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International Service Learning

Managing Expectations



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International service-learning (ISL) is a growing and diverse field. Third party providers dedicated to service learning trips and community development organizations recruiting volunteers to sustain their programs are growing in popularity. Some examples include the International Partnership for Service Learning (IPSL), Partners of the Americas, United Nations Volunteers, and Global Vision International. Additionally, many universities are creating their own programs internally, usually for short-term programs during school breaks. This momentum has generated a need for what qualifies as ISL and how to determine models of best practice. According to Bringle and Hatcher, “ISL is the combination of service learning, study abroad, and international education...and draws from the strengths of each strategy.” (2011, p. 14) Therefore, ISL requires a unique definition and research to support it. The definition Bringle and Hatcher provide for ISL is robust and comprehensive:

International Service Learning is “A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally” (2011, p. 19).

For the purposes of this project, I define ISL as any international project that involves volunteering, interactions with people from different countries and cultures, intentional learning, deliberate discussions about power and identity issues surrounding the volunteer project and meaningful reflection. Additionally, I accept Robbin Crabtree’s (2008) model that best practice for ISL is found in the intersection of and collaboration with international education and study abroad, civic education and service learning, cross-cultural adjustment and communication, development and collaboration, participatory research, learning theory, and the goals of the ISL organization (p. 28). This cross-discipline and cross-cultural approach allows for flexibility within ISL programs, but also grounds the efforts in theory, purpose, group involvement and results of personal and community growth and improvement.

While ISL can work best in structured academic environments, intentional learning can be just as valuable as academic coursework if the reflective elements are in place and the facilitators are skilled at enabling learning and discussion. For example, community development organizations thrive on the close relationships their international staff form with local community leaders. In a lecture on May 2, 2014 at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Fanta Aw emphasized that to maintain these relationships, it is important for the stakeholders involved to ask fundamental questions about where the gaps in the existing program are and how the program design and use of volunteers and other resources can be adapted to reach the overall goal of solving local and global problems. Because many community development organizations like the United Nations Volunteers are comprised of an international team, beginning these important discussions and bringing about intentional learning require a high level of cross-cultural communication skills.

Because of the many levels of culture, project investment, and knowledge, one of the most important issues in ISL is managing expectations. Often, there are at least three parties involved in an ISL project, students, community partners, and educators. Additionally, many cultures believe in a greater societal expectation of serving others. This means any ISL

partnership must be addressed to the larger community and sensitive to its needs and cultural expectations. For example, Latin American cultures tend to be more collectivist. Partners of the Americas uses this knowledge to grow a global youth volunteering network. RED2021 (the online platform), is a collective commitment by international organizations and youth to create a “more informed, connected, and accountable global youth volunteer community” (Partners of the Americas, 2014, What We Do Section, para. 5).

With so many different actors and goals, managing expectations in ISL in higher education is usually directed towards student learning, increasing students’ intercultural competency, and cultivating global citizens. To understand the broader expectations of the multiple parties involved, I conducted a literature review of current ISL research and conducted informational interviews with professionals in the field. I have determined that because of the complexity of International Service Learning, managing expectations encompasses more than increasing the intercultural competency of the students involved in the program. It is necessary to manage and understand societal expectations of civic engagement, the role and obligations of community partners, and the most effective models and tools for framing and meeting the learning outcomes of the student participants.

Part 1: Managing Expectations of Civic Mindedness and the Social Contract

In many countries and cultures, becoming a citizen indicates a relationship and commitment to a larger community. According to Connie Flanagan (1999), in many societies, becoming a citizen requires one to assume the “rights and responsibilities of membership in a social group, [and] is a marker of attaining adult status” (p. 135). Flanagan continues that these generational responsibilities are reaffirmed by the “social contract...the set of mutual rights and obligations binding citizens to their polity” (p. 135). However, the social contract is disrupted by social change, which is ever more present in our technologically advanced world. Volunteer service (sometimes required) to one’s polity is one way to teach youth life skills and help them become civic actors who will uphold the social contract. Examples of this type of service can be found around the world. In Germany, men and women ages 17-23 must fulfill a service obligation of 8-23 months (CIA Factbook, 2014). This can be served in country, or working internationally. In Israel, all men and women are conscripted into compulsory military service at the age of 18. Of those conscripted, “99% report to service” and “90% would volunteer even if not drafted” (Seginer, 1999, p. 205). These statistics indicate a devotion to their country and a willingness to serve beyond the requirement. Furthermore, in Mexico, all students (Mexican citizens and international students) who are receiving a degree from a Mexican University must complete a social service obligation in Mexico or internationally (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México, 2010, p. 2). This policy clearly links civic action with the attainment and responsibility of higher education.

Religious organizations also use service to support the social contract of their members. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints highly encourages their members (usually at the age of 20-24) to spread the church’s message around the world. Additionally, members can choose to be humanitarian missionaries who “serve in impoverished areas of the world and do not actively proselytize” (LDS, 2014, Types of Missionaries Section, para. 4). This type of civic action reaffirms the youth’s dedication to their community and connects the missionaries to global humanitarian efforts. However, one pitfall of charitable organizations is that they are often not tied into local government activities in countries that have a separation of church and state. Therefore, charitable organizations can be seen as interfering from the government fulfilling its

obligations to its citizens. In contrast, in Tanzania there is a governmental registry for active local and international NGOs working in Tanzania with contact information, demonstrating a link between private and public service (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2014, NGO Coordination Division Section, para. 8). The government of Bolivia is also unique because it houses a department of NGOs and religious organizations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to connect government social obligations with charitable efforts and development projects (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, 2014, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Section).

In the study conducted by Flanagan (1999), she discovered that youth from societies with fewer social welfare services were more likely to be engaged in voluntary community service (domestic or international) than youth from societies where the state provided most social welfare services (p. 143). When the state cannot or does not provide the needs of society, individuals take up the burden through volunteer work. In the United States, dedication to community service is especially strong and is even a graduation requirement for high school students across the country. While charitable organizations have big hearts and do provide meaningful service and resources, emphasizing service in an academic setting, offers a “civic rather than philanthropic” approach to service-learning (Bell, Mattern & Telin, 2007, p. 61). In this context, participating in service-learning from a community action standpoint implies mutual responsibility instead of altruism and is more likely to reinforce the social contract rather than self-gratification after a charitable act. Like the Germans, Israelis, and Mexicans, youth in the United States are raised to believe they should contribute to their society and give to others what the state does not provide. The challenge is upholding the social contract that each citizen holds with their country on an international stage.

While globalization and advancements in technology have created a more interconnected world, it has also undermined traditional ideas of citizenship. It is difficult for a person to feel truly connected to their country if s/he may need to move to several others because of work, education, or poor quality of life. For global nomads, international migrants, and refugees, they are not citizens of an individual state, but a global one. To manage the needs of a global and internationalized world, there is a necessity for global civic action and the development of a global social contract. The keepers of this contract will be global citizens. Since the late 1990s, global citizenship has been advanced as a deliberate standard in higher education. While there is no agreed upon definition of global citizenship in higher education, Schattle (2009) offers

“Global citizenship as an outward awareness entails such personal qualities as understanding complex issues from multiple vantage points, recognizing sources of global interdependence and a ‘shared fate’ that implicates humanity and all life on the planet, and looking beyond distinctions, at least in one’s mind, between insiders and outsiders in order to view the human experience in more universal terms” (p. 10-11).

This concept of global citizenship also denotes global responsibility beyond national borders. It is this responsibility that has led to the creation of and participation in ISL programs.

Global Vision International (GVI) is a case study in sustainably managing the expectations of aspiring global citizens eager to fulfill their global social contract. GVI is a multi-award winning organization that runs conservation and community development programs in over 150 countries around the world. Their mission is to “build sustainable projects that achieve long term positive results” (GVI, 2014, Our Mission Section). To sustain these programs, they offer short-term and long-term volunteer abroad programs that are overseen by an

international staff and local community leaders. Volunteers of all ages come to the programs with various expectations. Some volunteers want to improve their language skills, be a tourist, are interested in community development, or want to build their skill set. Throughout their programs, GVI uses the concept of the social contract to develop community and contribution with their volunteers. Firstly, GVI informs all its volunteers that they are supporting a sustainable project and will be joining a global team that is working to solve global problems locally. Secondly, all GVI Staff Members and volunteers live communally to build close friendships and support each other.

Furthermore, volunteers are well trained and informed about the communities they will be helping prior to beginning the program, and the training is reinforced throughout the volunteer's experience. Before arriving to the country, volunteers are sent a detailed description of the community and project as well as necessary vocabulary to learn in the local language and other recommended resources (books, articles, and videos) to familiarize the volunteer with the local culture. On site, the staff with already established relationships in the community provide cultural awareness trainings and introduce the volunteers to the local community leaders. It is also important to note that there is a minimum 3 month cross-over period between staff who are leaving their post and new staff joining the program to ensure adequate training, provide time for relationship building, and make sure the new staff members feel comfortable serving the needs of the community and the volunteers. This includes supporting the volunteers' daily reflection and work.

Every day volunteers must reflect on their activities, prepare for the continued project (lesson planning, construction plans, extracurricular projects, etc.) and serve their GVI family by cooking meals, light cleaning, and supportive conversations. GVI strives to instill investment in a project through "trust, respect and mutual understanding" and believes that "fun, friendship and happiness are our most valuable tools to build a cohesive international family" (GVI, 2014, Our Mission Section). GVI is also unique because the organization is run by directors from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the United States. Also, the staff and volunteers come from multiple countries and support communities all over the world. Organizations like GVI create a mutually understanding, international family that supports the advancement of global citizens who adhere to a global citizen contract.

Part 2: Managing Expectations of Community Partners

Because of our increasingly more globalized world, global citizens who are committed to an international social contract must find local solutions to solve global problems. Along with the many goals of ISL, one implicit mission of promoting global citizenship is furthering the development of a global social contract. Therefore, programs must have sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships with local community leaders. However, traditional models of service learning in higher education emphasize the education of the student participants, short term goals they can accomplish with little training, and lack a connection to the organization that is facilitating the service opportunity (Stoecker, Loving, Reddy & Bollig, 2010, p. 281). From the perspective of a community partner, this model only harms their organization and community instead of strengthening it. Good intentions are no longer a good enough reason for the creation of, or participation in, ISL programs. In her May 2, 2014 speech at the Monterey Institute, Fanta Aw continued that student participants and local community members must understand the connection of the local to the global and participate in global social responsibility. This responsibility yields ISL best practice of "mutuality" and "reciprocity" where the program plan

for action begins with a needs assessment conducted by the community and then works with higher education institutions and study abroad providers to develop clear learning and service objectives, a strategic plan for monitoring and evaluating outcomes, and a sustainable process of improvement and growth (Plater, Jones, Bringle & Clayton, 2009, p. 491).

The biggest barrier between ISL learners and community partners is inherent power and privilege. The word “service” denotes an unequal relationship where one group is “serving” and the other is “being served.” Without proper training and collaboration, this inequality places the volunteers in a position of privilege that reinforces prejudice and widens the power inequality gap. To manage this privilege, volunteers must critically understand social and economic inequalities, social justice issues, and cross-cultural challenges in their own lives and in the lives of the community they are working with. Perhaps most difficult for learners is developing intercultural competence to understand the problems in the community. According to an intercultural sensitivity model by Rockquemoore and Schaffer (2000), when participating in an ISL project, international service learners will initially experience shock, then feel “normalization” and move toward “engagement” (p. 17-18). The engagement phase can only take place with cohesive academic and community action learning. When volunteers are well informed and trained, they can aid in the “cooperative development of a program that will address a mutually established vision, and where both parties will serve and be served” (Baker-Boosamra, 2006, p. 6). This type of relationship allows the learners and their sponsoring organizations to work in solidarity with the community partners and form sustainable and meaningful relationships.

Another key component to ensure the mutual expectations of community partners and ISL providers are met is capacity building. Capacity building is “enhancing the ability of everyone involved to be involved effectively and to derive and generate maximum benefit from their involvement” (Plater et al., 2009, p. 491). For partnerships, it is particularly important to anticipate problems related to leaving the community. An ISL partnership should not be formed unless the community has the capacity to host and train the volunteers. A challenge in reaching this capacity is managing how capacity building is seen in other cultures. For example, cultures that tend to be more collectivist have an easier time building social capital and investment in community-based projects due to their dedication to their “we” group (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p.75). However, a hurdle to capacity building is traditional gender roles. In many societies, men are expected to be assertive, competitive, and tough, while women are the designated care takers (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 117). Therefore, it would be difficult to involve female volunteers and community members in projects that are seen as more masculine without first empowering the women of the community. Clear communication, respect, and open-mindedness are the keys to overcoming these cultural hurdles.

In general, when groups from extremely different cultural backgrounds participate in ISL projects together, there is a greater chance for cultural misunderstandings based on the way people think, reason, and relate to others. These cultural considerations must be taken into account before any project can be proposed to ensure maximum involvement from all partners. Because the definition of a strong, community-driven organization varies in and among different cultures, it is important for ISL providers and community partners to consider capacity building as encompassing adequate (safe from a risk management perspective) infrastructure, a strategic plan, a clear idea of where learners fit into an organization and a plan for sustaining program activities without the help of volunteers. By participating in capacity building discussions before sending students to work with an organization, ISL providers and community partners will have

a stronger and more ethical relationship and students will be able to reach the mutually agreed upon learning outcomes and gain community support.

A model for the contribution of community partners is the connection between Peacock Acres, an organization that aids foster youth in Monterey County, CA, and California State University at Monterey Bay (CSUMB). CSUMB houses an award winning department of service learning and includes a service-learning graduation requirement for every student. CSUMB's service-learning model is a prism that can be applied to ISL (Figure 1). The professors, staff, students and community partners at CSUMB put discipline based knowledge, student knowledge and community knowledge into the prism. By participating in the service experience, students begin to understand "the world from another person's perspective," "issues related to service in a multicultural society," "how power, privilege and oppression affect the service setting," and "an individual's commitment to and engagement with civic society" (CSUMB, 2010, The SL Prism Section, para. 4). During the volunteering and learning process, students transform the experience into new knowledge, skills, and awareness of self and society. (CSUMB, 2010, The SL Prism Section, para. 1).

In an international setting, students will especially be dealing with diversity which makes interacting with the local community more challenging. ISL educators and community partners can facilitate the transition out of the prism by providing students with pre-orientation training and meaningful reflection throughout the program to establish realistic personal goals and foster ethical and equitable relationships with the local community.

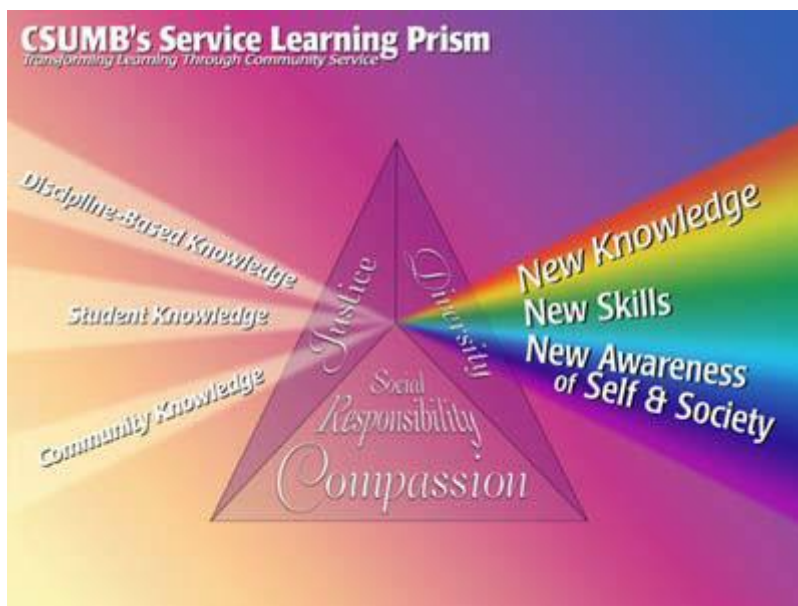


Figure 1: CSUMB's Service Learning Prism (CSUMB, 2010, The SL Prism Section)

The Learning Center at Peacock Acres (TLC) depends on service-learners to sustain their mentorship programs with foster youth who use their services. A majority of the foster youth at TLC are minorities and come from homes of poverty and neglect. The Director of TLC believes in an active role of community partners in the continuous training and coaching of volunteers. He also stresses the necessity of a reciprocal relationship with CSUMB professors and staff to reinforce student's learnings in the classroom with the practical experience of fulfilling a need at TLC. This cooperation is successful because TLC has a strategic action plan, a long term vision,

and understands their responsibility of educating students about issues of diversity and justice specific to their community.

Additionally, TLC stresses that service learners need to leave all their expectations behind and communicate their feelings, especially those of frustration or hopelessness. Not unlike working with an impoverished population with limited access to education in developing countries, public education cannot adequately serve the youth at TLC, and the youth have a high rate of discipline problems and low self-esteem due to their difficult backgrounds. Therefore, volunteers can initially feel like their time is being wasted or not making an impact. These sentiments are similar to the early stages of culture shock (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 323). Therefore, reflection and self-awareness are essential components of understanding other cultures and collaborating effectively with the diverse youth at TLC.

Because of a mutually beneficial collaboration based on the principles of CSUMB's prism and Peacock Acres' volunteer coaching, CSUMB can confidently place students at TLC and TLC has the capacity to grow their programs for foster youth and volunteers. Empowered by the passion and dedication of their service learners, TLC is embarking on providing community seminars and hosting an annual conference to share the challenges, larger social problems, and best practices for supporting foster youth in the Monterey Peninsula. This new project is a result of creating enough capacity to provide quality services to their participants and engage the larger community in a discussion about foster youth which affects several communities and cultures.

Part 3: Managing Expectations of Students

Once clear expectations are made for global citizenship and the global social contract and the expectations and needs of community partners are met, ISL providers can focus on how to manage the expectations of the ISL participants. From a U.S. perspective, there are three types of ISL: Service Learning Abroad, ISL in the U.S., and Service Learning in the U.S. by students from abroad (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p. 14). However, service learning and ISL is also occurring in countries such as the United Kingdom and South Africa.

In the UK, the Council for Citizenship and Learning in the Community (CSV/CCLC) works with over 200 higher education institutions to encourage education for citizenship and service learning (Annette, 2002, p. 86). This initiative has led to the creation of "Island programs" where professors from the UK take students to developing countries and work with local NGOs as part of an "action research course" during a university break (Annette, 2002, p. 88). This model uses the pre-established relationships with community development organizations and supports their work with extra labor and academic studies. This type of program allows students to conduct more research than perform service because the pre-established framework typically treats students more like visiting researchers than service learners. However, as more relationships are established with universities in other countries, this model is evolving. In 2002, the British Council helped the University of Jordan in Amman create a community service program to support the development of civil society (Annette, 2002, p. 90). This program can also support service learners from the UK directly participating in projects put forth by the community of Amman and promoted by the University of Jordan.

An interesting ISL initiative in South Africa is the Community of Higher Education Service Partnership (CHESP). This partnership initially involved five South African Universities, is managed by the Joint Education Trust, supported by the Ford Foundation, and involves several U.S. institutions who share their service-learning program knowledge. The goal of this program is to reconstruct higher education in South Africa into socially accountable institutions (Annette,

2002, p. 90). Also, by working with higher education institutions in multiple countries, CHESP promotes ISL programs and the values of global civic engagement. Even though a large portion of ISL research is focused on U.S. service learners abroad, student expectations are universally managed through clearly articulated program design, effective advising, and continuous coaching from ISL providers and community partners.

Common ISL program models are semester long or short term (such as an alternative spring break or summer session.) A well-known ISL provider of semester long experiences is the International Partnership for Service Learning and Leadership (IPSL). IPSL is a network of higher education institutions and service providers who generate ISL opportunities. All IPSL undergraduate programs include full academic study with 15-20 service hours per week with a local service provider. Additionally, the students live with host families and take part in cultural activities. The most important component of the IPSL programs are student reflections on the connections and disconnections between academics and the service activities they are engaged in (Brown, 2011, p. 64). These reflections are facilitated through a written reflection journal, weekly discussions with a faculty advisor, and writing a study of the service agency a student is working in. This framework allows students to form part of a global social contract, learn about cross cultural, socio economic, political and social justice issues affecting the population they are working with, provide a high degree of commitment and specialized skills to a local service organization, and form strong bonds with the communities they are collaborating with. Additionally, a semester long program offers ample time for “360-degree feedback” to help students learn at the “cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels” (Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2011, p. 243). Increasing a student’s competence in all three areas is vital to managing a student’s expectations and developing an ethical and sustainable ISL program.

Short-term ISL programs are rising in popularity and must face an even greater challenge than semester long programs. Short-term programs must accomplish the same goals and meet the same challenges in two-three weeks. While it is not possible to achieve the exact same outcomes as semester-long programs, it is helpful for short-term ISL programs to view ISL as a “form of ecological engagement... that is enacted through participation with the lives and ‘worlds’ of those living in different countries, and which enables ethical reflection, enhances personal efficacy, and seeks to engender a more just and sustainable society” (Bamber & Pike, 2012, p. 536). While these goals are broad, they can be broken down into strategies that students can undertake both in the U.S. and while collaborating with an ISL community partner abroad.

Before departing for an ISL program, students can learn about the history, culture, politics, and economics of the country they will be learning in as well as the nature and purpose of service learning and how it relates to an academic project. Additionally, students should be equipped with ethnographic research skills to challenge their own intercultural competency and form deeper connections with their program hosts (Smith-Paríolá & Gòkè-Paríolá, 2006, p. 79). Ethnographic research skills also help avoid cultural misunderstandings about the goals of the program from the perspectives of the local community. For example, a study conducted by Potter and Monard (2001) at the University of Pittsburgh reveals how the words “ayni” and “ayllu” in Bolivia hold a deeper meaning than reciprocity and community; these indigenous words reinforce a community contract with their neighbors that has survived colonialism and continues to strengthen their indigenous ways of life and knowing (p. 5). Understanding the language, culture and meaning attached to these words is necessary to create change that will be supported by the community for years to come. Students can begin to understand linguistic culture by

conducting ethnographic research and learning from the community without inserting their personal cultural bias.

In country, students should simultaneously be working with a local community, conducting an academic project, and reflecting on their experience at least daily. This three-pronged approach additionally helps students leave their tourist gaze behind and examine the extent to which the projects they engage with build on local knowledge, involve local people in solving community problems, and the student's own place in solving the problem on a local and global scale (Prins & Webster, 2010, p. 11). Therefore, a holistic model is imperative to managing student's expectations in both short-term and semester-long ISL programs.

Whether an ISL program is short-term or semester-long, conscientious advising is a key component to ensuring a student is well prepared and achieving ISL learning outcomes. According to NAFSA (2013), Advising for ISL opportunities should be combined with presenting all types of abroad experiences and recognize that service work is not for everyone (p. 10, 13). Students who are not well prepared are likely to experience extreme culture shock, lack cross-cultural communication skills, and end up in situations they are uncomfortable with and unqualified for (NAFSA, 2013, p. 13). In the case of medical volunteers, students who are not properly advised and have expectations contradictorily to their skill level can unintentionally cause harm.

With a focus on health and healthcare, Child Family Health International (CFHI), an ISL provider, finds that many students who join their programs have the intention of saving the world (Schmidbauer, 2013, p. 28). To avoid the scenario of a helpful undergraduate inappropriately delivering a baby, suturing a wound and/or performing minor surgeries in developing countries, CFHI focuses their programs on learning instead of doing and ensures each student's expectations are aligned with the type of program they will be participating in (Schmidbauer, 2013, p. 28). After participating in an ISL program, students may find themselves transformed by their ISL experience and filled with new academic and professional desires. Therefore, ISL providers would be wise to reach out to the academic advising and career services offices on their campuses and form a close partnership that supports the students evolving needs to achieve their goals (Niehaus, 2012, p. 168). Integrated and continuous advising from multiple sources is the best model for managing students expectations and encouraging their academic, personal and professional growth prior to, during, and after they participate in an ISL program.

Conclusion

As a result of the research and writing process, I discovered several new takeaways. I learned that there are multiple layers of managing expectations of the key stakeholders involved in international service learning. As a global society we are eager to travel, learn and support distinct cultures, but issues of power, privilege, and a lack of cross-cultural knowledge are barriers to developing long-term connections and friendships. To meet these challenges, clear communication between ISL providers (organizations or higher education institutions), local community partners and students is vital. This communication must be approached from a position of mutual respect and mutual benefit with intentionality to sustainably and ethically build local and global change. Finally, the many ethical dilemmas of ISL can be overcome with cohesive pre-during-post programming that emphasizes cross-cultural differences and similarities, the importance of ethnographic research skills to understand the project from the perspective of the local community, as well as broader questions of diversity and social justice. Through this programming, students, ISL educators and community partners can have

transformative experiences and build on their intercultural sensitivity skills. Students in particular can become assets to local community partners, build their personal intercultural competence, join a community of global citizens, and shape the future of international service learning.

On a personal level, this research has helped me better understand my own ISL experiences and projects that were not quite ISL because of a lack of structure and intentionality. From these experiences, I am able to reflect on my own feelings of frustration and now realize that I was not fully understanding the problems from a local perspective. Also, by insisting on my version of right and wrong, I could not learn from the local community and understand the complexity of the situation. Taking courses that have forced me to examine the theories of culture, my own biases, and the various ways individuals think, reason, and relate to others has increased my awareness of self and society. Furthermore, conducting this research provided me with models of best practice and ideas for how I will implement the values of a culturally sensitive ISL project that manages the expectations of civic mindedness, community partners, and students in my professional life.

To that end, I am now more able to better understand my future position as a Field Staff Member in Costa Rica managing volunteers with a community development program. I will strive to build capacity with the local community and volunteers that includes the cultural heritage and strengths of the local culture. Finally, I will investigate and employ cross-cultural communication strategies in the new volunteer orientations, provide consistent coaching to the volunteers, follow-up communication with the stakeholders involved in the project, and everyday coordination with local community partners. It is my personal goal for everyone involved in the ISL project to see the problems on a local and global scale. This dual perspective will allow for compassionate interaction with the local community and generate momentum for global change. Overall, this research has increased my knowledge of the scope and potential for international service learning programs and I look forward to entering and exploring the field in the near future.

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