

Then they can learn from our own ideas. Maybe if they go back to America they can

implement it" (personal communication). His excitement stemmed from an

opportunity to approach new ways of thinking and doing community service. Madu

(2011), the undergraduate student body president further augmented this sentiment when

he commented:

> I'm sure with the whole BP Oil spill a lot of cleaning still needs to be done and
> we have a lot of people from the Niger Delta in this school and that is a rural area
> where a lot of the foreign companies have neglected their duties and
> responsibilities to clean up. So there is a lot of pollution there. So if people here
> could go there and see how American's are cleaning up their area and not waiting
> for the government to do it, that could spark a change back home. (personal
> communication)

Madu was aware of current issues facing the United States and was able to apply them to similar issues in Nigeria; both students looked at this as an educational opportunity that would benefit Nigerian students and the community.

Another motivation discussed by Nigerian students was to address a lack of engagement and assistance from the government. Pearson (1999) wrote, "Community development is an approach that assumes that the people in a community best understand their own problems and the solutions that will work for them" (p. 102). Nigerian students, often spoke to how knowledge of their community influenced their overall desire to contribute to the service effort, specifically the lack of government assistance in the communities and villages that were far away from big cities. Abiodun (2011) noted,

> Down in Nigeria we have a very weak system of government where the government doesn't actually care about what is going on with its citizens... So if I were to go to America, I would think that more of what I would do, I would try to go to schools to find out how the government is able to provide for schools and then try to find out if there are any lapses. That is where I can come in. (personal communication)

Abiodem acknowledged a lack of support from the government to support his belief that an international exchange would benefit himself and the community. Namely, he would gain from the experience of learning how another country depends on government to provide basic necessities, which he would then take back to his community.

The discussion of government support has added a complicated layer to the striking differences in egoistic vs. altruistic motivations illustrated by U.S. and Nigerian participants. Nigerian students were more focused on the lack of support given to the community by the government, thus creating a need for community service at a very different level than a need seen by the U.S. participants. The U.S. participants often

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spoke of egoistic motivations without giving thought to the government support already

seen in the United States. As Abiodem's comment highlighted, this is a luxury not

afforded to the Nigerian population. That is, the United States has a stable history of a

strong Democratic society. As previously illustrated, Nigeria is still growing as a

democratic nation and is split into many different tribal and religious affiliations that has

led to a government fed more by nepotism than meeting the needs of its people. The U.S.,

however, has many examples of recognizing community service as something that should

be supported by both the population and the government creating a foundation not seen in

Nigeria.

The lack of government support for community growth in Nigeria also led

students to discuss their responsibility to the community at large, For example, Madu

(2011) commented, "I think it is something like 40% of people are below the poverty line,

so it is essential that we do a lot of community service" (personal communication).

Madu's statement underlining the level of poverty faced by the nation augmented the

community need that the students saw as not being addressed by the government. This

statement further addressed one of the reasons Nigerian students favored the idea of

creating an exchange: more people doing service would more quickly address issues

faced by a the larger population. This sentiment was shared by American participant,

Kaylee (2011), who made specific reference to the need for volunteers when asked to

address the benefits received by the host country. She stated, "Hopefully they are

reaching out to get volunteers because they need volunteers so hopefully it serves their

needs perfectly" (personal communication). While Kaylee did not list a tangible or easily

defined benefit for the host community, she did address something that other U.S.

participants failed to discuss. She highlighted the fact that each alternative break allowed host communities a small amount of time to have a large population of volunteers addressing a specific issue. That could be building anything from building a schoolhouse to volunteering at the eye clinic in the small Nigerian town. Ultimately, the community need is being met through a response to a need for more participants doing service.

<u>Knowledge and Understanding:</u>

During the interview process, I noted that participants rely on their personal understandings throughout each section of the interview to describe their individual experience with the various types of service offered. Similarly to the previous section, personal understanding was divided into personal benefits in connection to service and community benefits. Specifically, when discussing the current knowledge and motivations section of the interview, the U.S. participants were asked to describe alternative breaks in comparison to service learning, i.e., to address why and how they defined the fields. This distinction allowed me to locate the differences in how students perceive these two types of projects, if any differences occurred, and compare how these internal understandings characterize their motivation to participate or influence their decision making process. One common theme in student responses, four out of six of the U.S. participants, was by defining an alternative break primarily as an international and educational opportunity and adding the service opportunity as an after thought. This personal understanding can be seen as highly influential on how a student subsequently decides to participate in a project. Specifically, students' focus on internationalizing their service effort moves away from the practice of community service and instead highlights the desire seen by many U.S. students to go abroad.

For example, when asked to consider their definitions and to answer whether

alternative breaks are essentially international, all but two U.S. participants stated that the

international nature was a major component in their understanding of the field regardless

of the opportunity to participate in national breaks. In particular, Andrea specifically

described this field as,

> Just any break that you spend going abroad for, I guess, a service project. I think
> for me, [the international aspect] is important. I know there are alternative breaks
> that are domestic but I don't know. I definitely have a more international focus
> perspective on things. I'm a global studies major. (Personal communication,
> November 2011)

Andrea's understanding supports the educational aspect of the alternative break program

as she stated her major in global studies, while also underlining that the international

nature was a major draw for her. Further, she wasn't immediately clear on the service

aspect instead qualifying her statement with "I guess." Subsequently, the underlying

motivation is her desire to go abroad, not to participate in community service. She further

supported her personal understanding by later discussing the perceived benefits:

> Well, at least here at [this institution], I think there is a strong international
> focus… and I think, really, you can't have a good international education if you
> haven't traveled abroad and been exposed to different issues in different parts of
> the world. So I think programs like this really help establish the kind of prestige
> of this school as an international school. (Andrea, Personal communication,
> November 2011)

Again, speaking towards the international nature of her decision, Andrea understood that

offering this type of a international opportunity was a way for the university to recruit

more students looking to pursue international fields of study. This is supportive of the

assumption that this type of program seeks to engage students in international travel to

promote their educational development rather than address the social justice issues in the

international arena. Her response further speaks more to study abroad than it does to ISL, which theoretically uses student learning to augment both skill acquisition and community growth.

Conversely, there were two students from the U.S. participant pool that did not initially define the alternative break program as international. Not surprisingly, both these participants, Avery and Kaylee, had previous experience with this type of program. Kaylee, as noted, had both designed and led multiple alternative break trips in her former occupation. Avery, on the other hand, who offered some of the most insightful information, had been rejected for participation when she applied in the previous year. Rather than look at the location, Avery noted,

> I would define an alternative break program as a program designed for students to travel to regions of either their country or the world that have social justice [issues], either human rights violations or other themes. It's their opportunity to be educated on the topic and interact with individuals in a way to maybe bring that back to their own community or help progress the situation or in the field, construction wise building things or motivating children or whatever it is, to better the situation. (Personal communication, November 2011)

Her above comment illustrates the goal stated by the university, to perform service, become a more engaged citizen, and to root the experience in education. While it is possible that her answer is based on reading the requirements listed by the website, it uniquely highlighted the service aspect of alternative breaks, which she further discussed:

> The location wasn't really important. I mean, it was I guess because Spanish was the language and I've had history in learning about this part of the world. But really, in terms of where I wanted to do service, it wasn't like I really wanted to go to South American so I'm only going to apply for this trip, it wasn't like that at all. The Guatemala trip fit my goals more not because of where it was, but because of what it was trying to do. It was more about the theme. (Avery, 2011, personal communication)

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Avery discussed that her educational background would be a benefit to her in Guatemala, but that her educational goals were not a determining factor for her, which was not shared by other U.S. participants. Raman and Pushupati (2002) illustrated that student participation in service learning is influenced by their intrinsic motivations, or previous desire to participate in service. They stated, "This implies that service-learning programs do not just amplify the effects of motivations but add to them" (Raman & Pushupati, 2002, p. 201). Avery and Kaylee, who also stated that an alternative break was going outside your comfort zone for the community benefit, were both motivated by their desire to do service. Subsequently, according to Raman and Pushupati's research, they are more likely to achieve the goals illustrated by Break Away, that of becoming a more engaged citizen.

To another degree, both student groups addressed the community need for service in connection to their understanding of their personal social stability and place within their communities. Nigerian students, in particular, predominantly defined community service as a way to give back to the community and used personal anecdotes to highlight their passion. Abiodun (2011) commented,

> I really don't like seeing people suffering. There was this morning, I was at home, I just woke up really early this morning and I had not eaten anything yet. I was just walking around and I saw this very little child. He was just scraping a pot. They had used it to cook food the other day, and he was trying to get that for breakfast. I was touched—look how people are suffering, some barely have food to eat. So when I decided to join this club it was to reach out to those people in any way I can. (personal communication)

Abiodun's experience with witnessing starvation influenced him to participate in community service. Considering the differences between Nigeria and The United States, it is less likely, though not impossible, that a U.S. student living in the suburbs would be

witness to this type of scene. That makes Abiodun's response less surprising, but no less

indicative of his understanding of his position in society and his subsequent motivation

for participating in community outreach. Specifically, he commented that he had not had

breakfast *yet*, implying that obtaining something to eat was not going to be an issue for

him. Seeing the child affected by poverty and hunger emphasized the dichotomy between

the wealthy and the poor, which defined his understanding of a need for community

outreach. Beth (2011), from the U.S. participant group, similarly noted the benefits

provided to her due to her social standing when she discussed her inspirations:

> I plan to dedicate my life to [service]. I just have this desire, like when you see
> these certain conditions. I mean, I won the birth lottery, yea. But I can't just live
> with that. I feel like you have to really go in and help other people. (personal
> communication)

In Beth's case, she discussed seeing dire conditions as calling her to participate in

different service opportunities, which she hoped to dedicate her life to. She did not

discuss service as a future vocation, but as a responsibility given her social and financial

stability. In this instance, both U.S. and Nigerian students are dismissing the educational

aspect of a service project, and the international emphasis placed on alternative breaks, to

instead look more precisely at the humanitarian and social role of participating in service.

As previously stated, the mission of an alternative break at the U.S. institution

was described as an opportunity for students to travel during their breaks, either locally or

internationally, to work with global initiatives and address social justice issues first hand.

Further, the underlined goal was to encourage students to critically reflect on their role as

citizens in a globalized arena through their service, activism, academic inquiry, and

leadership. Both the mission and the goal are clearly stated multiple times throughout the

website and in the office on campus. However, when asked to define an alternative break, the participants often cited separate, more personalized definitions. Specifically, U.S. participants spoke more about the educational aspect of participating in an alternative break in conjunction with gaining an international experience. U.S. participants also spoke about the service aspect, but for four out of six of the participants, service was not the key aspect in their definition.

The Nigerian students, on the other hand, often referenced more uniform responses regardless of the lack of a specific mission statement anywhere on the university website or in the community service office. Specifically, each Nigerian participant indicated that community service was a way to give back to the community at large. It is possible that due to the voluntary aspect of the service at the Nigerian institution students were less likely influenced by the possibility of augmenting their education. Unlike the Nigerian participants, students from the United States applied the themes of the different alternative breaks to their personal and educational goals, which could factor into their overall understanding of the stated purpose of the alternative break program. Further, when discussing alternative breaks with the Nigerian participants, each participant still brought the focus back to the community as opposed to their own educational goals, though one participant, Abiodun, did acknowledge that his area of study, international relations, would be influential in his participation in international service.

Both U.S. and Nigerian students, though neither group received academic credit for their participation, discussed their understanding of the educational benefit of participating in their community service programs. For example, when asked if education

based service programs were beneficial, Adejola (2011) a very quite and shy participant

commented, "Yes. Some people don't really wake up on their own until someone directs

them. Maybe they give them a bit and they learn and they want to do more" (personal

communication). Adejola spoke to the learning that takes place while doing service, but

in a different way than U.S. participants. Rather than look at the personal benefit, Adejola

commented on the possibility of inspiring more service. McBride and Mlyn (2012) stated,

"Service learning must be directed by its goals, focused on achieving positive outcomes

for all the groups involved: the host communities, the students, and the institutions we

represent" (pp. 1-2). To Adejola, the positive affect for all participants was an education

that inspired continued service. This was unlike the U.S. participants who regularly

commented on personal educational benefits. Khloe (2011), for example stated,

> Like I'm so excited that I get to learn about this conflict in a region that I have
> wanted to learn about, but I guess I haven't really taken the steps myself because
> so many other things get in the way of every day life, but participating in the
> spring break, not only do you get to go there, but [you get] the learning process
> before hand. (personal communication)

Khloe's response does not mention how her education will change her perspective, how it

will impact the community in which she is volunteering, or even how learning about

another region can facilitate change or inspire more action. Instead, she focused on her

own excitement to see something that she had previously only discussed in a classroom

setting.

In regard to defining service, Nigerian students were more likely than their U.S.

counterparts to discuss donating goods as a form of community service. The U.S.

participants strictly discussed the activity of going out and doing service and becoming

engrossed in the community, even if for only a short period of time. This signifies that the

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U.S. participants looked at donating time as different from donating money or materials while Nigerian students discussed the benefits and need for both. Further, Nigerian students looked at donating goods as a way to remain active. Madu (2011) discussed the difficulty of continuing doing service after graduation:

> A lot of people are definitely going to keep it up. Even if they can't go out and teach or help children, they can donate. We see a lot of that now, people donate clothes; they even go out and buy clothes to donate. (personal communication)

This was echoed by many of the students and was even classified as one of the types of service available at the university (the special projects often centered around providing material goods). While this may be different from the U.S. perspective of community service, in Nigeria resources can be a burden depending on location and social standing. Schools in the area are often lacking books let alone families' ability to buy uniforms for their children. Subsequently, it is not out of the scope of community service to address the material needs in the same way students address the active need for service.

<u>External Influences</u>

It became apparent throughout the interviews that participants were not only motivated by personal understandings or the perceived benefits provided by service experiences. Instead, external influencers in their lives further motivated them. It was within this theme that U.S. participants were more likely to discuss why they chose their particular service projects while Nigerian's focused predominantly on the their relationship within the community and how that would later influence their lives. The previous discussion of governmental presence was also attributed as an external influence for the Nigerian participants.

Participants from the United States partially focused on connecting service to their work as well as connecting to the region and culture as a reason for choosing their alternative break locations. Specifically focusing on cultural identity, Kayla, A second year graduate student studying education, described connecting to her own cultural background as a major motivation in her choice of location, the Caribbean: "My dad is Puerto Rican and I feel very close ties with the Caribbean and it's very personal for me" (Kayla, 2011, personal communication). While Kayla noted having previous experience in Latin America, this was her first educational or volunteer trip to the Caribbean. Clearly, Her desire to connect with a cultural identity influenced her decision making process. Kayla further clarified that her desire to go to the Caribbean was not her deciding factor. Rather, in addition the influence of her cultural identity, Kayla further commented on her motivation to learn more about different education systems around the world to strengthen her classroom room teaching. She stated, "I wanted to look at an alternative break that had education in mind, so that is essentially the force behind it and in combination with being in the Caribbean" (Kayla, 2011, personal communication). The influence of augmenting her educational background while also finding a way to connect to her cultural history underlined how this trip would be personally beneficial to her goals and again highlighted service as a second thought.

While the U.S. participants often spoke to personal motivations in conjunction to personal benefits, Avery made a strong argument for the necessity of linking the two concepts. She argued:

> I think it's important based on personal interest because some people are more passionate about women's rights, or some people are more passionate about HIV/AIDS, some people are more passionate about different issues based on past

experience or just, your personal [interests]... I think it's important; I would not have gone on any trip just for the sake of going. So the location and theme are both important for the personal reasons that the student is going. (Avery, 2011, personal communication)

Avery concisely highlighted that the decision to go on an alternative break was to address a specific issue in which she had interest, not for selfish reasons or to personally benefit, but because passion for specific issues influenced greater participation. She would not go just to go, but to address an issue that was important to her and about which she had previous knowledge. In fact, this was a major deciding factor for each participant.

The interest to participate in international service was further influenced by students desires to participate in organizational efforts to do service at home and abroad. Khloe (2011), interested in a future in the Peace Corps noted, "[My motivation was] probably just my background and interest in service and my hope to be in the Peace Corps after graduation" (personal communication). Khloe underlined a vocational calling to continue participating in service efforts on an international level. Kaylee (2011) also discussed the influence of a future in a service related career: "Doing these different projects has really helped me narrow down what I want to do, either with young children or older adults" (personal communication). Kaylee's further suggested that remaining in the service industry, focusing on these populations, was in her future, which she could attribute to her past experiences doing service, including the alternative break project. The influence of a future career goal to participate in service encouraged both participants to seek opportunities that would prepare them for those future roles. With that in mind, the alternative break programs worked as an opportunity to teach the participants how to become leaders in the world of service. Like any other profession,

training is a necessity prior to action. These students attributed their previous volunteering as that experience and training.

Nigerian students offered little in the area of external influencers; however, some students addressed how their culture was influential as a communal society. Rather than discuss external influencers as a personal indicator, students considered the external influence to be the community lifestyle in Nigeria as opposed to the more individualized life style in the United States. For example, Adejola commented, "I like the eye clinic, because most of them, they are senior citizens, and I know some day I will be like that too. So I want to give [to] them and help them out" (personal communication). While observing students in the community I was further able to understand how their elders would influence the youth. In the eye clinic we assisted the elderly by taking them to different stations to be checked by a doctor and by performing basic eye exams (i.e. reading the eye chart). The students addressed each patient with individualized attention, which illustrated the relationship the youth have with elders of the community. With a country that is so rooted in tribal and familial associations, community development and support on a local level is not simply a voluntary action. Instead, it is a responsibility of each citizen to maintain the growth of the society as a singular unit. This is further augmented by the current transition taking place in Nigeria. Previous tribal affiliations that influence the communal and tribal nature of the student participants is now transitioning to a democratic nation wherein the government should be more participatory. However, as many students discussed the lack of support given by the government during this transition, the students felt that the communal nature of their heritage was still highly

influential in their decision to participate in community service. Perhaps this will change as the society becomes more stable.

<center>Educational Goals</center>

Not only a goal of service learning, but also a goal of the interview participants in this study, is to augment current education. As previously discussed, both U.S. and Nigerian participants illustrated different ways that community service and service learning are influential to the overall development of both universities and participants. The U.S. participants were more likely to be forthcoming about their personal educational goals, though Nigerian students, when asked to discuss how international service programs would benefit them, offered the different educational opportunities that they would like to receive. Further, students addressed long-term educational goals by discussing how participation in these types of programs, most specifically the alternative break programs, was beneficial to their majors and to their future career goals. Further, both U.S. and Nigerian students discussed the informal learning that these programs address by discussing the increased global awareness as another form of learning.

The educational goals of the U.S. participants were most apparent when discussing the benefits these programs provide to students and universities. For example, Kayla (2011) noted,

> Similar to universities, [students] get additional skills that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. It tends to be a very intense experience because it's, you know, living and waking up in that place. Maybe also language skills if they're already studying them" (personal communication).

Kayla's assumption that an alternative break augments students' education and marketability was a common theme in the discussion of motivations. Other participants

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found that the international aspect of the alternative break complimented their degree tracks. For example, Avery (2011) discussed her previous education influencing her desire to participate and learn more:

> I chose the Guatemala trip because of my past education. Last year I took Spanish both semesters and both semesters we spent time learning about, we watched films and learned about the indigenous peoples of Latin America and the El Salvadorian civil war and how the large impact it had on just the common people the poor people of the rural areas. When I heard that the Guatemala trip was working on empowering indigenous peoples after a civil war I was really interested because of the presentation and learning I had had before. (personal communication).

A previous knowledge of the location as well as a desire to learn more assisted in Avery's decision-making process. She linked her motivations to her ability to speak Spanish, her desire to learn more about the region, and her current understanding of the civil war's effect on the indigenous people of the region.

When discussing educational goals, participants also spoke individually about how the trips may or may not be beneficial in nature to their personal majors at the university, but more precisely spoke about the alternative break program offered them a well-rounded education. Much like the above opportunity to travel abroad, participants noted that the alternative break offered them an educational opportunity that, outside of the university, may never happen again. When discussing university benefits, Avery (2011) specifically noted, "I think that it's part of a well-rounded education. It is part of learning outside the classroom… It's a way to round out your knowledge—you graduate with knowledge and experience." In this comment, Avery underlined the impact an alternative break program might have on her long-term educational goals by addressing the importance placed of having a well-rounded education.

When discussing the benefits of participating in an alternative break program, students were asked to discuss how alternative breaks were successful at teaching participants about global awareness. Andrea (2011) noted, "This is actually what I have decided to focus my studies on. [Host communities] benefit in some ways by raising awareness" (personal communication). She was suggesting that host communities benefit from these service trips by the new awareness attained by the participants, and that she further wanted to focus her education around the effects of this perceived global awareness. Her theory was that, while the trips may be short, the information students obtain and bring back home with them continue to benefit the host communities by spreading awareness to those who may not have otherwise learned about the global and social justice issues addressed by the programs. Khloe (2011) further underlined this perspective with the statement, "Like after I come back [from the pre-trip orientation] I talk with my roommates about the meeting and their like, 'oh, I didn't know that was going on,' and I'm like, neither did I!" Khloe was not only excited about learning new information for her own benefit, but further passed along the newly acquired information to those around her. This offered an educational benefit not only for herself but motivated her to include her peers in the learning experience.

As addressed in the previous themes, the Nigerian students generally focused more on the community than on their own personal development as participants in community service. However, when addressed with the possibility of going abroad or having international students come to Nigeria, the participants were more likely to discuss educational benefits. For example, when asked about U.S. students doing service

in Nigeria Folami (2011), a sophomore female, was exited by the chance to exchange

ideas and learning:

> That's great because we all have the same purpose. We can share ideas. We can
> tell them how we do it here and they can tell us how they do it there... We just
> exchange ideas and that is great. (personal communication)

Here, the educational benefit is more non-formal in nature and is steeped in an exchange

of ideas rather than more directly related to university education. Another student,

Boseda (2011), discussed education in the form of exposure: "That would be really great

cause you get to explore the different ways you can contribute. I for one, should I get the

chance to go [to the United States] I would be exposed to a lot, It is a welcome idea any

day any time" (personal communication). Again, Boseda discussed a more informal style

of learning by addressing the exposure and how he would learn by being in a situation so

different from his own. Boseda (2011) later went on to say that creating an exchange

would be a good way to learn about culture. He stated, "I honestly don't know much

apart from what I see on TV. Here everyone on TV is living big. You don't get to see the

other part of America" (personal communication). One major aspect of informal

education is learning through participating in the surrounding environment. This is

something that Boseda was very excited to explore and he offered as a key motivation for

his desire to travel to do service.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Community Benefits and Ethical Implications</h2>

The final section of this chapter aims to discuss the perceived community benefits

of service programs observed by the U.S. and Nigerian participants in relation to the

ethical implications faced by these programs. U.S. and Nigerian students alike addressed

the benefits of service programs to the communities in which service was being

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completed, though the participants from the U.S. were quick to realize that they earned more clearly defined and tangible benefits than the host community. The Nigerians, on the other hand, were more willing to examine different ways in which the exchange opportunity would be better for society as a whole. Specifically, the lack of benefits understood by participants for the host community was one large disconnect of theory to practice.

Specifically, the ethical implications of alternative breaks can be defined in the design, execution, and final outcome of the service. Further, the motivations of students can directly affect each of these attributes of an alternative break. Specifically of concern was the possibility of perpetuating colonial or imperialistic relationships with the volunteers and the hosts. Students where asked to address this concern through a series of questions regarding the importance of their personal decorum, the possible negative repercussions of their presence, and whether or not a fear of perpetuating stereotypes and these dependent relationships was realistic. In response to this final question, Beth (2011) was most insightful:

> Showing what people want to see, like when you think of Africa in general you're thinking of the slums, the poverty, the HIV, so just showing you that is going to just cement the ideas you already had versus what I said before, purposefully disproving what you already think. Yes, [these stereotypes] can be further cemented, but the point of going is to avoid doing that. (personal communication)

Clearly comprehending the risk of breaching ethics by continuing to support detrimental stereotypes, Beth addressed the fact that these trips are not designed fix global issues. The savior complex, which was illustrated by other participants, is however, a serious risk.

The participants of alternative break trips are given an opportunity to see first hand how different global issues affect different communities around the world.

Subsequently, the U.S. students discussed the fact that media images perpetuated stereotypes and that the purpose of these trips was, in part, to remove that stereotype. For example, Andrea (2011), when questioned about negative impacts of these services, addressed the fact that stereotypes were often wrong and that the developing world merely needed outside assistance:

> The big perception is that they are starving and we have to help or they are being oppressed by the government and we have to help…And I think the real situation most of the time is that they are strong enough to bring themselves back up, they just need a little guidance or direction or recourses and you won't know that until you go there. (personal communication)

For Avery the benefit to the host community was that current stereotypes could only be broken by observation and passing information along to others. The media was a huge part of how students addressed the negative impact of a U.S. presence in developing countries. It was the consensus belief that the host communities were capable of addressing their own social justice issues, but that going to these countries as both participants and observers would break previous stereotypes. Unfortunately what is also evident in Avery's response is the same arrogance behind the global citizenship agenda. Her motivation to guide the developing world rather than learn from her experience does the same thing for which she admonished the media: perpetuation of stereotypes.

The U.S. participants seemed to have a difficult time alluding to any benefit outside of global awareness and seemed to be unaware of how to actually define the term. Further, only two U.S. students addressed how these programs were similarly beneficial to the developed world. First, students didn't find it problematic found to discuss their personal gain by participating in these programs and remained unreflective on how any other benefits were a possibility. Avery (2011) specifically commented, "I think that the

participant might actually benefit the most out of the whole experience because we are getting to travel to new countries... I think it is really a learning growing experience for the participant. That's the biggest benefit from the alternative break" (personal communication). Student participants are benefitting from all the theoretical applications of these programs: development, travel, intercultural awareness, etc. The community, on the other hand, was more difficult to place into a tangible profit. Also, while students addressed the need to break stereotypes, only two students addressed the need to do so in the developed world. When discussing the developed world Khloe (2011) offered, "I feel like there are different topics and causes in the world and that anywhere they choose to do an alternative break, developed or developing, that that area would benefit from the break" (personal communication). Khloe highlighted the fact that the benefit is not only in creating awareness, it is in addressing the reason that called for the service in the first place, which happens in both the developed and developing world.

The Nigerian students were more inclined to address community benefits as they were less interested in specific social justice issues and more interested in facilitating change. Students in Nigeria were more likely to discuss specific types of service as opposed to the theory that service is good because it is good. Instead, participants discussed the community directly. For example, Olabisi (2011) stated, "I saw children and their classes were dilapidated, their structures were so bad, they didn't even have materials to read...And so me and the other students, we read to them, we play sports with them and we make them dance and sing songs together: (personal communication). Olabisi directed her reason for doing service to the impact it had on the community. The service effort on the part of this student did not change the world nor did it increase

global awareness. Instead, it simply offered children an opportunity to learn and grow through community interaction. Boseda (2011) also addressed the community by comparing service to a type of scholarship: "Here, I am on scholarship. I'm not saying that is why I am doing it… but contributing is like a scholarship for them. You can give clothes, money, support. You could read to them and you are not charging them anything" (personal communication). Like Olabisi's statement, the community service is about making a difference in the lives of those that do not have the resources to ignite change. That is the tangible impact that these community outreach programs have on the participating host communities.

It was with this same mentality that each of the Nigerian participants enthusiastically approached the alternative break concept. Madu (2011) articulated this enthusiasm in his unprompted statement about creating an exchange between U.S. and Nigerian universities:

> I welcome the idea [of Americans coming over] I think it is a great idea. Right now a lot of people, even here, we do exchange based on academics. But we also need to show community service is something noble to look into, you know? (personal communication)

For the Nigerian students, the idea of having foreign students come to do service was a way for them to inspire their own community as well as the global community to take notice of Nigeria. It was with this concept that both U.S. and Nigerian participants echoed the same ideas about global awareness. It was further underlined, however, that the community service should be conducted in equal parts. Iyapo (2011) stated, "Ideas would be welcome because they could enhance our own community program here. Then they can learn from our own ideas. Maybe if they go back to America they can

implement it" (personal communication). For students to travel to another country without a plan or without ideas of community service would be indicative of a poorly designed program, which was recognized by the Nigerian students. However, they also underlined, as Iyapo's statement illustrates, a need to share ideas and communicate with the organizations and universities in the regions where the service is taking place.

The ethical implications of this disconnection between the participants and the host community are complicated. Primarily, the lack of understanding on the behalf of the American students runs the risk of perpetuating imperialistic stereotypes, which these programs are, theoretically, designed to avoid. Further, the alternative break trip runs the risk of commodifying service by turning the act of volunteering into a personal benefit rather than a community and humanitarian benefit. It is easy to look at the Nigerian responses and comment that the students speak more about and are more connected to the community. This would not be a false assumption. They are speaking about their own community and, subsequently, are more likely to have nuanced responses that discuss the direct outcome of community service. However, what is illustrated in the U.S. responses is a clear misunderstanding of the transition of theory to practice. While theory indicates that the students will come back more capable of understanding the impact of the service, this is not proven by the responses from students with previous experience in alternative breaks. In fact, Kayla who works in the alternative break office of the U.S. institution stated, "in terms of eco tourism and voluntourism, those concepts are quite rampant now and I feel like these alternative break opportunities are most beneficial to the people going on them and less so to the communities that they are visiting" (personal communication). This fear that Kayla expressed is one that has been echoed by the

researchers. Student motivations do not underline a strong understanding or a strong desire to do service. Rather, they underline educational and personal goals stated by each participant. For a trip to be effective for both the students and the host communities, these fears should not be forgotten and should be considered when designing new programs.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Service learning offers students an opportunity to become more involved in their surrounding communities as well as acquiring useful skills for their future. This was made evident in student responses from both the Nigerian and U.S. participant pools. However, the motivations for participation were very different with consideration to the types of programs available. Both U.S. and Nigerian participants were motivated to give back to their community, but their unique cultural backgrounds and physical environments differentiated their responses. It was indicated by the students that participation in community service was an inspiration to continue doing service as they pursued their educational and professional goals. Students from both subject groups addressed how education was an important factor in the service and in the exchange that takes place with international service projects. It was also indicated that Nigerian students were excited by the prospect of having students from the United States, or any country, come and do service in their community. However, it was also indicated that more structured education in pre-departure as well as in local community service efforts would enhance the overall understanding of the benefits offered to the host communities.

Further, student responses indicated a clear lack of reflection and understanding in regard to the perceived benefits for host communities through alternative break programs. This disconnect was augmented by a clear violation of ethical standards wherein the opportunity to travel abroad to participate in service was seen as a commodity by students

rather than as a humanitarian effort. Responses clearly indicated that student motivations primarily focused on how alternative break programs would be beneficial to students and universities first and host communities second. This violation is connected to the literature, which clearly equated service as a vague addition to the learning aspect of these programs.

<p style="text-align:center">U.S. Responses</p>

The influences of student motivations on the purpose of the alternative break program are evident in the nature of the participant responses. Each participant was motivated by their personal understandings of the field, namely the international opportunity these programs offer. However, this motivation did not seem to illustrate an effort on the part of the participants to tailor the purpose of the alternative break to their personal desires. Rather, the students were influenced by their desire to participate in the specific social justice issues addressed by the different programs. Further, the U.S. participants equated participating in an alternative break with their educational pursuits. As Khloe (2011) noted, "I think the most important thing is the interest in wanting to learn not only about the education but the project you are going to be doing there" (personal communication). Participation in these programs, as defined by participant responses, is motivated by a desire to travel abroad, augment educational and professional pursuits, and a desire to participate in the everyday activities of a new culture. Service, was clearly a motivating factor, though students seemed to have a difficult time reflecting on what role service played in these programs.

Nigerian Responses

The Nigerian students motivations to participate in community service were less varied due to the nature and design of their programs. Each of the students were motivated by their desire to give back to their own community either out of a feeling of obligation or out of a desire to see change in their country and local community. Students were further influenced by their cultural dynamic as a communal society. For example, student responses centered on taking care of the community because they would also need to be taken care of some day. The concept of alternative break programs and U.S. students traveling to Nigeria to participate in community service was also widely accepted with students also stating their desire to travel to the United States to do service. Abiodun (2011) in particular noted,

> Yes, it is a very good idea. I would look forward to having American students to come here and work. We would also like to go there because we believe there are still areas that they also need our help. So, in as much as we would like to have American students come here, we would also like to go there. (personal communication).

This desire to participate in service in other countries suggests that the developing world, while open to assistance from other countries, is not only capable of participating in their own growth, they are also capable of participating in the growth of the developed world.

Recommendations For Alternative Break Programs

In theory, alternative breaks offer a suitable cultural alternative to traditional long-term study abroad. As Chieffo and Griffiths (2009) noted, short-term study abroad programs offer the entire student body the opportunity to study in another country as opposed to the traditional programs, which recruit a very specific population. While compounded, the level of intensity offered through the alternative break program is a

realistic alternative to the depth offered through long-term programs in regard to student development and opportunity. However, the intended purpose of these programs and the actual implementation must be continually revisited.

Design

Practitioners must evaluate whether these opportunities are to be considered international service opportunities with the community in mind or if they are to be short-term study abroad opportunities for the benefit of the student. Once this has clearly been defined, the mission must match the intended purpose so to truthfully and fully inform student participants. If an alternative break is meant to be a service program, advertising and education surrounding the filed must illustrate this objective over student development and educational goals. This will not detract students from seeking international experiences, nor would it take away from their educational goals. However, their understanding of their role they will play in the field, specifically in relation to the host community participant relationship, will be more clearly identified, which will theoretically inform their overall motivations. Should alternative breaks be defined as study abroad opportunities, however, study abroad advisors and alternative break leaders must be well versed in the foundations of student development theory and how these types of programs, both at the international and national level, effect the growth of the student participants so as to meet the desired outcome of increased global competence.

It is evident that the overall design of an alternative break must be considered when discussing the ethics implied by the field. Currently, at the U.S. institution in this study, trips are being designed and led by students as early as 19 or 20 years old. While Perry's scheme of Cognitive and Intellectual Development does not define a specific age

by which students achieve the different levels of development, practitioners should be aware that a student still in adolescents may not be prepared to lead a group of their peers to an international location while learning to comprehend their own development and place in society. The limited research surrounding alternative breaks and the research surrounding ISL all underline the importance of critical reflection designed into the whole process of a service program in order to generate learning and improve the service opportunities. Platter et al. (2009) specifically stated, "Using reflection maximally toward these ends requires a precise understanding of the learning and service objectives at stake in the ISL activity" (p. 494). While students have faculty support, their ability to implement reflective practices that are critically engaging while still developing as young adults is highly suspect. This is partially illustrated by the common occurrence of U.S. student participants citing global awareness as a key benefit to these programs without being able to clearly define the implicit nature of the phrase. Their common responses were clearly lacking in reflection, which may be linked to the lack preparedness of a young student when designing such a detail-oriented program.

Further, the understanding of how host communities benefit from these programs needs to be more clearly stated in the design of the programs from the onset of the alternative break process. McBride and Mlyn (2012) commented,

> Those contributions can be "just being an extra pair of hands" or actually transferring skills or building capacity, like training local preventative-health volunteers on effective practices. And in the end, we all share the goal of increasing our collective sense of humanity" (p. 1).

The U.S. participants were unclear as to how these programs were beneficial to host communities outside of global awareness. Further, it was apparent that students were not

prepared to fully define global awareness. This displayed a lack of reflection on their part, but also a lack of preparation on the part of the institution. This is not to diminish the importance of global awareness. Rather, students should understand the meaning behind the phrase as well as recognize that the community is as much a stakeholder in the success of an alternative break as the participants.

Communication

The design of the programs should further investigate the sustainability of communication and cross-cultural relationships. Participants, leaders, and practitioners need to be aware of the how the intent of these programs impacts host communities and the ethical implications surrounding that relationship. Mabel Erasmus (2011), a South African scholar with a focus on both ISL and CSL, noted, "entering into dialogue and setting up research collaboration would be a constructive way to address our mutual interests and challenges" (p. 367). In order to be successful not only for students, but also for host communities, it is imperative that we, as volunteers, respect the agency of the host community and their own participation in service projects. What is most clear from the answers given by the Nigerian students is that they have a voice and an interest in cooperation. McBride and Mlyn (2012) noted, "America's imperialistic past is not so distant. Having the community's goals front and center is important lest this become "self-service" for the students or institution only" (p. 2). It is paramount that universities do not become so interested in how students are benefited simply from a western and predominately U.S. development perspective. Rather, it is necessary to focus on the voice of those that are in the field every day, to foster those connections and maintain those relationships.

In participating in these programs, students, professors, and practitioners must recognize that they are not the leaders in the field; rather, they are participants and volunteers there to learn and serve. Pearson (1999) further underlined this distinction, "Fitting neatly with academia's goal of creating experts through higher levels of learning, [participants/academics] assume that the students are merely providing services to 'those less fortunate than themselves'" (pp. 101-102). The service opportunity is far from privileged university students assisting those less fortunate and this assumption is detrimental to the success and continued growth of alternative break programs. The alternative break process is both a learning experience and a service experience for all the stakeholders involved. The savior ideology apparent in this discourse must be addressed prior to departure so as to avoid an occurrence in the field as well as to support the notion that host communities are not going to be changed by a weeklong service trip.

Education and Training

If these programs are to support student learning and development, the educational aspect should be restructured to address not only the historical information surrounding the social justice issues, but should also address concerns of student development theory, study abroad, and intercultural competence. When discussing future goals and suggestions for program development, Avery (2011) noted,

> I think that during the pre-trip trainings, we've read a lot of articles teaching U.S. about the history of Guatemala and if I were leading the trip I would do more discussion about what to expect when we get there and knowledge about who we are going to talk to specifically. (personal communication)

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It is just as important for students to be prepared in the historical context of the situation as it is for students to understand what it is going to be like once they get to their destination. Platter et al (2009) noted:

> ISL provides a powerful means for helping higher education's mission to prepare students as globally competent and globally aware citizens. Unfortunately, its potent nature can lead to complacency about fine-tuning the design of these educational experiences in order to meet particular learning objectives and about accumulating evidence on best practices to guide the pedagogy. (p. 502)

Historical evidence and awareness is only one aspect of the educational responsibilities of these programs. Reflection, personal awareness, and practical skills are also necessary when designing an alternative break. Without the proper pre-departure education and training, students will be less likely to make any transitional movement towards becoming relativistic in their development. Further, the alternative break programs are so short that the pre-departure training is that much more important in preparing students for intercultural dynamics and adjustments that will be less available to them once they are on-site. The more international alternative breaks become, the more imperative it is that both cultural acquisition and experiential learning are fully supported by trip leaders and practitioners in the field.

This training should be implemented on two different levels. First, the student leaders should be trained in how to effectively transfer skills to others. The trip leaders do undergo training prior to the commencement of the pre-departure preparations, however, this training should be ongoing as the programs continue to shape and develop. As the programs change, so should the leader training so as to

best address the needs of all students. Both the faculty advisor and the office of service learning on the campus can give this support. Second, the student participants should receive training in the actual efforts of the community service project, cultural differences and communication, and tactics for critical reflection, which should be in addition to the historical context of the service issue being addressed. Plater et al. (2009) outlined the different learning goals of ISL and reflection strategies as including academic, civic, cross-cultural, and personal growth. They argued, "An important step in designing reflection so as to generate this learning is to express the desired learning outcomes in specific, assessable, learning objectives for each domain" (p. 494). Each participant should thus apply reflective goals to each of the different learning domains that can be oral or written, and are openly discussed with peers, leaders, and the community.

<div align="center">Future Research</div>

What was most apparent by the end of this study was the need for more research to be conducted after students have returned from their alternative break programs. While this study highlighted the knowledge students have going into their programs and their motivations for participating, an in-depth analysis needs to be conducted to illustrate the outcomes on student development and intercultural competency. In order to fully determine the success of the alternative break program, researchers must investigate the theoretical outcome outlined in the Active Citizen Continuum. While Break Away cited one study that had previously been conducted, there was next to no research outside of anecdotal evidence supporting the theory that students' participation in alternative break programs was a catalyst to active citizen engagement. While this research offered student

responses indicating a desire to continue service, there was no indication that the alternative break program had any influence on this decision. It is further necessary that any study researching the effects of citizenship engagement be completed in a multi-stage process. Interviews and surveys should be conducted pre-departure, immediately after students return, and again by the end of the semester. It would further be beneficial for a study to be conducted on student participants after they have graduated and the opportunity to participate in community service is not as prevalent. This type of study would highlight the long-term effects of participating in an alternative break program.

SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in Research

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Elenor (Megan) Francis from American University. The purpose of this study is to identify the motivations and emotions students feel about international service learning while examining how international service learning can be improved. This study will contribute to the student's completion of her Master's Thesis.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a personal interviews and focus groups that will be administered to individual participants on campus at the American University in Washington D.C. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to community service learning and alternative breaks. The interviews will be recorded by audio tape.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require 1-2 hours of your time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include a better overall understanding of how students from a non-western background perceive community service learning and alternative breaks. The research will further allow students the opportunity to suggest changes to the overall implementation of service learning projects to facilitate a better understanding for future participants in these types of learning projects. The study will not offer any direct benefit to the participants outside of the chance to voice their opinion in regards to study abroad and volunteer work.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at a classroom with faculty advisors present. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or

generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, participants will be given the option to have all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers *(including audio tapes)* be destroyed. If participants do not specifically ask for the audio recordings to be destroyed, the digital recordings will be stored on the researchers computer in a password protected file.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any individual question without consequences.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

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Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

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Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

☐ I give consent to be (*video/audio*) taped during my interview. _____ (initials)

_____
Name of Participant (Printed)

_____   _____
Name of Participant (Signed)   Date

_____   _____
Name of Researcher (Signed)   Date

Current knowledge and motivation:
1. How would you define an alternative break?
   a. What about service learning?
2. What is your experience with these two types of programs?
   a. Have you ever participated in one before?
3. Have you ever participated in volunteer work outside of your educational goals?
   a. If so, please explain the type of volunteer work. Was this experience something you can see as benefitting a student's educational goals? Please explain.
4. How did you choose the program in which you are participating?
   a. How important was the location of the program in your decision making process?
   b. What is the importance in choosing an appropriate location and project for each person in an alternative break or international service-learning project? (In other words, why is it better for some people to pick one location/project and for others to pick a different location/project?)
5. As a current participant, what motivated you to apply and participate in an alternative break program?
   What are your general opinions about these types of study abroad and volunteer programs?
6. In what way do you find these programs to be successful, if at all?

Purpose of the trip-Perspectives:
1. What is the purpose of an alternative break program?
   a. How does this differ from international service-learning programs?
   b. What about community service at your home institution?
2. Is it your belief that specific regions of the world are more popular for alternative break programs? What are the more popular regions?
3. What do you propose is a good way for students to understand what is meant by the term 'developing area'? Can you give examples of these areas?
   a. In your opinion, would you say that the developing world and disaster relief areas popular locations for this type of study abroad? Why?
   b. How do these geographic areas benefit from international volunteer programs, in your opinion?
   c. What about disaster relief areas? What is the difference?
4. Do more developed areas that have not been affected by disaster need or qualify for this type of program? Can you give examples?

Benefits to Education/Society:

1. How are international service-learning programs and alternative breaks beneficial to the goals of a university campus, if at all?
2. How are these programs beneficial to the participants?
3. How do these experiences increase global awareness?
4. Conversely, how might these experiences perpetuate colonial/imperialistic ideology? Do you think this is a realistic fear?
5. Do you think it is important on an alternative break or international service-learning trip for students to consider how they represent themselves? Why or why not?
   a. Do you think that a student's behavior on an alt. break program could have positive or negative implications beyond the student him/herself?

Previous Experience:
1. If you have participated in this type of educational exchange, what were your initial reactions about the experience?
   a. How has it affected your short and long term learning goals?
2. What was good about the program in which you participated?
   a. What critiques do you have of program in which you participated?
3. Have you continued to participate in community service in your daily life?
   a. Was this a goal or an inspiration of your current service?
   b. Is this something that you hope to continue doing after you graduate?

Suggestions:

1. Finally, what suggestions, if any, do you have as a student to improve the current manner and organization of international volunteer programs?

APPENDIX C

NIGERIAN INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What do you consider service learning or community service?
2. What inspired you to start doing community service?
3. What are your general opinions about the types of programs offered here?
4. Do you think it would be beneficial for the community here if students from around the world came once or twice a year?
5. What keeps you motivated to keep giving back?
6. Do you think you will continue after you graduate?
7. Do you think the relationships you are creating here will help you maintain that service?
8. Did you participate in volunteer work before university?
9. Do you think that students coming from abroad will increase global awareness?
10. If you could go abroad and do community service where would you go and why?
11. If you went specifically to American
12. What suggestions do you have for students coming from aboard?

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