Rethinking Post-2015 Development
Conceptual and Policy Implications Beyond MDGs

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Globetrotting or Global Citizens?

Understanding Trends and Motivations for Participation in Learning/Volunteer Abroad Programs

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About my Research

• 2005 – pilot study
• 2007-2011 – funded research: interviews in Canada: 139 Canadians (longitudinal and return)
• And abroad: 181 interviews with participants from Peru, Guatemala, Jamaica, India, Malawi, Zambia and South Africa
• Co-investigator: Barbara Heron, many RAs
• Funded by the International Development Research Centre in Canada.
Research Outputs

• Collaboration with colleagues – panels
• *Globetrotting or Global Citizenship? Perils and Potential of International Experiential Learning* (ed. Tiessen and Huish)
• Several book chapters and journal articles, many public presentations
• Course development: Global Citizenship and International Experiential Learning
• Websites:
  - [http://cdnglobalcitizenship.wordpress.com/](http://cdnglobalcitizenship.wordpress.com/)
  - [http://cdnglobalcitizenship.weebly.com/open-access-publications.html](http://cdnglobalcitizenship.weebly.com/open-access-publications.html)
Globetrotting or Global Citizenship?

- Does international experiential learning (or learn/volunteer abroad) produce globetrotters or global citizens?
- How do we understand global citizenship?
- Thick/thin or Critical/Soft GC education?
- Racisms, oppression, (neo)colonialism, etc
- Narratives and making sense of how we represent the Global South
- Making the most out of these experiences
## Snapshot

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<tr>
<th>Trends among Canadian Youth</th>
<th>Host Country Participant Reflections</th>
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<td>1. Part of a growth industry</td>
<td>Practice should continue</td>
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<td>2. Shorter time frames</td>
<td>Minimum of 6 months</td>
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<td>3. Global South as a ‘cheaper’ option</td>
<td>Dumping ground versus credibility of donors</td>
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<td>4. Younger participants (15-17 years)</td>
<td>Time spent ‘caring for’ youth or ‘support’</td>
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<td>5. Increasingly personal motivations</td>
<td>Formerly political or solidarity-oriented motivations</td>
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<td>6. Voluntourism - Allure of adventure</td>
<td>Appreciation of the desire to travel so long as it does not interfere with work</td>
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Trend 1: Growth Industry

• From call to action to rite of passage
• 1.6 volunteer tourists per year (value of $2.2 billion USD) – (travelmole, Tourism and Research Marketing, 2008)
• Mintel (2008): expected value of volunteer abroad in 2010 of $35 billion USD
• Lough (2010): 1,032,780 reported volunteering abroad
• One program in Canada ‘Me to We’ sent 13,000 participants abroad in 2010
Trend 2: Shorter time frames

• 51% of the market spends one month or less abroad
• 6-12 month programs dropped from 10% to 33% of the market
• Lough (2010) 39% of volunteers spent less than one week abroad
• My study participants: short term was 2 weeks, long-term was 3-6 months
Trend 3: Global South

- Brookings (2008) survey of top 10 destinations:
  - Peru, Mexico, Kenya, India, Honduras, Ecuador, Brazil, Belize, Costa Rica and Sudan
- My study: majority travelled to Africa
Trend 4: Marketing to younger individuals (15 – 17 year olds)

- Increasing demand for Gap Year programs
- A range of highschool program options
Trend 5: Personal rather than Political

- A Guatemalan participant, Jose Miguel: volunteers come better prepared but for shorter periods of time and that their motivations have shifted and “Before, the motivations were political, now they are personal, institutional and cultural motivation.”
Trend 6: Voluntourism/Travel and Adventure

• Shopping for a country based on what you can ‘do’ there (anecdote)

• To what extent is the travel, tourism and adventure the primary motivation for going abroad?

• To what extent do places/adventures become trophies?
Learn/Volunteer Abroad Marketing

• “glossy posters depicting faraway locations urge students to spend a spring break, summer, semester, or year encountering new people, places, and languages in a destination of their choice” (Zemach-Bersin, 2009:303).
• in the United States, American undergraduates have unconsciously and consciously absorbed thousands of images and advertisements before they finally decide on their destination of choice.
Beneath these comments: a glimpse at entitlement and luxury

• namely feeling bored, isolated or stagnant as reasons for wanting to go abroad

• “I was feeling that I was probably in the same place for too long and I wanted to go to a completely different place that was very far away from where I was”.

• “I was kind of tired of being in school for a long time”

• a privileged act of leisure accorded to very few people in the world
Host Country Reflections on Travel and Adventure for Western volunteers

• **Positive**: volunteers as open-minded
• volunteers work hard and play hard
Considerations:

• These trends have implications for host partners and how we teach students and prepare the participants before going abroad
• A consumable product?
• Cultural capital that can be turned into economic capital (employment, social class)
• Neo-colonial experiences: re-creating the other in the images we consume and re-produce
• Expectations, entitlement, timing and inequality of opportunity
« Effective Practices » for International Volunteering

• The next step
• Best practices
• 12 countries 960 surveys, partnership development
• Development outcomes?
• Next: holding organizations accountable: code of conduct? Monitoring VSOs?
Thank you

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Globetrotting or Global Citizenship: Perils and Potential of International Experiential Learning
Rebecca Tiessen and Robert Huish (eds)
University of Toronto Press, 2014

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