ABSTRACT

MARTIN STANDISH, KATHRYN. Service-Learning, Study Abroad, and Voluntourism: Exploring the Benefits of International Service-Learning. (Under the direction of Dr. Gene Brothers.)

The combination of academic coursework, service, reflection, and travel, is sometimes referred to as international service-learning. This document is a compilation of two articles pertaining to research on international service-learning as a pedagogical method that has the potential to further student development associated with service-learning, study-abroad, and volunteer tourism, but within a single program. The first article, *International Service-Learning: A Combined Model of Travel, Community Service, and Academic Coursework to Further Student Development*, presents a review of theory and literature pertaining to service-learning, study abroad, and international service-learning. Based on this review, the researchers suggested a functional model that unites service-learning, study abroad, and volunteer tourism by means of Astin’s Theory of Involvement. This article also included a discussion of the proposed model for international service-learning and suggestions for future research. The second article, *Towards Cultural Competency: Assessing Intercultural Sensitivity Development in Students Who Participated in a Study Abroad Course with a Service Component*, presents findings from an empirical study that examined the intercultural communication competency gains of university students participating in short term faculty led study abroad programs. This study concluded that participation in this type of academic program facilitated the development of intercultural communication competency in students.
Service-Learning, Study Abroad, and Voluntourism: Exploring the Benefits of International Service-Learning

by
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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

Raleigh, North Carolina

2010

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DEDICATION

To my father who instilled in me the value of education and has always encouraged me to

“live above my heritage.”
BIOGRAPHY

Kathryn Martin Standish, better known as Kate, grew up in Fayetteville, Georgia, south of Atlanta. She received her Bachelor of Arts in History in 2006 from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She worked at the North Carolina State Archives from 2006 to 2008 before returning to school to pursue a Master of Science in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management at North Carolina State University.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people I would like to thank, as I never would have made it this far on my own.

I would like to begin by thanking my family: my father, David Martin, for his undying love and support of me. I never would have made it this far without your encouragement; my husband, Trey, for his support, understanding and assistance throughout my time in graduate school; my sister, Meredith, for her support and encouragement as one of the best friends I will ever have; my mother, Joanne Christian, for always providing me with a reason to push on.

I would like to give special thanks to the members of my committee for their time and commitment to this project: Gene Brothers, my committee chair, for his ongoing assistance, advice, and sharing of fun and amusing travel stories; David Cardenas for his constant encouragement, guidance, and willingness to assure I always have enough work to keep me busy; and Judy Peel for her welcoming and helpful nature when I started the masters program at NC State.

And finally, a huge thanks to everyone else who has supported me academically and/or emotionally over the past two years: Kyle Elekwa, Chris Serenari, Stacy Supak, Stacy Tomas, Samantha Rich, and my fellow Grad Lab residents, among many others. Thanks so much for everything!
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INTRODUCTION

In today’s world of higher education, schools seek to facilitate not only students’ academic development, but also social and personal development in order to prepare well rounded individuals who will be able to successfully contribute to society. This is reflected in the large number of both academic and non-academic services that most universities offer their students. Even with all of the options available to students, most have a limited amount of time to contribute to the different types of programs and services available that must be split among coursework, extracurricular activities, family and friends. In addition, recent budget crises have led many colleges and universities to reduce programs and services, as well as personnel needed to oversee these programs. It is important that students and those making decisions about program offerings take into consideration what elements or combination of elements best facilitate student development.

In addition to the programming benefits offered by combining programs as described above, there are also benefits to be gained by the individual students. Globalization is making the world a much “smaller” and interconnected place. College students today live in a world where they are expected to value diversity and be capable of interacting with culturally different individuals. Both are markers of a culturally competent person, the advance of which can be facilitated by a number of development tasks. One of the tasks necessary to achieve cultural competency is the development of intercultural communication skills. These expectations will continue as students move through college and into the workforce. Determining what programs and experiences might facilitate development of
these skills is paramount, not only for the future success of each student, but to assure proper allocation of resources towards programs that will most benefit the student.

The following is a compilation of articles written to explore the combination of travel, academic coursework, service to a host community, and reflection, a mixture of elements embodied by international service-learning programs. It was the author’s belief that this combination of elements may facilitate students to develop skills associated with study abroad programs (travel and academic coursework) as well as service-learning programs (community service, reflection, and academic coursework). Research suggests that combining these benefits into a single program allows participants to develop competencies and skills associated with each program in a shorter amount of time than if he or she was to participate in a study abroad and service-learning course separately.

Despite prospective benefits, the research associated with international service-learning leaves much to be desired. Interpretation of exactly what constitutes international service-learning has been wide ranging due to the lack of an official definition or set of guidelines. This may lead researchers and those planning these types of programs to unknowingly omit an important element crucial to facilitating student development. The first article in this compilation attempts to address some of these concerns by examining the theories and current published research, presenting a model for international service-learning and suggesting future research.

The second article presents findings from research conducted by the author during the summer of 2009. The goal of this study was to determine what effect participation in a faculty-led, short term study abroad course with service and reflection elements had on
students’ development of intercultural communication competency, a step towards the larger lifetime goal of cultural competency. Using pre- and post-test measurements of a modified version of Chen and Starosta’s Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (See Appendix A for modified scale), this study found that participants do, in fact increase intercultural communication skills after participation in the above mentioned program type.
International Service-Learning: A Combined Model of Travel, Community Service, and Academic Coursework to Further Student Development
Abstract

Today’s college graduates are entering an increasingly diverse, globalized world that requires them to be culturally competent and accepting of individuals with diverse backgrounds. The purpose of this paper is to outline the personal and academic development of college students with regard to two educational activities that have become popular in modern education: study abroad and service-learning. Based on this review, the researcher suggests uniting the pedagogical methods of service-learning and study abroad by means of Astin’s Theory of Involvement. This article suggests that combining these pedagogical methods has the potential to enhance student development outcomes, particularly cultural competency development. The current literature combining student travel and service-learning, though limited, was reviewed using the catch-all phrase “international service-learning.” Recommendations for future research to advance the study of service-learning based study abroad programs are also presented.
Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline the personal and academic development of college students with regard to two educational activities that have become popular in modern education: study abroad and service-learning. Based on this review, the researcher suggested uniting the pedagogical methods of service-learning and study abroad, by means of Astin’s Theory of Involvement. Both service-learning and study abroad programs require increased involvement by the student outside of a classroom setting and provide real life experiences for participants, which facilitates learning.

Study abroad and service-learning literature both showed an increase in academic, personal, and interpersonal student outcomes. Current literature discussing service-learning in an international setting, though limited, was reviewed using the catch-all phrase “international service-learning.” Combining these pedagogical methods under Astin’s theory has the potential to enhance student development outcomes by facilitating developmental markers cited by both study abroad and service-learning researchers and advocates. Recommendations for future research to advance the study of service-learning based study abroad programs are also presented.

Literature Review

Astin’s Involvement Theory

Astin developed his theory of student involvement from over twenty years of student development research. Involvement theory is based on the premise that students learn more when they are actively involved in both the academic and social elements of the collegiate experience. Astin defined student involvement as, “the amount of physical and
psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (1999, p. 518), and holds that actions, rather than thoughts, intentions, and feelings, define involvement.

The theory of student involvement was rooted in a longitudinal study that attempted to identify which factors facilitated student retention and which seemed to negatively impact student persistence in college (Astin, 1975). He examined the effects of student residence (whether a student lived on or off campus), social group involvement (fraternities, sororities, ROTC, etc.), student employment, and extracurricular activities on student retention. Overall, Astin noticed that all positive factors corresponded to increased student involvement, while negative factors corresponded to a decrease in involvement. Astin (1999) concludes that, “nearly all forms of student involvement are associated with greater than average changes in entering freshman characteristics” (p. 524).

In developing a theory of student involvement, Astin discussed the implementation of several pedagogical theories popular among faculty, staff and administrators. He identified three that are both widely used and are problematic in implementation:

1. Subject-Matter theory is popular among faculty and suggested that student learning and development are reliant on exposure to a particular subject-matter. Implementation of subject-matter theory is heavily dependent on lecture and study, giving the student a passive role in learning.

2. Resource theory is popular among student service professionals and administrators and states that the availability of physical, human, and fiscal resources will encourage and facilitate student development and learning.
3. Individualized (Eclectic) Theory evaluates each student’s individual needs to determine the best combination of resources and instruction methods. This theory combines elements from a number of different theories, but is very costly to implement (Astin, 1999, p. 519-521).

In comparison to the above mentioned theories, which focus more on student outcomes, Astin’s theory of student involvement is more concerned with how a student develops and what behaviors and processes facilitate that development (Astin, 1999). This difference of perspective provided a link between the elements of other theories and desired learning and development outcomes by encouraging faculty and staff to focus more on student motivation and actions and encourage active participation in the learning process. In turn, involvement encourages academic and psychological development and promotes student retention.

Astin laid out five postulates for his involvement theory. The first postulate defines involvement as “the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects” (1999, p. 519). By this definition, involvement can include participation in a student organization as well as the effort that a student puts into studying for an exam or writing a paper. The second postulate states that individual development is dependent on the interests and actions of each student. He also notes that involvement occurs along a continuum rather than in uniformed succession. Thirdly, Astin postulates that involvement can be measured both quantitatively—for example, time spent working on an assignment—and qualitatively—how a student spends his or her time on campus. Astin’s final two propositions lay out the key educational design for the theory of involvement. The fourth states that, “the amount of
student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is
directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program”
(1999, p.519). The fifth and final postulate assumes that the overall effectiveness of
educational policy and practice is directly related to its ability to increase student
involvement.

Astin’s Theory of Involvement serves as an appropriate theoretical base for student
development results from participation in international service-learning. This literature
review will demonstrate that students benefit both personally and academically from
participating in service-learning or study abroad alone. When coupled with the international
and intercultural experiences offered by study abroad programs students experience full
immersion within the host community. This in turn aids in enhanced academic and personal
development.

Service-Learning

Service-learning is an educational pedagogy that emphasizes the combination of
academic learning, experience within the community, and meaningful reflection. For this
education experience students are required to participate in a service experience outside of
class. Those experiences are reflected on and related back to academic material during class
meetings. Service-learning in higher education has its roots in Greek and religious affiliated
groups that have been prevalent on college campuses for centuries. The activist attitudes of
the 1960’s, facilitated by the Civil Rights Movement, the 1961 formation of the Peace Corps,
and the creation of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) spurred wider interest in
service by giving young people active, hands on opportunities to make a difference in their
The first conference to discuss the combination of service and learning in higher education, as well as the importance and implementation of the combination, was held in Atlanta in 1969. Three key objectives were reached: (1) Students should be encouraged to participate in community service, and academic objectives and recognition should be incorporated into that service; (2) Funding should be available for students who wish to participate in service-learning; (3) Planning and implementation of service-learning objectives should be overseen by students, faculty, and public and private organizations.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in educationally based service with the creation of a number of organizations and government programs: National Youth Leadership Council (1982), Campus Outreach Opportunity League (1984), National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (1985), Youth Service America (1985), Campus Compact (1985), the Bush administration’s National Community Service Act of 1990, and Learn and Serve America, created by the Clinton Administration in 1993 (National Service-learning Clearinghouse, 2008). Since then, more universities have added service-learning program options for students and research interest has increased and performed to gauge the effectiveness of service-learning (Titlebaum, Williamson, Daprano, Baer, & Brahler, 2004).

The International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership (IPSL) considers service-learning to be a valuable educational tool that, “addresses simultaneously two important needs of our societies: the education and development of people and the provision of increased resources to serve individuals and communities” (IPSL, 2003). In addition, the Commission on National and Community Service (CNCS) (1993) defines service-learning as a program which provides educational experiences:
1. Under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with school and community;

2. That are integrated into the students’ academic curriculum and provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity;

3. That provide a student with opportunities to use newly-acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and

4. That enhance what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others (CNCS, 1993, p. 15).

Interest in service-learning began with the publication of *The Transition of Youth to Adulthood* as part of the National Commission on Youth (1980). The report stated that community service should be used to “bridge the gap” between childhood and adulthood. A number of reports, organizations, and government initiatives with the goal of encouraging volunteerism among college age students (summarized at the beginning of this section) have followed in the decades since; however, some educators question the benefits of community service combined with classroom learning. A 1992 *New York Times* article presents an interview with, Jack Sprague, the vice president of the Maryland school board and his opinion of service-learning: “I can't, in the reading I've done, find one iota of scientific research that says that this has made a difference in a student's education, ... and I'd rather concentrate on making sure our students are getting a good grounding in the basics” (DeWitt, 1992 as cited in Markus, Howard, & King, 1993, p. 411). While educators at all levels have
begun implementation of service-learning, barriers still exist that will require support from further research.

Research in following years addressed educators’ concerns by describing the impacts and outcomes of service-learning on undergraduate students in a university setting. This review of the research suggested a positive association between service-learning, academic development and personal development (Fredericksen, 2000; Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Eyler, 1999; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Kronick, 2007).

Benefits of service-learning. Studies show that service-learning has the ability to enhance both student development and academic outcomes. An effective service-learning program must contain academic learning, community service, and reflection elements. Strong emphasis should be placed on the process of discussion and reflection in order for students to link academic concepts with their community service experiences and prevent the formation and perpetuation of stereotypes. While most studies focus on the ability of students to retain academic information, other findings suggest that service-learning can increase a student’s knowledge and understanding of human rights, social responsibility, and community involvement (Markus et al., 1993; Kendrick, 1996; Astin et al., 2000; Hellman, Hoppes, & Ellison, 2006).

Markus, Howard and King (1993) examined the service-learning benefits of college students with regard to both academics and personal life. During the winter of 1992, 89 students from the University of Michigan who enrolled in “Contemporary Political Issues” participated in the study. This course consisted of a lecture session and subsequent weekly
discussion sessions led by graduate assistants. The lectures, readings, midterm, and final exam were the same for the test (service-learning) and control (traditional) groups. The test group was required to volunteer with one of several pre-approved organizations throughout the semester, which were then used as the subjects of papers and discussions sessions. The control group discussed lectures and wrote papers that reflected what they had learned in class and through readings. Each group was also given a pre-course self evaluation to record social and political beliefs and values going into the course and a post-course evaluation that was designed to reveal perceptions of how the course changed the student’s orientations towards service and community. Course and instructor evaluations were also completed and compared to assure neither group was getting special treatment and to increase reliability.

The differences between the test and control groups were evident in the discussion sessions. Students who participated in the community service sections of the course differed on many levels from those who completed the traditional format. Test group students indicated a significant increase in their perceived importance of equal rights, volunteering, and choosing a career that is “helpful to others.” These students also exhibited an increased intention to serve others and donate to charity, as well as a higher “tolerance and appreciation of others” (Markus et al., 1993, p. 413). The most important findings, however, were the academic indicators. According to this study, students who completed the service-learning sections were more likely to indicate that they performed at their best during the semester and also “learned to apply principles form this course to new situations” (Markus et al., 1993, p. 414). Service learners also scored, on average, a letter grade higher than students in the control group. Markus et al. concluded that, despite questions from a number of skeptics in
education, “students participation in community service can have a significant effect upon their personal values and orientations towards their community” (1993, p. 416).

A study undertaken by Kendrick (1996) applied a similar method, comparing students who took a sociology class, traditionally taught with and without a service-learning component. Several student development markers improved in the students who participated in the service-learning section, including improvements in social responsibility and personal efficacy. In addition, service-learning students were better able to recall and apply course material than their traditional course counterparts.

Astin et al. (2000) defined the benefits associated with service-learning. They suggested that, while extracurricular community service alone affects student outcomes positively, course based service further enhances those outcomes. As demonstrated in Table 1.2 below, researchers found that service-learning had a significant positive effect above and beyond those offered by generic community service. These variables should be viewed by higher education administrators and faculty as a way to “educate students to become concerned and involved citizens” (Astin et al., p. 17).
Table 1.1
Benefits of Service-Learning over Extracurricular Volunteering

<table>
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<th>Academic outcomes</th>
<th>Critical thinking, writing skills, and GPA saw greater improvement among service-learning students than students who did extracurricular volunteering;</th>
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Adapted from: Astin et al. (2000)

Hellman, Hoppes, and Ellison (2006) identified the combination of academic learning, community service, and reflection as an effective combination that leads students to a deeper appreciation for a chosen academic discipline and a sense of responsibility within the community. Students also benefit from the development and enhancement of critical reasoning, reflection, personal development, the development of interpersonal relationships, and a sense of citizenship by bringing students out of the classroom to work with underserved populations.

Fredericksen (2000) carried out a study to determine which characteristics describe participants of service-learning and if a service-learning component is positively associated with academic performance. Six hundred and ninety-nine students who enrolled in an American government course over three semesters were surveyed. Findings indicated that female and low-income students are more likely to participate in service-learning than other groups. The author also concludes that academic performance is positively associated with
service-learning participation, as has been indicated in other studies (Markus et al., 1993; Astin et al., 2000).

Eyler and Giles (1999) present research that explored service-learning as a valid experiential learning method that “connects the multiple dimensions of human development that are often separated on college and university campuses” (p.10), leading to the development and enhancement of social, academic, personal, and leadership skills. A notable element examined in this research was the development of critical thinking skills due to the highly reflective nature of service-learning.

While the research that has been summarized above mainly addressed benefits to the student, Roschelle, Turpin, and Elias (2000) suggested that students not only learn from their service-learning experience, but also have a positive effect within the communities and organizations they serve by offering unique skills. Kraft (1996) also found community impacts to be primarily positive, stating that students who set out to help the community via a service-learning experience do, in fact, help the community. Using a qualitative approach, Roschelle et al. (2000) examined the experiences and outcomes of students who completed a course entitled Poverty, Homelessness, and the Urban Underclass. Authors noted that, “without interaction with impoverished people, student stereotypes are rarely changed” (p. 841). This concern was addressed by offering a credited field experience to expose students to the reality of what they were studying in class. Anecdotal but interesting, Roschelle et al. (2000) observe that students that completed the academic course with the field component were more likely than others who took the class to seek careers in public service, a finding also noted by Markus et al. (1993).
One of the greatest barriers to the continued development of service-learning programs at the collegiate level is the fact that faculty are often hesitant to support service-learning. It has been suggested that, “faculty are reluctant to invest the extra time that teaching service-learning courses entails, and many are skeptical of the educational value of service-learning” (Gray, Ondaatje, and Zakaras, 1999, p. 103). This view was further supported by the fact that previous studies have shown that students gain from extracurricular service. This fact leads some to question why time and effort should be put into combining service with academics if students are able to gain benefit from service alone (Markus, Howard, and King, 1993). A study by the Higher Education Research Institute addressed this concern, suggesting that service-learning participation added significantly to benefits observed in students who participated in non-academic community service alone (Astin, et al., 2000). General benefits included the ability of students to apply abstract theoretical academic concepts to real world situations. This, in turn, reinforced learning, connected students with the greater community, and prepared them for real world applications of their education.

Inclusion of three elements, shown in Figure 1.1, is necessary for the successful execution of a service-learning program. Reflection, combined with academic coursework and service experience, is an essential element to the service-learning pedagogy and is defined as “the intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives” (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997, p. 154). A 2000 study by Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee evaluated how various outcomes of service-learning are achieved and found that the most effective elements of the service-learning pedagogical model was increased faculty
support on both personal and academic matters, as well as the discussion and reflection of service experiences with other students. Hatcher and Bringle suggest five requirements of effective reflection of a service-learning experience:

(1) link the service experience to classroom learning objectives;
(2) reflection should be guided by the class instructor;
(3) reflection should occur on a regular basis throughout the duration of the course;
(4) opportunity for feedback and assessment; and
(5) include a clarification of values. (Hatcher and Bringle, 1997).

Without an opportunity for a student to reflect on his or her service experiences it may be difficult to make proper connections to course assignments and theory. Short term service experiences, like those undertaken by students during a service-learning experience, can also run the risk of misguiding thought and promoting stereotypes if not reflected upon. Similar issues could arise during a service-learning experience abroad if the basic components for an effective and successful service-learning experience are not included. Issues can be amplified by unfamiliar cultural practices, traditions, language, and a number of other stresses that students abroad face.
The types of programs available to students interested in studying abroad vary greatly in learning objectives, length, academic concentration, location, and level of interaction with the local culture. While students can still participate in the traditional semester or year abroad, shorter term programs of varied locations are increasing in popularity (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2008a). Program content and experiences also vary greatly,
allowing a student to choose a program that best fits his or her goals, from studying at a
foreign university to living in an indigenous village with a local family.

Study abroad has become increasingly accessible to college students in the past
decade. As a result, participation has been growing steadily. Fewer than 100,000 American
students studied abroad during the 1997-98 school year. However, during the 2006-07
school year 241,791 students studied abroad—up 8% from the previous year and an increase
of almost 150% in the last decade (IIE, 2008b; IIE, 2008c).

Even though study abroad numbers are steadily growing from year to year, there is a
clear disconnect between student’s intentions to study abroad and their actions. A study
published by the American Council on Education (ACE) (2008) reports that almost half of
college bound students indicated interest in international education opportunities. This is
cited as an ideal that has not been realized: despite a high level of interest, less than five
percent of enrolled students actually participate in study abroad (ACE, 2008).

The Study Abroad Evaluation Project. The Study Abroad Evaluation Project
(SAEP) undertaken by Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Yachimowicz (1990) is the most
comprehensive study of its kind to date. The study provided a comparison of basic
demographic data and developmental outcomes in two groups of students, those who studied
abroad during their junior year and those who did not. Carlson et al. explored the impact the
host country had on student experience and achievement, and measured the short and long
term effects of the study abroad experience. SAEP included a sample of 204 students from
four universities who studied abroad during the 1984/1985 school year and 153 juniors who
remained on campus to serve as a comparison group. Those who studied abroad all
participated in an entire academic year abroad in an immersion program, meaning students were not surrounded by other U.S. students. The long-term effects of study abroad were measured by interviews with 158 randomly selected study abroad alumni who participated in a study abroad program 5 to 20 years prior (1990).

Carlson et al. (1990) found that study abroad students scored significantly higher than the comparison group in the following areas; interest in current events, cultural interest, appreciation of foreign culture, and self-perceived academic achievement. The most significant aspects of these students' trips were the interaction with host nationals and the opportunity to travel. Study abroad students were more likely to recognize the importance of developing a personal point of view and seeking information from various sources, as well as a decreased emphasis on grades. Other interesting results included the development of different thinking and learning strategies developed by students while abroad.

Carlson et al. (1990) found that of those students surveyed who participated in a study abroad program, one hundred percent went on to graduate. It should be noted that all students were in their junior year, while retention issues are more prevalent in the first two years of college. This outcome does, however, fall in line with Astin’s Theory of Involvement (Astin, 1984) which suggests that involvement facilitates retention. While some of the general findings have been supported by more recent research, there are several other limitations to this study due to the changing face of the study abroad program in the 21st century. Carlson et al. (1990) only included programs in Western European countries which, at the time, were the destination of most students seeking international education. As mentioned previously, more students are now choosing non-Western programs. Program
type has also diversified drastically. For example, more programs are being offered through major departments, delivery of course material changes according to program location, and the subject matter and length of programs varies from short one week trips to an entire year abroad. Students and the collegiate education system have been changed drastically since the data for the Carlson et al. study was collected in the late 80’s.

More recently, various benefits to students’ personal and academic development have been widely identified by educators, students and researchers (Institute for the International Education of Students, 2008; Kitsantas, 2004; Black & Duhon, 2006; Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1990; Gmelch, 1997; Ismail, Morgan & Hayes, 2006; McKeown, 2009; Williams, 2005; Xie, 2004). Study abroad allowed students to immerse themselves in an unfamiliar culture, language and society. These programs facilitated a shift in focus from purely academic learning to experiential learning, which allowed students to derive and internalize meaning from actual experience. This, in turn, led to increased student development outcomes when compared to students with no international experience.

**Combining Service-Learning and Study-Abroad**

As shown in the various studies presented in this review, there is an overwhelming body of knowledge addressing the personal and academic benefits to students who participate in either study abroad programs or service-learning designated courses. Research also explores the benefits of travel abroad combined with community service under the titles of *volunteer tourism* and *international service-learning*. Volunteer tourism programs (VTPs) include individuals with varied skill sets, from skilled to unskilled, who travel a certain distance from home in order to contribute both financially and physically in scientific,
environmental, or social projects. The length of each volunteer expedition varies, although most tourists spend at least a week, but no more than a month at their destination (Earthwatch Institute, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2007). International service-learning infers volunteer service as part of an educational experience, although problems exist as the term is used to describe a variety of program types, which may or may not be considered service-learning by published standards (CNCS, 1993). This will be addressed in a following section.

**Voluntourism.** While extensive research has not been performed regarding the costs and benefits of VTPs, recent studies overwhelmingly support the model as a valuable tool for ensuring the well being of both the host communities and guest experiences (Clifton & Benson, 2006; Ellis, 2003; Gray & Campbell, 2007). A study of volunteer tourists conducted by Zahra and McIntosh (2007) examined the benefits of volunteer tourism as an alternative, more genuine cultural encounter when compared with traditional cultural tourism. They concluded that the experiences had by volunteer tourists were “more authentic, genuine, reflexive, of contemporary cultural content, and a meaningful interpersonal experience” when compared with those simply experiencing traditional cultural tourism products (Zahra & McIntosh, 2007, p. 553).

Benson and Clifton (2006) identify local perceptions and socio-cultural impacts of research oriented volunteer tourism in the Wakatobi Marine National Park in Indonesia. The qualitative data collected via interviews with the local community found an overall positive attitude of research ecotourism from the local population. Negative socio-cultural effects mostly centered on the possibility of changing cultural norms among youth, resulting from the exposure to Westerners. Economic opportunities were limited, but provided a source of
optimism about the volunteer tourists’ presence. Economic benefits were found to be largely collective rather than individually motivated. Overall Benson and Clifton’s study highlights a number of the concerns that other researchers have identified in regards to the local sustainability of volunteer tourism ventures, but claims that it instills within the local population a sense of optimism about the future (Duffy, 2002; McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Raymond & Hall, 2008).

A case study by Gray and Campbell (2007) collected data from 36 semi-structured interviews, along with participant observation, to determine how hosts and volunteers construct meanings of volunteer tourism. The study was performed during two different seasons in Gandoca, Costa Rica using volunteers participating in a sea turtle conservation project led by a non-governmental organization that has had a research presence in the area since 1978. Their research revealed subtle differences in the overall positive views of volunteer tourism from the point of the stakeholders when examined from aesthetic, economic, and ethical value standards.

The limited studies that have explored the outcomes of volunteer tourism have found positive outcomes for both volunteers and host communities. Even some with doubts have granted that the goals of cross-cultural understanding and global citizenry, optimistically touted by supporters of the volunteer tourism model, are attainable if strict planning and management guidelines are met (McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Raymond & Hall, 2008). Raymond and Hall (2008) identified three key goals that should be met in assuring cross cultural learning for volunteers as well as the overall sustainability of VTPs: (1) Develop programs which will be of genuine value for the local communities; (2) the importance of
approaching VTPs as a learning process rather than simply an ‘experience’ should be recognized through the use of experiential learning techniques; and (3) opportunities for interaction with other cultures should be deliberately facilitated.

**International service-learning.** International service-learning combines a student experience abroad with service participation in the community being visited. Kraft (2002) presented a typology of international service-learning that demonstrates the range of applications that the term has taken on, many of which, Kraft admits, do not fit the most stringent definitions of service-learning. This is different from volunteer tourism in that participants of international service-learning are most often students who participate in community service abroad and receive course credit for the experience, as opposed to volunteer tourists who choose to participate in a service oriented vacation. There are instances in which students who participate in a VTP can receive course credit, but for the purposes of this paper those examples will be considered an exception.

In contrast to the abundant research available on service-learning on a students’ home campus, the impact of research regarding international service-learning on student learning and development is limited and largely anecdotal. In addition, definitions and requirements for an international program to be considered service-learning are murky when compared to the very specific guidelines for service-learning on a home campus. Grusky (2000) suggests a number of issues faced by faculty and students that participate in international service-learning programs. While the article is full of advice that should be considered by those who run study abroad programs, the definition of international service-learning presented in the article however, does not include course and reflection requirements, leading the reader to
question whether it can legitimately be considered “service-learning.” This is a common problem in current international service-learning research.

**Defining “international service-learning.”** Kraft (2002) presents four degrees of international service-learning following Sigmon’s (1996) typology of service-learning presented in Table 1.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Service Abroad</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>International service-learning</em></td>
<td>A program that has a small service component but is not a significant part of the required course work</td>
<td>A traditional study-abroad program with an optional service opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>International SERVICE-learning</em></td>
<td>Often short term environmental, social justice, or religious missions that have a strong service component with learning being more of an incidental side effect</td>
<td>Missions trips; Alternative Service Break (ASB) trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>International service-learning</em></td>
<td>Independent student travelers who participate in various educational and service experiences while abroad, but with no connection between learning and service goals and outcomes</td>
<td>Independent backpacking; Semester-at-Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>International SERVICE-learning</em></td>
<td>Equal weight is given to both service and learning components of a course abroad</td>
<td>most in line with true service-learning courses abroad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Kraft (2002)

When considering the widely used definition and components of service-learning, the only model presented by Kraft (2002) that truly captures an international version of the more widely researched national service-learning experience is *International SERVICE-*
LEARNING. It is unclear if the other models are service-learning or simply service abroad. Future research should compare the outcomes of programs that meet the criteria of each of the “International Service-Learning” program types identified by Kraft (2002). This research makes the assumption, based on previous literature, that coursework and service are directly related to and intertwined with one another and as a result contributes to student outcomes (academic and personal). A balanced combination of these two pedagogical models is required for students to experience maximum benefits from both service-learning and study abroad participation.

**Benefits and barriers of international service-learning.** Research above suggested that volunteerism as part of a travel experience enriches the experience for the participants and creates a more sustainable product for the local community (Clifton & Benson, 2006; Ellis, 2003; Gray & Campbell, 2007; Wearing, 2004; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007). However, few international education programs include significant volunteer elements. Gmelch’s (1997) study of independent student travel during weekends and vacations, while participating in a study abroad program in Austria, identified an issue that the author thinks may be addressed by combining service-learning experiences with study abroad programs. American students would spend four days in class at the University of Innsbruck, followed by three day weekends for travel. Students were required to journal their travel experiences, which were later reviewed by the course instructors. Gmelch (1997), describing results from a traditional study abroad program, states, “when I collected and began reading my students’ journals I was startled at how shallow their engagement with the people and places they visited seemed to be…there was little evidence that they had learned much about any
European culture; their observations on the whole seemed naïve and simplistic” (p. 476). It is the goal of this review to suggest that promoting the benefits of international service-learning could infuse more sustainable missions and practices into international education programs which, in turn, may better benefit the student participants and the volunteered communities. An emerging body of research explores the benefits of students volunteering abroad.

Borg and Zitomer (2008) demonstrate how service-learning can be applied dually to a program at home and abroad, with one team in charge of design and the other in charge of implementation. This model assured that students unable to travel would be able to participate in the project, the development of a solar-powered water pumping system for the Santa Maria de Guadalupe Orphanage in Guatemala. Students were assessed qualitatively through prompted journal entries and quantitatively using a Likert scale survey pre- and post-test to measure student perceptions and outcomes of the international service-learning experience. The main engineering project was used to complete academic objectives (the creation of a solar powered water pumping system) while a number of other assignments and tours were cited as meeting the service objectives. Readings, journaling, a visit to the Guatemala City dump—home to approximately 10,000 squatters—and meetings with local NGO representatives to discuss their class project were designed to facilitate further cultural understanding and meaning to the academic project. It was determined that students benefited from being able to apply technical skills and increased the cultural, social, and international experiences of the participating engineering students. This study is also
significant in that it presents a model for the implementation of service-learning study abroad programs in the technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) published one of the few studies that apply the same standards of national service-learning to international service-learning. They cited the combination of service-learning and study abroad as offering a unique combination of integration into the local culture as well as service experience, and evaluate the effectiveness of these goals according to student experience. As shown in the previous literature, there is a distinct set of goals and outcomes individually associated with both study abroad and service-learning. Tonkin and Quiroga’s interviewed 17 alumni of International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership programs. These interviews resulted in the identification of six major themes that reflect outcomes normally assigned to either service-learning or study abroad. This may suggest that combining these two educational tools (service-learning and study abroad) may increase student development outcomes.

Themes related to the service experience itself mirrored findings from the domestic service-learning literature, including the transformation of conceptions about service and helping others. Authors cited that students developed a sense of commitment and empathy for their community abroad, which led to students feeling a strong obligation to return to provide further service. This reflects long term effects and dedication to service often mentioned in the service-learning literature, but with an added global perspective that cannot be achieved at home.

Transition and adaptation themes were similar to those reported in the study abroad literature. Initially students received a sense of empowerment from what, at home, would be
considered mundane experiences, like riding the bus or buying lunch. Students also described their interactions with a range of individuals from varied socio-economic classes, made possible by the service-learning experience. Home stays and classes at a foreign university often expose students to more affluent members of the population. A service experience can put them in contact with those less fortunate, giving students a better picture of the overall condition and norms of the society. It is also pointed out that, “the academic work that they did in the classroom was vital in allowing them to contextualize and understand their cultural interactions within a more general theoretical framework” (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004, p. 139).

Perceptions that students had of their own culture were challenged by immersion in the culture of the host country. Tonkin and Quiroga reported outcomes similar to the mirror effect, described as a situation in which someone “examines his or her own construction of the Other by being immersed in the Other and looking back at his or her own cultural reflection” (2004, p. 141). Further, the experiences led students to question national identity and pride, similar to the findings reported by Carlson et al. (1990) in the Study Abroad Evaluation Project. Upon return many students reported difficult reentry experiences. Observing and working with low socio-economic populations during the service experience caused students to question the morality of American consumerism and reevaluate needs and luxuries.

Lastly, Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) made note of career objectives and goals of the 17 alumni. Many reported that the international service-learning experience was a turning point that led them to pursue professions that would allow them to help others, including medicine,
education, and law. This is also in line with the findings presented by Rochelle et al. (2000) and Markus et al. (1993) who found that students who participated in service-learning were more likely than those who did not to indicate interest in pursuing a career that would help others.

While the previous studies have suggested that combining service-learning pedagogy with study abroad, Smith-Pariola and Goke-Pariola (2006) identified difficulties that faculty may face when implementing international service-learning. The authors presented their own case study, a short-term study abroad program in Jamaica, describing its service-learning component and suggesting areas of improvement that came out of that experience. These suggestions included alteration of faculty-led discussion to be more structured and attuned to service-learning objectives. Difficulty was cited in relating course material to the volunteer experiences due to varied subject matters that students were required to choose from (anthropology, education, or Caribbean studies). Smith-Pariola and Goke-Pariola’s program is more akin to an Alternative Service Break (ASB) than a traditional study abroad course, short-term or otherwise. A problem addressed by this article that applies to both ASB and study-abroad programs is that the set-up of service projects abroad are often unpredictable, giving course leaders limited control. Though the lack of control in some aspects of a service abroad experience may be frustrating for instructors and students, it is noted by Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) that American standards should not be applied to foreign organizations. Due to cultural, financial, and institutional differences, foreign organizations must be “judged on their own terms” (p.137), and should be looked at as a learning experience for students.
International Service-Learning Model and Suggestions for Future Research

Review of the student development in service-learning and study abroad literature widely suggested that these pedagogical methods facilitate positive outcomes in both academic and personal arenas. Figure 1.2 visually demonstrates the interaction between the elements of service, academic learning, and travel to create the program types discussed in this literature review (service-learning, study abroad and volunteer tourism). The combination of all three elements results in international service-learning. The limited research available under the currently catch-all phrase international service-learning also suggested increased student development outcomes. In particular, Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) outline development outcomes that reflect both the service-learning and international experience components, rather than the distinct set of benefits identified for service-learning or study abroad alone. Analysis of the research presented above demonstrated that the development of “international service-learning” is still a work in progress. Further research is needed to advance our knowledge of the method, as well as its acceptance among educators.

Figure 1.2 shows the intersection of academic coursework and travel as study abroad. Current literature regarding study abroad describes a host of examples, benefits, and outcomes. However, several elements of Carlson, Burn, Useem, and Yachimowicz’s 1990 study need to be updated to reflect the increasingly diverse nature of study abroad programs. A new comprehensive study should address the expanded number of students from different disciplines studying abroad, the increased diversity of location and interest in programs that offer shorter stints abroad. Evaluation of the outcomes of specific program elements, in
particular the outcomes of community service while abroad, coupled with a discussion about why students decide not to study abroad could help determine which barriers still exist in international education. Additional assessment and implementation of programs like the one described by Borg and Zitomer (2008) is important in attracting underrepresented disciplines, such as STEM majors.

Figure 1.2: Model Showing the Major Components of International Service-Learning

Review of the literature also raises concern about the implementation of what has been termed international service-learning, shown in Figure 1.2 as the program type that results with the intersection of academic coursework, service, and travel. International service-learning needs to be more clearly defined to distinguish between it and other
international learning and service experiences. As mentioned in the above text discussing study abroad and volunteer tourism, opportunities exist for a service experience to have negative effects, such as reinforced stereotypes and community dependence, on participants and the volunteered population (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Raymond & Hall, 2008). Defining the expected processes and outcomes of an international service-learning experience to mirror those of traditional service-learning discussed earlier in this paper is important to assure that the term is not irresponsibly used, possibly leading to negative stereotypes and outcomes associated with international service-learning programming. Standards need to be set to differentiate service-learning abroad from other international programs that include a service component. Each cross section in Figure 1.2 contains a spectrum of programming possibilities that will take further research to place.

This review of the literature has also shown that, while clear standards and definitions exist for certain terms and pedagogical methods, such as service-learning, study abroad and volunteer tourism, there are exceptions that seem to cross over from one realm to another. For example, some volunteer vacation companies, like Earthwatch Institute, Inc., offer student internships and fellowships to participate in one of their programs. The student may even be able to get internship credit from their school. Is this an example of volunteer tourism, educational tourism, international service-learning, an internship abroad, or a combination? Development of a model or spectrum that demonstrates the degrees to which service can be applied to different program types (study abroad, internships, vacations, etc.), coupled with the program model presented in this paper, would help researchers visualize the nature of service, education, and travel. Once a model has been created, evaluation of the
effects of different points on the spectrum on visitor/student outcomes should be assessed. This could help determine what experience may be best suited for students, families, individuals, and other populations. Outcomes of each program type on host communities should also be evaluated to assure that volunteer projects are in fact sustainably meeting the community’s wants and needs.

Assessment of cultural competency outcomes in service-learning and international service-learning participants needs to be addressed by future studies. Cultural competency has been discussed in several empirical investigations of study abroad (Carlson et al., 1990; Caffrey, et al., 2004; Black & Duhon, 2006), but such information regarding service-learning and international service-learning is scarce. Other specific developmental (cultural competency, interpersonal communication, etc.) and academic (understanding of course content, knowledge retention and applications, GPA, etc.) outcomes should also be evaluated across the spectrum.

Finally, research should be conducted to determine what types of programs are best suited for the international service-learning model. Smith-Pariola and Goke-Pariola (2006) cite difficulty in implementing the course/service connection requirement due to students in their program studying one of several academic options. It seems likely that this model is best suited for small programs with a specific academic focus.

Review of the published research regarding service-learning, study abroad, and volunteer tourism has demonstrated the opportunity for these pedagogies to be combined to further participant outcomes and program success under the heading of international service-learning. The growing body of research concerning international service-learning leaves
much room for further investigation. The broad relationships presented in Figure 1.2 are complex and should be broken down further. The combination of relationships that contributes to the idea of international service-learning as an ideal program for student development needs to be further investigated to determine how each component contributes to student outcomes. Further research should help determine whether the benefits that result from the combined whole demonstrated in Figure 1.2 is greater than the individual contributions of service, travel, or academic coursework, as well as the programs that result in each paired combination (service-learning, study abroad, and volunteer tourism).
References


Towards Cultural Competency: Assessing Intercultural Sensitivity Development in
Students Participating in a Study Abroad Course with a Service Component
Abstract
The combination of academic coursework, service, reflection, and travel, sometimes referred to as international service-learning, has the potential to further student development associated with study abroad and service-learning separately, but as part of a single program. The current study was conducted to determine if participation in this type of academic program facilitated the development of intercultural communication competency in students. Students from two UNC-system universities participating in short-term, faculty led study abroad programs were asked to participate in the study. Two surveys containing the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, one pre-departure and one upon return, were completed by 31 participants. A Wilcoxon signed ranks test was run to analyze data, and found that there was a significant increase in intercultural communication competency after the study abroad experience.
Introduction

International service-learning (ISL) is the combination of international travel, community service, and academic coursework. It has been suggested that students who participate in this type of program may see developmental gains similar to those of study abroad and service-learning combined. While much research has been done to investigate student outcomes related to service-learning and study abroad pedagogy, little exists regarding the developmental outcomes of international service-learning. Development of a student’s ability to effectively interact and communicate with individuals from varied cultures and backgrounds is one developmental factor that has become increasingly important given the widespread effects of globalization (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Such competencies are described by a number of terms, each with their own nuances and applications. The development of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and knowledge contribute to the development of cultural competence, defined as “an ability to interact with people of different cultures” (Martin & Vaughn, 2007, p.31). Cultural competence is measured by the mastery of four components: the individual’s awareness of his or her own cultural worldview, attitude towards cultural differences, knowledge of the cultural practices and worldviews of others, and cross-cultural skills. A person is considered culturally competent when he or she is able to understand, communicate, and interact with individuals of varied cultural backgrounds (Martin & Vaughn, 2007). Cultural competence is a developmental skill that requires not just formal knowledge, but also experiences within a culturally different environment (Caffrey et al., 2004). Olson and Kroeger (2001) defined someone who is globally competent, or has a high level of cultural competency, as one who “has
enough substantive knowledge, perceptual understanding, and intercultural communication skills to effectively interact in our globally interdependent world” (p. 117). The concern for cultural competency development has been most prevalent in health and education fields due to the daily contact that the individuals in those professions have with people from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Caffrey, Neander, Markle, & Stewart, 2004; Marks, Reed, Colby, & Ibrahim, 2004; Inglis, Rolls, & Kristy, 2000; Friedman & Hoffman-Goetz, 2006). However, due to an increasingly globalized world, more students in varied fields will inevitably find themselves needing the skills required to interact with culturally diverse persons.

The purpose of this study was to measure increases in cultural competency experienced by students during a study abroad experience that included community service, academic and reflection components. The researcher hypothesized that students participating in an international service-learning experience would increase student sensitivity and confidence during intercultural interactions, moving towards the goal of cultural competence.

For the case of this study, international service-learning is taken to mean a study abroad program run by an educational institution that includes academic, service and reflective elements. One question was asked and six hypotheses formed:

RQ1: Is there a significant effect on the development of intercultural communication competency among university students who participate in an international service-learning program?

H1: Participation in an ISL program will have a significant effect on students’ development of cultural competency.
H2: Participation in an ISL program will have a significant effect on students’ development within the Interaction Engagement subscale of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS).

H3: Participation in an ISL program will have a significant effect on students’ development within the Respect for Cultural Differences subscale of the ISS.

H4: Participation in an ISL program will have a significant effect on students’ development within the Interaction Confidence subscale of the ISS.

H5: Participation in an ISL program will have a significant effect on students’ development within the Interaction Enjoyment subscale of the ISS.

H6: Participation in an ISL program will have a significant effect on students’ development within the Interaction Attentiveness scale of the ISS.

The theoretical basis of these hypotheses was rooted in A. Astin’s (1984, 1999) theory of student involvement. Based on over twenty years of student development research, Astin suggested that, “the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program” (Astin, 1999, p.519). Astin has examined service-learning as a tool to further student development outcomes and increase retention beyond the ability of extracurricular service. It has also been suggested that the increased level of involvement required by students who participate in an ISL experience enhanced study abroad benefits, see benefits normally only associated with service-learning on the home campus, and meet other developmental markers that might not be as attainable without the contact afforded by the service experience abroad (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004; Borg & Zitomer, 2008). This led
the researcher to hypothesize that students participating in ISL would increase their
development of intercultural communication competency, a developmental marker required
to ultimately achieve cultural competency.

**Literature Review**

**Cultural competency development and study abroad.** There are many benefits
associated with study abroad participation, one of which is exposure to new cultures and
experiences. These exposures can increase students’ global awareness and acceptance of
others and help individuals move towards cultural competency. Various benefits to students’
personal and academic development have widely been identified by educators, students and
researchers (Institute for the International Education of Students, 2008; Kitsantas, 2004;
Black & Duhon, 2006; Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yachimowicz, 1990; Gmelch, 1997; Ismail,
Morgan & Hayes, 2006; McKeown, 2009; Williams, 2005; Xie, 2004). Study abroad
allowed students to immerse themselves in an unfamiliar culture, language and society.
These programs facilitated a shift in focus from purely academic learning to experiential
learning, which allowed students to derive and internalize meaning from actual experience.
This, in turn, lead to increased student development outcomes when compared to students
with no international experience (Black & Duhon, 2006; Caffrey, Neander, Markle &
Stewart, 2004; Carlson et al., 1990).

The measurement of cultural competency among the general undergraduate college
population was explored by Geelhoed, Abe, and Talbot (2004) who studied the cultural
competency outcomes of students paired with international students in a peer exchange
program. They concluded that the interpersonal contact between students from different
cultures was a key factor in the development of cultural sensitivity towards these groups. The Institute for the International Education of Students (IIES) recognized the importance of cultural competency development for all students, especially those participating in educational programs abroad. IIES (2008) stated that intercultural competence is a significant and desired outcome of international education participation, in particular, “emphasis is placed on students acquiring adaptive skills to facilitate their immersion in their host country and support them in further study or work abroad” (p. 9). Contact with a different culture other than one’s own causes a shift in values and attitudes towards different types of people. Study abroad programs inherently facilitate this type of interaction and student identity development. Other benefits to the student from such immersion, in regards to the development of cultural competency, include the opportunity to view his or her identity within the context of another culture, facilitating post-national identity development (Dolby, 2004), the development of cultural competency and awareness (Drexler, 2006), promote international understanding, and prepare students to function in a multicultural world (Kitsantas, 2004).

A study by Kitsantas and Meyers (2001) measured gains in cross-cultural effectiveness among study abroad participants in comparison with students who participated in traditional classroom learning. While the pre-test scores showed no significant differences among the groups, study abroad students scored higher on the second assessment than students who took the on campus course. The authors concluded that study abroad participation significantly contributed to students’ overall preparedness for functioning in
today’s multicultural world and call for increased programming that focuses on cultural awareness learning.

A similar study compared perceived gains in cultural competency among two groups of nursing students to determine how domestic and abroad clinical experiences effected the students’ development (Caffrey et al., 2004). One group participated in a five week clinical experience abroad, while the other attended a course at home that integrated cultural content into the traditional curriculum. A pre- and post inventory of cultural competency levels led the authors to conclude that the international experience was crucial for the development of cultural competency. While Caffrey et al. (2004) noted that cultural competency requires more than just formal knowledge of a subject, but experience and exposure, it should be mentioned that classroom learning can act as a base for the acquisition of cross-cultural skills. Language training, destination awareness, even knowledge gained through the study of social science and humanities disciplines can be reinforced and enhanced when taken out of the classroom and into a real world setting.

The ability of a study abroad experience to enhance cross-cultural tolerance, empathy, self confidence and independence was measured by Black and Duhon (2006). The authors noted the importance of documenting student outcomes of study abroad participation in order to assure program objectives are being met. Twenty-six business students participating in a study abroad program completed a cultural awareness inventory the day after their arrival to London, England. The same inventory was filled out by students at the end of the program for comparison with their pre-test scores. Results provide evidence that cultural development markers are enhanced by the students’ time abroad.
Overall, past studies suggested that students who participate in study abroad benefit from the experience in many different ways. Cultural competency has been explored by the studies summarized above, all of which conclude that students experience gains in cultural competency as a result of participating in a study-abroad program (Kitsantas, 2004; Dolby, 2004; Drexler, 2006; Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Caffrey et al., 2004; Black & Duhon, 2006) or cultural exchange program (Geelhoed et al., 2004).

**Cultural competency development and service-learning.** Another form of experiential learning that has been shown to assist in student development is service-learning. While service-learning may not facilitate the same types of student development outcomes as being immersed in a foreign culture (as is the case with study abroad), the pedagogy offers the opportunity for students to interact with individuals with different backgrounds through a service experience, experience real world applications for course work, and reflect upon those experiences to form meaning.

The need for an individual to be culturally competent while abroad may seem more pressing than at home. However, a number of studies in the service-learning literature have addressed the need for such competency at home (Flannery and Ward, 1999; Wheling, 2008). Growing diversity in the United States increases the chance that students will find themselves in interactions with culturally different individuals. While cultural competency as an ultimate goal isn’t as thoroughly researched in the service-learning literature as in the study abroad literature, a few studies do discuss the subject. Most studies address items like cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity development, which are integral stepping stones in achieving cultural competency.
Flannery and Ward (1999) used qualitative data to examine the connections between service-learning and the development of cultural competence. Reflective papers were collected from students participating in a community based service-learning course. Classroom observation was also used. The authors concluded that students participating in the course furthered their cultural awareness development. The outcome was taken a step further by suggesting that students were actually moving through cultural awareness development towards the larger goal of cultural competence. Wheling (2008) also examined cultural competency acquisition by considering the evolution of a program from being concerned only with language competency development to recognizing the importance of cultural competency. Those leading the program eventually identified and acknowledged the benefits of helping students attain more than just language competency, and began including specific goals aimed at promoting cultural competency. The author cites the growing Hispanic population in the United States as a key reason that today’s graduates should be more culturally competent. Service-learning creates more culturally competent graduates by allowing students to go beyond cultural barriers that often divide the mainstream from the marginalized. Weekly contact with migrant families combined with reflective exercises not only resulted in enhanced language ability, but the combination of experiential and academic learning also contributed to the cultural competency development of the students.

While not directly addressing cultural competency, McHatton, Tomas, and Lehman (2006) outlined the experiences of two faculty members who created a service-learning based personnel preparation program designed to develop, “culturally competent service providers who can act as social change agents” (p. 68). The authors cite the rapidly diversifying K-12
population in the United States and the fact that the general makeup of the teacher population has remained static over the years (white, female, and middle-class) as a reason that students need cultural training. The experience with this particular program led the authors to conclude that service-learning provides a tool for students to develop intercultural sensitivity, a step towards achieving cultural competency. Similar conclusions were reached by Worrell-Carlisle (2005) who described the outcomes of a service-learning course designed to promote cultural awareness in pre-nursing students.

While there is literature that addresses cultural competency and its developmental markers (cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, and cultural sensitivity) as an outcome of service-learning, much of it is anecdotal and program based, rather than student based. What is widely demonstrated by these articles is the need for cultural competency development for those who work with diverse populations at home, not just abroad.

This study addresses one of the cultural competency markers listed above, cultural sensitivity, but takes it a step further to include the ability and comfort of students to interact with individuals that have different cultural and ethnic backgrounds than their own. This measured not only a student’s feelings about other cultures, but also their ability to effectively communicate with individuals from those cultures, putting a more abstract developmental marker into practice. It is important to expand the past literature to include not only cognitive and affective measurements, but also gains in the practical application of those measurements.
Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to measure the effects of a study abroad program with service-learning elements (service and reflection)—a program type loosely defined as international service-learning (ISL)—on a student’s movement towards cultural competency by the way of intercultural communication competency. The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) was used to measure each student’s intercultural communication competency before and after program participation. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was used to determine if there had been significant shifts in intercultural communication competency after the ISL experience.

Population and Participants

The study population included students participating in short term, faculty led study abroad programs during the summer of 2009 at two University of North Carolina (UNC) system universities. One is a large four-year research university with a high number of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) concentration programs. According to the 2008/2009 College Portrait of Undergraduate Education (2009), this university enrolled 32,872 undergraduate and graduate students, 44% of which were female, 56% male. Areas of study that awarded the most bachelor’s degrees in 2007/2008 were engineering (22%), business, management and marketing (15%), biology (11%), social sciences (8%), and agriculture (5%).

The 2008/2009 profile of the second school, another four-year university in the UNC system, indicated enrollment of 17,407 students. Of these, 67% were female and 33% were
male. This school has a higher focus on art and science programs than the other, with the largest number of undergraduate degrees for 2007/2008 being awarded in business administration, management and operations (9%), nursing (7%), teacher education (6%), psychology (5%) and English language and literature (5%) (College Portrait of Undergraduate Education, 2009).

Faculty leading summer term study abroad programs affiliated with the two universities described above were identified through study abroad program databases online. Faculty members were then contacted via email to request permission to include their students in this study. Faculty leaders of nine programs agreed to allow the researcher to contact their students before and after the study abroad experience. Programs included eight different countries on five continents and ranged in length from approximately 3 to 6 weeks. In total 178 students were contacted during the spring of 2009 to request participation in this study. The initial invitation letter was sent by first university’s Study Abroad Office on May 11th, 2009. A follow-up invitation was sent three weeks later on June 1st, 2009. Of the 178 students invited to participate, 52 responded for a 29% pre-test response rate. Students then participated in their chosen study abroad programs without intervention of any kind from the principle investigator. Upon return to the United States a post-test survey was sent out to the 52 students who filled out the first survey. From the total 178 students initially contacted 32 responded to both the pre- and post-test surveys. Participants from one program were eliminated from the sample due to the fact that the program did not include all service-learning elements (service and reflection), leaving 31 useable pre- and post-survey pairs and a total response rate of 18.2%.
Materials

Data collection for this study was completed using two online surveys. Participants were asked to rate their reaction to each statement on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree). Test instructions called for certain questions (denoted by an asterisk in Appendix A) to be reverse scored before final scores are computed. A higher score on the ISS suggested a higher level of intercultural competency. In addition to the scale, students were asked to indicate their current perceived level of past experience abroad and where they would be traveling to. Demographic questions (class level, major, gender, and age) were included at the end of the pre-test survey. The post-test survey included the ISS, the perceived experience abroad scale, and two open ended questions about their experiences.

The surveys were administered using the SurveyMonkey website. The invitation letter, Institutional Review Board exemption letter, and link for the first survey were sent to students at the end of the spring 2009 semester by the first university’s Study Abroad Office on May 11th. The amount of time available for students to fill out the pre-test survey varied since each program had a different departure date. Students were asked to fill out the survey prior to their program departure date. The post-test survey was administered by the researcher only, using email addresses obtained from each student in the pre-test survey. The second survey was available for two weeks, from August 24th, 2009 until September 7th, 2009. Due to the low pre-test response rate, an incentive was offered for participation in the
post-test segment of the study. Those who completed the survey (n=32) were entered into a drawing for a $50 Target gift card.

Effects of an ISL experience coupled with community service and reflective elements were measured using a modified version of Chen and Starosta’s Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS). Modifications were made to some of the terminology used in the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale to clarify meaning, for example, changing the much used phrase “culturally distinct counterpart” to “culturally different individual” or “person from a different culture”. Intercultural sensitivity is one behavioral aspect of cultural competency. Individuals who have become competent in intercultural communication are described as having the desire to and motivation to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Several studies resulted in the creation of a 24-item scale that measured intercultural communication competence based on five factors:

- **Interaction engagement** measured how an individual felt about intercultural communication (items 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24);
- **Respect for cultural differences** measured the test taker’s ability to orient his or herself or to tolerate the views and opinions of another culture (items 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, 20);
- **Interaction confidence** measured the participant’s comfort in situations in which they must interact with persons of different cultural backgrounds (items 3, 4, 5, 6, 10);
- **Interaction enjoyment** measured positive and negative reactions towards interacting with people from different cultures (items 9, 12, 15); and lastly
• Interaction attentiveness, which measured how much effort an individual puts into understanding what was happening within an intercultural interaction (items 14, 17, 19) (Chen & Starosta, 1996).

According to Chen and Starosta (2000), the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha reported of .86 and .88 during two separate tests. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .87 for the pre-test and .91 for the post-test.

Procedure

After the data was reverse-scored according to author instructions, it was uploaded from Excel into SPSS for analysis. Descriptive statistics were run for all variables. In addition to the Excel sheet including all survey data, separate sheets were created for each of Chen and Starosta’s subscales to determine changes in each of the five subscale areas in addition to overall score changes.

Wilcoxon analysis. Due to the small sample size, researchers ran a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to test for significance between the pre- and post-test data. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, also referred to as the Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Test, serves as a non-parametric equivalent to the independent samples t-test, but relaxes normality assumptions. In small sample cases, when a data set does not follow a normal distribution, the Wilcoxon test can be three to four times more powerful than the t-test (Sawilowsky, 2005). Rather than comparing means, the Wilcoxon test converts pre- and post-scores to ranks for comparison to determine if the null hypothesis, zero shift in location due to treatment, should be accepted or rejected. The test works by calculating the difference between the pre- and post-test scores for each individual. Ranks are then assigned based on the absolute value of each score difference.
Positive and negative ranks are summed separately, the lesser sum providing the test statistic. If the null hypothesis is true then both rank sums would be the same. In the case of this study the pre- and post-test data for each individual is non-independent paired data that measures changes in a student’s characteristics rather than comparing separate sample populations.

The Wilcoxon signed ranks test is named for its creator, Frank Wilcoxon, who introduced the test as a non-parametric alternative to the Student’s t-test in a 1945 paper. Several tests led Wilcoxon to conclude that his method was capable of determining significance of difference of means with as few as eight pairs of data (Wilcoxon, 1945). It is also important to note, however that Wilcoxon is a more conservative test than a t-test and is less likely to find significant differences between pre- and post-test data. The same holds true for this research study since, due to the fact that Wilcoxon is a weaker test, type II errors are more likely to occur, meaning the test may not pick up a statistical difference in the case where there in fact is one. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test has been utilized in the travel and tourism literature by Hsu and Jang (2007) who evaluated the post-merger financial performance of hotel companies. Researchers chose to use Wilcoxon due to the small sample size they had to compare the performance of hotel firms’ pre- and post-merger financial performance. Education literature has also used the Wilcoxon signed ranks test as an analysis tool. Kim and Alvarez (1995) analyzed data using the Wilcoxon test, among others, to determine the level of academic development, social skill development, and career preparation in women who attended female only colleges.
Results

Introduction

The following results section includes demographic information, overall changes in intercultural communication competence from pre- to post-trip, a comparison of ISS outcomes of students who indicated little prior travel experience before program departure, and a look at the individual ISS items.

Demographics

Of the 31 participants, 54% were rising seniors, 22.6% had graduated or were pursuing graduate study, and 16.1% identified themselves as rising juniors over the summer of 2009. Only two participants indicated that they were freshmen or sophomores. The median age of participants was 21, with a mean age of 22. The youngest participant was 19 and the oldest was 31. Ten students (32.3%) indicated that they had never traveled abroad, while 48.4% indicated some degree of travel experience in a foreign country. There were more female participants (58.1%) than male (41.9%). Students participated in programs in China, the Czech Republic, France, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Namibia, Tanzania, and Chile. Figure 2.1 shows the regions where students participated in their summer programs, which include Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, Western Europe, and Africa.

Students overwhelmingly indicated that they participated in community betterment projects while abroad (93.5%). Eight students (25.8% of participants) indicated that they participated in an environmental betterment project. Students who indicated that they participated in both community and environmental betterment projects while abroad accounted for 19.4% of total participants.
Six major fields of study were identified (Figure 2.2). The top three were Social Sciences (32%), STEM (29%), and Business (20%). Others included Liberal Arts, Natural Resources, and Design.
Total Pre- to Post-Trip Differences in Intercultural Communication Competency

Overall, the increase in Intercultural Sensitivity Scores after program participation for all participants was statistically significant. Over three quarters of participants (n=24), or 77.4%, increased their level of intercultural communication sensitivity after participation in a study abroad program with service and reflection elements. A Wilcoxon analysis (Table 2.1) showed a statistically significant increase in total intercultural sensitivity scale scores following the service-learning study abroad experience. The median score for the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale increased from pre-trip (Md=86) to post-trip (Md=95).
Table 2.1 Wilcoxon signed ranks test for pre- and post- intercultural sensitivity measurement using the intercultural sensitivity scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Participants – Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>Negative Ranks(^1)</th>
<th>Positive Ranks(^2)</th>
<th>Ties(^3)</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Engagement Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-2.814</td>
<td>.005*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tend to wait before forming an impression of individuals from other cultures.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-1.182</td>
<td>.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am open-minded to the thoughts and opinions of people from different cultures.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-0.159</td>
<td>.873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often give positive responses to people of different cultures during our interaction.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-2.309</td>
<td>.021*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with individuals from a different cultural background than my own.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-2.714</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to communicate within different cultures using verbal and non-verbal cues.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-2.980</td>
<td>.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a feeling of enjoyment toward differences between culturally different individuals and me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-0.899</td>
<td>.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respect for Cultural Differences Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People from other cultures have a narrow worldview compared to my own culture</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-0.758</td>
<td>.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel comfortable interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-2.980</td>
<td>.003*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the values of people from different cultures.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-0.265</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-0.225</td>
<td>.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-0.758</td>
<td>.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think my culture is better than other cultures.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-0.436</td>
<td>.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Confidence Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-3.434</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-1.252</td>
<td>.211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-0.842</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-2.858</td>
<td>.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-2.621</td>
<td>.009*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Enjoyment Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am easily frustrated when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-4.313</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-2.360</td>
<td>.018*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often feel unsuccessful in my attempts to communicate with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-2.440</td>
<td>.015*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Attentiveness Scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.046*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-2.106</td>
<td>.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-1.496</td>
<td>.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am sensitive to subtle meanings when interacting with culturally different individuals.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-0.643</td>
<td>.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Score Change Pre to Post</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.005*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(^1\)Post<Pre; \(^2\)Post>Pre; \(^3\)Post=Pre; \(*p \leq .05\)
Individual Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Items

Of the 24 items asked of participants, 12 resulted in statistically significant changes after ISL participation. Each of the five subscales within the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale also had individual items with significant changes from pre- to post-trip measurements. When the differences for each question were combined, researchers found that the combined groups of questions for four of the five subscales were statistically significantly different. Respect for Cultural Differences was the only subscale that did not show a statistically significant change from pre- to post-trip (p=.991).

**Interaction engagement items.** Interaction Engagement was the largest subscale, made up of seven questions that addressed how students felt about intercultural communication. Statistically significant change in this scale indicated more positive views towards the general idea of intercultural communication than prior to the study abroad. Of those seven items, four were statistically significantly different: *I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures* (p=.005); *I often give positive responses to people of different cultures during our interaction* (p=.021); *I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with individuals from a different cultural background than my own* (p=.007); *I am able to communicate with different cultures using verbal and non-verbal cues* (p=.003). The average pre-test score for this scale was 27.7. The post-test average was 29.6 (out of a possible maximum of 35).

**Respect for cultural differences items.** The Respect for Cultural Differences subscale only saw one question increase significantly from the pre-trip to post-trip inventories: *I don’t feel comfortable interacting with people from different cultures* (p=.003). This was
also the only one of the five subscales that did not see a statistically significant shift after the study abroad experience. The average pre-test score for this subscale was 24.55 out of a maximum of 25 after reverse-scoring. The post-test average was slightly higher (=24.94), but not statistically significant.

**Interaction confidence items.** The Interaction Confidence subscale had the second highest significance level among participants with three out of five items showing statistically significant gains (p=.002). The statements *I am sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures* (p=.001), *I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures* (p=.004), and *I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures* (p=.009) were all statistically significant. Average scores increased from pre-test 15.48 to post-test 17.74 out of a possible 25 points.

**Interaction enjoyment items.** Interaction Enjoyment was the most statistically significant subscale (p=.000), with all three items showing significance. These three items describe how a participant feels when he or she is interacting with someone from a different culture. *I am easily frustrated when interacting with people from different cultures* was the most statistically significant change from pre- to post-test, with 26 participants showing a more positive association (a decrease in feelings of frustration) with this statement than before departure (p=.000). Other statistically significant items included *I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures* (p=.018) and *I often feel unsuccessful in my attempts to communicate with people from different cultures* (p=.015). The average pre-test score statistically significantly increased from 8.87 to 11.8 out of a possible 15 points.
**Interaction attentiveness items.** One of the three items in the Interaction Attentiveness subscale, *I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures* \((p=.035)\), was statistically significant. The average pre-test score was 10.7, which increased to 11.45 on the post-test survey.

**Discussion**

**Introduction**

The first hypothesis (H1) of this research study was that students participating in an international service-learning program would increase their development of intercultural communication competency, a requirement for overall cultural competency. The results supported this hypothesis, with 24 of the 31 students having gains in the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test showed this difference to be statistically significant. The Wilcoxon test was also run to test for the validity of the remaining five hypotheses (H2, H3, H4, H5, H6), that each individual subscales in the ISS would increase significantly. This hypothesis was partially supported. While all of the subscale averages did increase from pre- to post-test, only four out of five increased statistically significantly.

**Demographics**

The breakdown of class level information presented above does not reflect the reported national demographics of study abroad students according to studies by the IIE (2009) and Carlson et al. (1990). This could be due to a couple of different factors. First, because the programs that students participated in were during summer sessions, most were
in transition from one class standing to another. In the pre-test survey, participants were asked to indicate what their status would be in fall semester of 2009, rather than their current class level, which might have resulted in junior and senior being the top two groups of participants. A second possibility is that these differences might be due to confusion caused by the wording of that particular item in the instrument. Students were asked their class level and given the following choices: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate. Given that most students filled out the pre-trip questionnaire either right before or shortly after the end of the spring 2009 semester, there might have been confusion as to what indicated class level should be for each student. In addition, the word graduate, though meant to capture the number of graduate students participating in the programs, may have been misinterpreted to mean that the student had graduated in the previous term.

Results showed that over half of the participants in this study were female. These numbers are similar to the student body demographics reported above for the predominantly female liberal arts focused university. However, the vast majority of this study’s participants attended the STEM focused university (n=29) which reported that 56% of its population was male. This discrepancy could be explained by national trends that show female participation in study abroad programs are typically much higher than male participation (IIE, 2009); 65.1% and 34.9% respectively as of 2006/2007.

Another interesting demographic item reported above were the different locations that students chose to study abroad. This reflects the changing face of study abroad participation, as reported by the Institute of International Education (IIE) (2009). IIE reported an increase in the number of students choosing programs in locations like Africa, Asia, and Latin
America. This could be influenced by the steady weakening U.S. dollar since 2001, as many schools are reporting an increase in students studying in developing countries due to a more favorable exchange rates (Evans & Murray, 2008).

Figure 2.2 shows the different fields of study that students identified in the survey. The findings of this study are similar to those reported by IIE (2009): Social science, business, and liberal arts majors have a much higher representation in study abroad programs than other disciplines. The one discrepancy in this study from the IIE was the high number of STEM majors. While IIE reported only 4.7% of participants from these fields, this study saw 29%. This is most likely due to the fact that the majority of participants (93.5%) were from a university recognized for its programs in engineering, statistics, and other STEM fields of study.

Demographic findings generally show that the participants of the current study were representative of national study abroad participants, the one exception being area of study. The small sample size (n=31) means that findings cannot be generalized to the entire population. The root cause of the study’s low response rate was most likely the method of delivery and the fact that there was a delay in the pre-test information being sent out to students. However, using a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test allowed researchers to analyze and find significance in the data. It should also be noted that many studies have found significance in developmental outcomes using small samples (Roschelle, Turpin, and Elias, 2000; Gmelch, 1997; Borg and Zitomer, 2008; Tonkin and Quiroga; 2004).
Total Pre- to Post-Trip Differences in Intercultural Communication Competency

Of the 31 participants in this study, 24 students experienced an increase in the ISS score after returning from their trip abroad. A Wilcoxon Signed Rank test revealed a statistically significant increase in Intercultural Sensitivity Scale scores after participation in an ISL program. This supports the researcher’s original hypothesis that a study abroad experience with a service component contributes to increased intercultural communication and sensitivity in ISL participants. This also supports suggestions from the literature that international service-learning facilitates overall gains in student development (Tonkin and Quiroga, 2004) and suggests that even short term programs abroad facilitate significant changes in student development (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, and Hubbard, 2005).

Individual Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Items

Of the 24 items asked of participants, 12 resulted in statistically significant changes after treatment. Individual items on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale that showed significance for the complete group are shown in Table 2.1. Within each of the five subscales there were statistically significant changes from pre- to post-trip measurements individual scale items.

Interaction engagement items. Significant responses to the Interaction Engagement Items suggest a shift to more positive views towards the general idea of intercultural communication than before departure. Study abroad participation, and international service-learning in particular, facilitates interactions with a culture different from the participant’s own. These items were most likely statistically significant due to the level of interaction that students had with individuals in their host communities while traveling.
abroad. As Caffrey et al. (2004) observed, the skills leading towards cultural competency do not form in a vacuum and cannot be taught in a classroom, but rather must be learned by firsthand experience and exposure to new cultures and ideas. This is an important finding to note due to the fact that it shows a shift in attitudes about intercultural communication. There has been suggestion in past studies (Carlson et al., 1990) that students that study abroad are already ahead of their peers in many developmental areas. These findings show that, despite a predisposition to being more accepting and aware of cultural differences, students who choose to study abroad can still improve not only their skills, but attitudes towards intercultural communication interactions.

**Respect for cultural differences items.** At first glance the fact that no significant changes occurred in this subscale may seem like a negative outcome, given the importance of this item in both intercultural sensitivity and cultural competency development. However, analysis examining the Respect for Cultural Difference subscale alone indicates that students already showed a high level of competency in this area prior to involvement in their chosen study abroad program. Previous research supports this finding by suggesting that students who choose to study abroad have higher tolerance and respect levels for different cultures than their peers, even before the academic experience abroad (Carlson et al., 1990).

Out of six items on the Respect for Cultural Difference subscale, “I don’t feel comfortable interacting with people from different cultures” was the only one that showed a statistically significant difference. Possible reasons for the lack of gains in this area are explained above. The difference between this item and the other five in the subscale is that this item deals with the comfort level that students experienced while interacting with people
from different cultural backgrounds. The other five are more objective statements about how
the individual feels and acts towards a culturally different individual, rather than reflecting
their own level of confidence in an actual interaction situation. Studies, including this one,
suggest that a student’s confidence in speaking and interacting with others is greatly
enhanced by participation in programs that require close contact with culturally different
individuals (Caffrey et al., 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; IIES, 2008).

**Interaction confidence items.** The high level of statistical significance seen in this
subscale was expected as the literature cites increased self-confidence and confidence in
interactions with others as a benefit of both study abroad and service-learning participation
(Caffrey et al., 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; IIES, 2008). Stresses put on students in an
unfamiliar situation, like those experienced by students participating in study abroad and
service-learning courses, can lead to positive and negative developmental outcomes. If not
properly managed, these experiences can facilitate stereotypes or leave participants with an
unrealistic view of a community or place. Proper management of these experiences, on the
other hand, can facilitate self-confidence, confidence interacting with others, and a sense of
global community (Chen and Starosta, 1997). The regular self and faculty-led reflection
elements of international service-learning are successful tools that help students to process
information and lead to more positive outcomes. Findings suggest that increased confidence,
combined with forced interaction with others during service projects and other activities may
have led students to feel that they could apply their newly acquired communication skills
with other groups. Willingness to apply intercultural communications skills to interactions
once the student is back home in his or her comfort zone is an important step towards achieving cultural competency.

**Interaction enjoyment items.** *I am easily frustrated when interacting with people from different cultures* was the most statistically significant change from pre- to post-test, with 26 participants showing a more positive association (a decrease in feelings of frustration) with this statement than before departure. Feelings of discouragement and lack of success, along with the above mentioned frustration, often plague individuals placed in a situation where they may have to communicate with someone coming from a different cultural perspective or when there is a language barrier (Chen and Starosta, 2000). The ability of the students in the current study to move past these barriers to the point that they begin to enjoy their interactions with culturally different others is another important marker of cultural competency that seems to have been met by participants. The significant items in this subscale, the one listed above in addition to “*I often feel unsuccessful in my attempts to communicate with people from different cultures*” and “*I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures*” reflects that these barriers may have been overcome. The increase in confidence that students seem to have experienced, combined with positive experiences and associations with the host culture or community gained from interactions while abroad may also explain the high significance level of this subscale.

**Interaction attentiveness items.** In the final scale, one of the three items describing interaction attentiveness was statistically significant: “*I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.*” Interaction Attentiveness describes the amount of effort an individual is willing to put into understanding and processing an intercultural interaction.
Observation is an important factor in the ability to understand and react in any interaction, but particularly those in which there are cultural and language differences between the individuals.

Overall, students indicated that they enjoyed interacting with culturally different others more after participating in an ISL experience than before. Participants also reported that they were better able to understand and respond in intercultural communication experiences. Increased confidence in interactions, as well as feeling better prepared to socialize with culturally different others. For all statistically significant scale items, increased confidence facilitated by forced interaction with the local population through service projects and other activities and reflection of these experiences both internally and within the group may have led to the increase in overall enjoyment of intercultural communication experiences.

**Conclusion**

Globalization has made the word a much smaller place than it once was. It is no longer only medical professionals and international businessmen that require the ability to function and communicate effectively in other world cultures. Today’s college student is already part of a global community, and this fact will only become more pronounced as he or she enters the workforce. This study attempted to better understand the participants of international service-learning programs and the effect of participation on intercultural communication competency, a key skill needed to function in today’s world, and found that students who participated in study abroad program with service and reflection elements saw a statistically significant increase in this competency. The majority of prior research on the
subject of international service-learning is anecdotal and program specific in nature, making it difficult for those making programming decisions to weigh the pros and cons of this program type. More quantitative research using a variety of programs was needed and this study contributes to that gap in knowledge. Although more research is needed, there is sufficient evidence that suggests a plethora of benefits associated with international service-learning over the more basic root programs of service-learning and study abroad.

The first hypothesis of this study which stated an increase in intercultural competency after participation in an international service-learning experience was supported by data collected before and after participation. The remaining hypotheses, that each of the five subscales within the ISS would increase significantly was partially supported. This section will explore the implications of the above findings, as well as limitations and recommendations for future research and program development.

**Implications**

This research study showed that students who participate in a short-term study abroad course with service and reflective elements saw statistically significant gains in intercultural communication competency. This suggests that the combination of travel, service, reflection and academic coursework benefits students by helping them increase cultural competency development. Much can be drawn from this and other findings reported above to suggest and inform future research and program development.

International service-learning is unique in that it actually combines the activities and benefits of study abroad and service-learning, which has been suggested to provide a more efficient way for students to develop certain skills in a finite amount of time by combining
the benefits into a single program (Tonkin and Quiroga, 2004). The current research study found that combining the two pedagogies, in addition to elements of voluntourism, leads to significant gains in the area of intercultural communication competency. Given the small amount of research that has been undertaken in the field of international service-learning, these findings contribute to the validation of international service-learning as a worthwhile undertaking for both participants and facilitators.

Findings also revealed which intercultural communication areas students were already proficient in and which areas saw growth. This study found that participants already had a high regard and respect for other cultures, a finding also reflected by Williams (2005) and Carlson et al. (1990). The pre- and post-test model used by this study enabled researchers to determine that, while some elements of intercultural communication competency had been met prior to departure, the bulk of development happened while the student was abroad showing that even the self-selected students had room to grow in this area.

Lastly, findings may suggest that is not simply the act of traveling abroad that promotes the development of intercultural communication competence, but interaction with the host community. Most of items that had significance on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale were statements pertaining to active interaction with individuals of the host community characteristic of immersion while abroad. It is not likely that this type of development would be seen in individuals who spend the majority of their trip on a tour bus, staying in Western owned hotel chains, and eating at international chain restaurants. International service-learning facilitates this type of contact by assuring that students are forced to interact with the
local community through service projects and other planned and unplanned activities. If it is the interaction that facilitates intercultural communication development, implications may exist for students who remain on the home campuses as well. While it would be ideal for all students to take part in a study abroad program during their time in college, there are a number of factors that make it impossible for some to do this. If extensive interaction is a main contributor to the development of intercultural communication sensitivity, it may be possible for students unable to travel abroad to replicate some of these benefits at home by interacting with international students.

**Recommendations for Future Research and Program Development**

Further interpretation of the results was difficult due to the fact that no control group was used. Initially, students participating in both service-based and traditional study abroad course formats would be compared. However, the researcher’s choice of using faculty led summer programs severely limited the number of students participating in a program with no service element, which make the intervention and control group model impossible. A future study should include a more varied sample of program types and lengths to give a more accurate picture of where international service-learning participants are developmentally compared to traditional study abroad students. It was noted in this study that study abroad and international service-learning participants were similar in their demographic makeup. While this may have been due to an oversight in instrument design, this should be further explored to determine what factors lead students to choose ISL over a traditional study abroad program. This kind of information could be used when marketing to different groups of students.
While the current study did show that participants in an international service-learning courses increased intercultural communication skills, it is difficult to determine what factors (previous travel experience, service projects, degree of immersion, etc.) had more of an effect on the outcomes than others. A future study that includes both groups using a quasi-experimental model would be beneficial in determining how international service-learning students compare with traditional semester abroad students and traditional service-learning students. Answers to this type of question are needed to guide future program design and implementation.

Future research should be conducted to see if benefits gained by students differ depending on the degree of contact the student has with the local population, as well as in what type of service project they participated. This study found that the majority of participants participated in a community based service project rather than an environmentally based service project. Determining why this is and what developmental differences result from each project type would be beneficial. Different levels of contact with the host community might affect the development of intercultural communication competency and other cultural competency developmental markers. In addition, developmental differences between students based on service project types (social, environmental, etc.) might be discussed. Practically, environmental service projects might be better suited for some programs than others (natural sciences, for example) and may provide an alternative in areas where those leading the trip don’t feel comfortable facilitating a service project directly with the community.
Lastly, domestic alternatives should be explored to assure that all students have an opportunity to develop cultural competency during their college careers. While it is noted that certain markers can only be developed through experience within a culture other than one’s own, others may be facilitated by regular contact with culturally different individuals within the student’s community.
References


CONCLUSION

International service-learning offers students the opportunity to travel, experience new cultures, interact on a personal level with the host community, expand academic knowledge, apply classroom theory and knowledge to real life situations, and reflect on these experiences. These experiences not only increase student development and the ability of a student to function in his or her local community, but may also create a sense of global accountability and encourage ongoing participation as the member of a global community. It is the author’s hope that, as the research of methods and benefits of international service-learning is expanded, this valuable pedagogical method will be properly and more widely implemented. The two articles presented in this compilation have attempted to address two facets of the international service-learning literature that are lacking in past studies. Both are contributions to the relatively new and expanding body of knowledge on international service-learning.

The first article, *International Service-Learning: A Combined Model of Travel, Community Service, and Academic Coursework to Further Student Development*, addressed the theoretical base of international service-learning. A review of the current literature led to the creation of a model for international service-learning and suggestions for future research. Obstacles still exist for researchers and practitioners of international service-learning, the most urgent of which may be the lack of official definition and program standards to inform those who wish to research or implement this pedagogical method. Current definitions are murky at best and widely accepted official standards non-existent. While the first article in
this compilation has taken steps towards the resolution of this problem, there is much work to be done on this matter.

*Towards Cultural Competency: Assessing Intercultural Sensitivity Development in Students Who Participated in a Study Abroad Course with a Service Component* was the second article in this compilation which described the findings of a research study that addressed one of the research suggestions from the previous article: the investigation of specific developmental markers in international service-learning participants. For the purpose of this study a marker associated with the lifelong process of attaining cultural competency, intercultural communication competency, was chosen. Data showed that students who participated in the study did, in fact, improve their scores on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, suggesting growth in the area of intercultural communication competency.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX A

Modified Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
2. People from other cultures have a narrow worldview compared to my own culture.*
3. I am sure of myself when interacting with people from different cultures.
4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.*
5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
7. I don’t feel comfortable interacting with people from different cultures.*
8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.
9. I am easily frustrated when interacting with people from different cultures.*
10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of individuals from other cultures.
12. I often get discouraged when I am interacting with people from different cultures.*
13. I am open-minded to the thoughts and opinions of people from different cultures.
14. I am very observant of cultural differences when interacting with people from different cultures.
15. I often feel unsuccessful in my attempts to communicate with people from different cultures.*
16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.
17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.
18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.*
19. I am sensitive to subtle meanings when interacting with culturally different individuals.
20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.*
21. I often give positive responses to people of different cultures during our interaction.
22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with individuals from a different cultural background than my own.*
23. I am able to communicate within different cultures using verbal and non-verbal cues.
24. I have a feeling of enjoyment toward differences between culturally different individuals and me.

*Reverse scored items