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"The Popular Thing to Do" Examining Young Evangelicals' Motivations for Short-Term Mission Trips

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“The Popular Thing to Do”

Examining Young Evangelicals’ Motivations for Short-Term Mission Trips

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Abstract

Evangelical Christians are taking short-term mission trips in ever increasing numbers, with several billion dollars a year invested in these efforts. This thesis set out to understand if there was a gender difference in the motivations of young evangelical men and women, ages 14-25, who participate in short-term mission trips. Using historical perspectives on missions and functionalism, this thesis explores the motivations of recent short-term missionaries. I expected a large difference between the genders based on historical narratives of men and women missionaries, as well as my own experience in missions. However, after interviewing seventeen people, ten women and seven men, I discovered that men and women participated because of similar motivations, for example social and understanding motivations. Therefore, I argue in this paper that gender does not significantly impact motivations of evangelical Christian short-term missionaries, ages 14-25, because the qualitative data collected yielded nearly equal functional motivations for men and women. I also argue that short-term missions have several systemic issues that were revealed in studying the motivations; and that in order for these trips to be beneficial the systemic issues will need to be addressed. The thesis begins by examining historical motivations of women missionaries, and then summarizes functional theory to provide a platform for the research. The data collection methodology is described, and concerns that arose prior to the primary research are also discussed. The primary data analysis then reveals that both men and women participate in short-term mission trips for social relationships, desires to learn, and their moral convictions.

Table of Contents

Thesis Advisor Confirmation Form	2
Abstract	3
Introduction	5
Personal Perspectives	9
Literature Review	10
Short-Term Missions vs. Long-Term Missions	12
Historical Perspectives of Missions	14
Functional Motivational Theory	18
Values Functions	19
Understanding Functions	22
Enhancement Functions	23
Career Functions	25
Social Functions	26
Protective Functions	27
Methodology	28
Research Methods	28
Data Collection	29
Results	33
Social Functions	34
Understanding Functions	37
Value Functions	40
Career Functions	44
Protective Functions	45
Enhancement Functions	47
Other Findings	50
Conclusion	51
Appendix A: Interview Questions	55
Works Cited	57

Introduction

While walking through the airport during summer months, one often sees large groups of young adults traveling to under-resourced areas for short-term mission trips. These groups are often noticeable through their brightly colored team t-shirts, which they wear traveling to and from their destinations. Short-term mission trips have been an important part of my life. I have traveled repeatedly to Andros Island in the Bahamas; was a part of a three-women team providing oversight to a partnership between my home church and Tanzanian partners; and joined my family when I was much younger on a trip to Costa Rica. My own experiences motivated me to research short-term missions. I have seen the valuable work accomplished in these efforts, relieving suffering, providing spiritual direction, and substantively changing the direction of people's lives through the help they receive.

I was curious how gender affected short-term missions, as I had observed important differences in how men and women acted on these trips. I saw the importance of mission work, but also noticed how women were often placed in supportive roles, i.e. cooking, caring for the children, or supporting the programs, while men were leading the programs and serving in the main pastoral roles. I was curious to see what part gender played in the motivations of short-term missionaries. The group I participated with for several years in Andros Island experienced tensions within its leadership, who came from different doctrinal backgrounds and had different ideas on several things – most notably the role of women. The church that I traveled with empowers women in leadership roles, while the other churches can be very “complimentarian” - understanding the Bible to place certain limitations on the role of women. I wanted to evaluate whether or not my

experience was normative. Therefore, I decided to research what motivates young evangelicals to participate in short-term missions, expecting that insight could be gained about gender differences and systemic issues within short-term missions.

Short-term missionaries (also known as “short-termers”) participate in these trips for many reasons, and understanding these reasons is the primary goal of this paper. This thesis seeks to answer: *how does gender affect the motivations of young evangelical adults, age 14-25, to participate in short-term mission trips?* To begin, this paper will look at the term evangelical Christian, and then will address my own personal assumptions for this thesis based out of my experiences with short-term mission trips.

North America is filled with people of many religions, and each major faith group is comprised of many smaller branches. In general terms, the Christian faith has Protestant denominations, Catholic, and Orthodox groups. The evangelical branch of Christianity grew out of the Protestant reformation, and it generally upholds a conservative theological framework. Evangelicals believe that salvation is exclusively through Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross and his bodily resurrection three days later. Evangelicals hold that salvation is by faith and not through works or other factors. The term “Evangelical Christian” is not limited to those of a single denomination, because there are evangelicals in many denominations. I chose to focus on young evangelicals because I wanted to narrow my research field and because I grew up in an evangelical Christian community.

I speculated, based on my experiences, that gender distinctions would be noticeable in most aspects of short-term missions. I assumed that the answers from research interviews of short-term missionaries would be gendered. After reviewing

literature on motivational theory and the historical motives of women missionaries, I projected that women respondents would have stronger answers in the functional motivations, which center on relationships and personal growth. I based my assumption upon the historical motives of women to volunteer, which will be further discussed in the literature review. Women typically volunteered with other women in community-based settings, where they were socialized to be caring and empathetic.

Second, I assumed that men would display a stronger propensity toward the functional motivations that relate to personal achievement. In my own experience, I have witnessed men working primarily towards measurable goals. Societal understanding of masculinity is focused less on interpersonal relationships and more on success in the workplace and other spheres. During several mission trips, I have observed men who failed to engage in relationally significant ways with other team members, and instead focused on practical details such as solving transportation issues or repairing broken equipment. While visiting Andros Island in the Bahamas, I witnessed the gendered division of tasks: men were in charge of running the generator, taking out the trash, and handling all forms of logistics. The women were given tasks in the kitchen or to prepare the crafts for the vacation bible school we were running. In post-trip conversations with women who had traveled to Andros Island, I discovered that they did not seek these roles and were unhappy about the division. Eventually, several of the women who had gone multiple times, initiated a conversation with the leadership board about adjusting the division of roles.

Lastly, I projected functional values that related to a person's deepest convictions and those that related to near-term career advancement would be revealed in roughly

equal strength between men and women. I assumed that men and women would both have deeply cherished religious beliefs that would play a major role in their motivations to participate in these missions. Similarly, short-term mission experience is viewed favorably, and in some cases essential, for both men and women for admission to many evangelical colleges, or for those seeking a career in cross-cultural vocational ministry. These are common “next steps” for many short-term participants.

My primary research did not match my assumptions. Therefore, the thesis will argue that gender does not significantly impact motivations of evangelical Christian short-term missionaries, ages 14-25, because the qualitative data collected yielded nearly equal functional motivations for men and women. Young evangelical men and women participate in short-term missions for similar reasons. However, I also assert that, within several functional types of motivation, there are nuanced differences between men and women. I also argue short-term mission trips motivations are not informed by gender; however, sexism and other structural issues can exist within short-term mission projects. Therefore, by recognizing sexism and other systemic issues, short-term missions can be strengthened, as the team will be able to fully employ the strengths of those on the short-term mission trip. This paper will initially discuss my own motivations for this paper. Then it will examine functionalism and historical motives of missionaries, next it will move into the primary research section. Finally, it will conclude with a discussion of the implications for short-term missions going forward and how short-term mission trip’s organizers can take gender into account.

Personal Perspectives:

I must first address questions about the authenticity of my work and the perspectives from which I write. I am a middle class, white Christian woman. I attended many forms of school, including a year of homeschooling, a private evangelical school, and public schools in both wealthy and poor school districts. I completed my high school degree by taking classes exclusively at an extremely diverse and cosmopolitan community college. These experiences have allowed me to gain different perspectives on our global community. They provided a variety of insights, which impacted my own decisions to participate in short-term missions. Going to school in diverse populations allowed me to begin to experience other cultures, as I made friends with people who were grew up in other countries and cultures. My friendship with them provided a different education than the one I received in school. It helped me to better understand the world, which then made me want to participate in short-term missions. As previously mentioned, I have participated in a number of short-term mission trips. Each summer from 2009 until 2012, I went on trips lasting from 7-17 days in the Bahamas on Andros Island and also once to Tanzania. My experiences during these trips have inspired this research and have impelled me to evaluate best practices for trips of this kind.

I am a graduating senior from a private university, where I have studied social science. My undergraduate classes have provided a framework for the theory within this thesis. A combination of classes at Pace University and my own research have pushed me to understand how we can better organize and facilitate short-term mission trips, as well as what motivates young people to participate. Classes in gender and equality (such as Feminist Political Theory, The Girl Child Perspective, Introduction to Peace and

Justice Studies) helped me to understand how gender equality can be disregarded intentionally and unintentionally, and often for what was thought to be a higher purpose. Gender inequality occurred in many different spheres, whether it was historically during World War I when the women's suffragist movement was set aside for the cause of the war; or today, in different political contexts like in the military. In my own experience, I noted that gender played a part in how team members were recruited and deployed in my short-term mission trips. As previously mentioned, men assumed traditional roles of mechanical repair and logistics. Women worked primarily with children. My trips impressed me as being strongly gendered. Knowing that one person's experience may not be normative, I decided to research short-term missions and gender.

Literature Review

Over the past thirty years, young evangelicals have significantly increased their global travel for short-term missions. Research suggests that about 1.5 million American Christians travel a year for a short-term mission trips (Koll 93); this number is expected to grow (Howell "Evangelical" 236). Since the 1980s, short-term missions grew steadily, with some research suggesting a rise of 650% (Howell and Dorr 236). Priest estimates 2.7 billion dollars are spent annually ("10 Year"), while Ver Beek estimates closer to 4 billion, basing his figure on about a thousand dollars per person ("Short-term missions lecture"). Evangelical short-term mission trips are an expanding economy; and therefore, are worthy of an ethical and social analysis.

The increase in short-term missions during the 1980s and 1990s is now known as the era of "short-term mission boom" (Walling, Eriksson, Meese 153). Karla Koll

provides an explanation for the boom, “this new form of missionary involvement of churches in the United States emerges in a particular economic and political context. It expresses in a graphic way the asymmetry in access to power and resources between most Christians in North America” (93). She explains that many Americans have the money and freedom to travel freely, and that they give their resources, as well as their time. Andrew Root concludes that the growth is due to modernization and globalization, explaining that the ease of travel has allowed short-termers to travel relatively inexpensively all around the world (314). Short-term mission teams usually raise support for their trips, with participants sending out support letters to those in their church and community. While evaluation is outside the scope of this paper, many have questioned the ethics of investing in the high cost of the trips compared to other more direct investments in the global community.

Another factor in the growth of short-term missions, which Koll notes, is that short-term mission participation has become a requirement for post-secondary Christian education at Christian colleges, as well as a large part of church youth group activities (153). Short-term missions have become a central element in the spiritual journey of millions of American evangelical young men and women.

Several studies have been done to look at the effectiveness of short-term missions. They found that many short-term mission trips fall into several pitfalls that make them less effective than they could be. First, the “mission” is not well defined. The idea of mission work has been oversimplified from doing God’s work to doing good deeds of any kind (Simmelink). These projects fail to fully assess what the “doing good” is doing, whether it is making lasting change, is cost effective, etc. Short-termers serve when it is

best for their schedule, and they want to do it their way (Simmelink). Those who are being served should be part of the process and equal to those who are going to serve, thereby reducing negative power relations (Simmelink).

Second, short-term missions have often placed an emphasis on the “doing” aspect of doing good (Schwartz 29). While discussing negative experiences within short-term missions, Schwartz writes that people who are always doing are no longer “human beings” but are “human doings” – with a focus on a task rather than on the people being served (29). Finally and perhaps most significantly, short-term mission participants often receive very little training before leaving for the field. They often have no political, economic, or social understanding of the region they are working in (Howell “Mission to Nowhere” 211).

While much research has been conducted with regard to the effectiveness and long-term impact of these mission trips, little has been done on the motivations of the short-term missionaries (Linhart 452). This literature review will examine existing research on short-term missions and gender, with a particular emphasis on motivations for short-term missions. It includes research on the historical context of the mission movement, and the motivations of long-term missionaries. It also examines motivational theory with a particular emphasis on functionalism.

Short-Term Missions vs. Long-Term Missions

Historically, most long-term missionaries from North America are deployed via parachurch/denominational mission agencies – though larger contemporary churches are increasingly sending missionaries directly to global fields. In contrast, short-term

mission trips are organized and deployed from a larger spectrum of organizations (Friesen 2). Churches, youth groups, denominations, and mission agencies all extend short-term international mission opportunities to young people. Long-term missionaries typically receive extensive training before departing for the field. On the field, their focus is on those they serve. In contrast, many short-termers receive little or no training before they are deployed. Besides the actual work of the mission, mission organizers often have a corollary goal of equipping those traveling on the mission (Howell *Short-Term Missions* 73). Short-term missions offer many service opportunities to their participants: educational opportunities, health care, urban development, and children's programs (Howell *Short-Term Mission* 47).

Short-term mission trips usually last seven to ten days; however, some last for several months (Friesen 2). (For example, most of my trips lasted two weeks, while my sister served in New Zealand for four months.) Long-term or career missionaries have terms lasting from a few years to a lifetime. The overall process of becoming a short term mission participant is generally several months, in contrast to the several years it often takes to deploy a career missionary (Howell *Short-Term Missions* 9). Both short-term and long-term mission efforts have an evangelistic component; however, evangelism is not always the main focus. A majority of short-term and long-term mission projects involve service and caring for those in need, whether that is through education, medical support, and/ or material support (i.e. building infrastructure). The main differences to note between long-term missions and short-term mission trips are how much support is raised for the missionary, the length of time spent in the field, the amount of training before going, and the rigor of the application process.

Historical Perspectives of Missions

Western colonization opened up new geographies and allowed for easier travel between the colonies and “homeland” for residents of colonial nations. Service to God has always been a primary motivation for those who undertook global mission efforts. Unfortunately, religious faith was not the sole thing that they sought to impart. Western colonialism presumed that their societal norms and manners were the proper and only way to live, often deeming other forms of indigenous culture as backwards and incorrect. Therefore, missionaries were often employed in a role of colonization, and taught Western manners to local populations, with both men and women joining in these efforts (Rutherford 54). For example, missionaries were sent to teach behaviors that were deemed important to the colonial powers (often disregarding indigenous cultural norms), as well as to help govern townships, educate the children, help assist fellow missionaries, and provide religious insight (Rutherford 52).

Societal gender norms of the nineteenth dictated day-to-day life for the missionaries and encouraged separate spheres for men and women (Rutherford 51). For women, this division required being “moral guardians of society” in charge of the domestic sphere (Rutherford 51). Men were to be masculine leaders in charge of public affairs: including business, governing, and maintaining a patriarchal structure over society (Rutherford 50). The distinction in spheres between men and women led many of the early women mission societies to focus solely on women and children, leaving the rest of the mission work to the men (Dharmaraj 60). Men were considered to be the leaders, and women were not to get in the way. Women’s roles were to support the men,

which meant working with children and other women (Hoyle 1996). However, women were often able to break out of societal norms more easily in the mission field than back home, and they occasionally performed jobs that were considered more “masculine;” jobs like working outdoors, rowing boats to other tasks, and occasionally leading church meetings (Rutherford 54, 64). Observing vestiges of these historical distinctions in recent short-term missions could lead one to expect differences in functional motivations along gender lines. In my experience, that meant that girls were only occasionally allowed to help with mechanical repairs or logistical planning, and instead were assigned primarily to roles involving children.

Historically, many women accessed the mission field through their husbands; however, unmarried women were often welcomed to the field, though their access was far more limited (Rutherford 60). Traveling with a husband was deemed best, as women were seen as fragile and in need of a protector. Rutherford notes that some male leaders often requested single “refined” women to come and join in the field, as they were often more willing to perform the tasks at hand (60). These tasks included caring for children, secretarial work, hard cleaning, i.e. scrubbing floors and other laborious cleaning tasks, and sometimes medical-work (Rutherford 61). Rutherford writes, “scrubbing and cleaning children often ‘crawling (with) things’ were listed as tasks ‘servants or unrefined women’ would not perform” (60). These tasks were considered women’s work and it was assumed that women missionaries would be willing to do them, even if they had never performed them before because they saw the value of the work (Rutherford 61). The mission field opened roles and opportunities for women in ways they would never have experienced while at home during the nineteenth century. While roles in taking care of

children, light cleaning, and occasional medical work may have been available in their home countries, the mission field allowed them to have autonomy over their jobs and to take on other forms of leadership as well. Women would sometimes lead hospitals, run entire schools with over two hundred children, lead women's Bible studies, and engage in other forms of leadership (Rutherford 62).

Some bishops considered women to be more willing to answer to "higher claims;" and thus, "who, for Christ's sake, will undertake anything in the path of duty" (Rutherford 60-61). Answering higher claims for the sake of Christ meant getting physically dirty and working in sub-par standards (Rutherford 61). Cultural norms dictated that women should never be dirty, put themselves into dangerous situation, or do physically demanding work. As previously mentioned, women were seen as fragile and gentle; and yet, women were given these tasks because Western societal norms stated men were too important and had other work to do; therefore, women should complete these tasks (Rutherford 61).

While examining the historical motivations of long-term Pentecostal missions, Andrew Lord developed a highly structured understanding of missionary motivation, which he labeled, "the voluntary principle" (81). Lord defines the voluntary principle explaining, "the voluntary principle is that the Holy Spirit, working in hearts of individual believers, motivates the work of Christian mission" (83). Lord suggests three implications for the missionary movement in relation to the voluntary principle:

1. Mission is primarily motivated without reference to the church organizations, i.e. mission is primarily a 'bottom-up' not a 'top-down' activity;
2. Mission is the domain of every believer, i.e. not limited to a particular class of person e.g. clergy, religious;

3. Mission arises out of an experience of God, i.e. out of more than just human concern or cultural context. (83)

Lord's first and second principles view missions as available to everyone, and treat men and women as equals. He promotes an egalitarian approach, and not top-down leadership. Lord's third principle explains the religious piece of missions, separating it from other social movements (81). What Lord observed has parallels in the short-term missions movement of today, and led this author to expect that men and women would be motivated equally in those functional motivations that are derived from deeply held religious convictions. Both men and women could be motivated similarly to participate in a short-term mission trip because they are hoping for an experience of God or because they see serving or evangelism as roles for every believer.

Evangelical churches often organize missions in Lord's 'bottom-up' way, allowing for students and others who are not professional missionaries to serve the global community. Organizers require evangelical short-term missionaries to have a personal testimony, i.e. an experience of God in order to participate. Short-term missionaries' testimonies often include feeling a sense of call to the mission field. Historically, men and women were motivated to participate in missions because they felt they had a direct calling from God (Hoyle 1996). A direct calling from God often formed the foundation for another calling, which was to take care of the spiritual wellbeing of others (Hoyle 1996).

The twentieth century experienced many changes, which lead to new forms of missions. Long-term mission agencies developed new relationships with potential missionaries and many new organizations formed. The Methodist Board of Missions approved new mission projects for college students. Both Operation Mobilization (OM)

and Youth with a Mission (YWAM) were birthed and would later become key facilitators of the short-term mission movement. The Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (now known as The Mission Exchange), and a few others were also formed (Howell *Short-Term Missions*; Priest 1).

By mid-century, the short-term mission movement was unleashed out of another fresh wave of missionary activity. Beginning in the 1950s, the short-term mission movement began to take shape (Howell *Short-Term Missions* 75). The older missionary establishment generally had a positive view of the short-term programs, particularly when it led to pledges to do longer service afterwards. Howell illustrates this by citing Harold Ockenga, one of the founders of the National Association of Evangelicals. Ockenga saw short-termers as potential missionaries, but not as actual missionaries until they committed to a long-term process. He thought mission assignments should not have a time frame (Howell *Short-Term Mission* 76).

Functional Motivational Theory

Functionalism is the study of attitudes and motivations, noting why people do the same things for different reasons. Katz writes, “Stated simply, the functional approach is the attempt to understand the reasons people hold the attitudes they do” (170). Houle, Sagarin, and Kaplan explain, “a main premise of functionalist theorizing is that while different people can perform the same actions, these actions may serve different psychological functions for different individuals” (337).

Scholars have devised four categories to describe findings. Katz, for example, identifies adjustment, ego defensive, values expression, and knowledge categories (336).

Clary et al. built upon Katz and others by designing six functions used as tools to assess the motivations of volunteers, labeled the Volunteer Function Inventory or VFI (Clary 1516). Their efforts significantly inform this research on gender in short-term mission. Clary et al. grouped volunteer motivations into the following six categories: values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protective functions (1517-1518). In the remainder of the literature review, Clary et al.'s six motivation categories will be employed to examine historical motivations for missions; and thus, provide important context for evaluation of motivation in short-term missions.

Values Functions:

Clary et al. define values as the altruistic or humanitarian concern for others (1517). Values express one's moral background, and how these convictions are expressed in what a person actually chooses to do. Katz uses similar descriptions when he labels this function as the "values expression" function (174). For Clary and fellow authors, an example is, "I feel compassion for people in need" (1520). Deeply held faith-based convictions can be a value motivator and can also affect the other motivations. In the literature on short-term missions, one of the most consequential motivations described is a sense that one is called by God to go on the mission trip. Feeling a calling would be a deeply held value. Brian Howell describes the rhetoric of short-term missions as revolving primarily around a sense of call and sacrifice ("Mission to Nowhere" 206). Howell explains that feeling a sense of call is the "correct" response – meaning the response most mission leaders are expecting to hear - when an applicant is asked about his or her motivations on their application ("Mission to Nowhere" 206). A sense of being

called is generally rooted in altruistic motivations. It is founded on the assumption that the people who will be served by the mission need help as a result of physical or spiritual poverty.

One study on the motivations of volunteers by Thomas Fletcher and Debra Major used Clary's six motivations to study the implications of gender for short-term volunteer health care service providers. (These volunteers should not to be confused with faith-based medical missionary efforts, as these volunteers provided secular health care with the Red Cross or emergency service providers.) They discovered the students were primarily motivated by a value of compassion expressed as a desire to help others (Fletcher and Major 112).

Historically, women have been motivated to become missionaries because they had a desire to be used by God in other contexts, as there was little within ministry for them to do in their home areas (Hoyle 1996). Lydia Hoyle, a researcher on the history of missions, studied the motivation for single women going into missions from the U.S. during the nineteenth century (Hoyle 1996). Hoyle deduced several motivations by comparing letters written to mission agencies during the late nineteenth century from female applicants and letters from male missionaries already in the field. She noted that women wanted to help fulfill the mission of God and were not able to do so in their society, as it was considered men's role to lead organized religion (Hoyle 1996). Women who went to the mission field to escape their Western society's gender norms were often met in the field with the same or similar expectations. Today, we would label the arbitrary division of labor as sexism, where women are seen as fragile and unable to do

the same work as their male counterparts. Unfortunately, this division of labor can still be seen in some missions, where it is rooted in the historical continuities of sexism.

Values are often informed by religion and moral instruction. The Bible, as understood by most evangelicals, places a particular emphasis on the commandment from Jesus, known as *missio Dei*, which in Latin translates to the “mission of God” (George 286). Historically, *missio Dei*, which is also labeled the “Great Commission,” is often cited as a leading motivation for almost all missions within the Christian evangelical network (Howell *Short-Term Mission* 46, Hoyle 1996). Jesus’ command to evangelize all nations was embodied in the life story of the Apostle Paul, whose exploits are described in the New Testament book of Acts. His letters comprise much of the New Testament outside of the Gospels, the sacred histories of the life of Jesus.

The Apostle Paul is often viewed as the first Christian missionary – and he stated his desire to preach the gospel in areas where no other man had ever preached it (2 Corinthians 10:14-18). Jesus himself said the gospel was to be preached to the uttermost ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), to people of every nation and language group. (Luke 24:46-47, Matthew 28:19-20, etc.) It is not surprising that short-term missionaries are often motivated by a desire to share the message of Jesus with people in parts of the world where they assume residents have had little experience with the Gospel. Short-termers may discover that this is not always the case, as locals have often times had similar experiences with the gospel (Howell and Door 256).

The Bible also teaches the value of generosity. Some short-termers cite a motivation to share and bestow blessings on others, as short-termers have felt blessed in their own lives (Howell and Dorr 248). Short-termers seek to share what they have, as it

is something Jesus talked about often. (Mt. 6:3-4, Mt. 19:21, Mt. 25:31-40, Lk. 12:33-34) In seeking to be generous, one can give both time and monetary resources. Howell and Dorr emphasize the sharing of financial blessing, explaining that living out a life of Christian obedience and generous lifestyle is hard to do in an affluent North American context. Journeying abroad to an area of physical poverty can be transformative when an affluent person experiences poverty first hand (Howell and Dorr 249). Participants who reveal that they are motivated by the Great Commission, by a feeling of generosity, or by a desire to share the gospel are expressing values, because their actions are motivated by a religious conviction that is the embodiment of these values.

Understanding Functions:

Clary and Snyder explain that understanding grows when volunteers are able to learn more about the world around them through direct approaches (157). Other scholars, such as Katz, use similar terms to describe this motivation. Katz labels the understanding function as the knowledge function because the understanding function is formed out of the desire to gain more knowledge (175). Motivations and attitudes are driven by a desire to better understand and gain knowledge about the world (Katz 175). Understanding and knowledge are often viewed as a type of egotistical function because learning can increase the ego (Haefliger and Hug 5). The term egotistical is not used in this context negatively, but in the sense that it is a self-directed benefit rather than an other-centered positive result. Howell and Dorr interviewed travelers who were researching the suffering of fellow global citizens (252). It would seem likely that their primary goal may have

been to alleviate suffering in some way, but the motivation to learn is labeled as understanding or knowledge by experts in functional theory.

A related motivation for short-termers is the desire to gain fresh insights in order to grow into a better version of him or herself. These changes can include increased awareness of the world in general, and specifically learning about materialism, cultural expressions, and perspectives in international issues (Walling, Eriksson, and Meese 154). Short-termers who experience personal growth are motivated to return on subsequent trips. A related and often expressed reason for joining a short-term mission is the desire to travel and tour another country (Howell and Dorr 254). Root argues that the connections made globally through technology increase a desire to travel, which could motivate short-termers to participate in mission trips. When short-termers see the world represented online, they become motivated to learn if it is an accurate representation (Root 315). Part of understanding is informed by the desire to seek adventure and go to the “unknown.” Paralleling the growth of adventure tourism, many young people are looking for adventure in a place they have never visited.

Enhancement Functions:

While the previous motivation enables a person to learn in a cognitive sense, enhancement provides opportunity for individuals to grow as a person by developing psychologically (Clary and Snyder 157). Hug and Haefliger note, “the Enhancement motive is concerned with enhancing positive (unlike the protection motive) aspects of one’s personality. It is also considered an egotistical type of motive” (5). Enhancement

has both negative and positive connotations, as it is about self-enhancement – which can reflect personal growth or can be an expression of selfishness.

Historically, women have been motivated to mission work by the desire to express themselves in useful work (Hoyle 1996). Hoyle explains that society did not allow women to be useful outside of their home context, which was a source of dissatisfaction for many women (1996). Nineteenth-century women, in the Western world, were socially structured to run the family home and to form women's social organizations for social activities (Midgley 2005). Women were restricted as to how much they could do to help support missionaries in the field (Midgley 2005). Thus, women left home for foreign mission fields, in part, to be able to do things that fostered their personal and spiritual growth as individuals.

Today, short-termers often note similar motivations to enhance their life and walk with God, noting that they are hoping for renewal of faith and deeper spiritual connection to God (Howell and Dorr 249). Though similar to the value to serve God, this motivation is self-oriented rather than other-centered. Short-term mission trips are often seen as opportune experiences to encounter God, as well as foster a stronger faith (Linhart 454). In stepping outside of comfort zones and being hyper-alert to what is occurring, many short-termers sense a closeness to God as they depend on God more. While on short-term mission trips, many short-termers claim they are able to find meaning in life (Linhart 457). Often, this motivation is driven by the parents of short-termers who hope that by sending their son or daughter on the trip they will grow more in their faith. Howell argues that the best way to understand short-term missions, and the motive behind them, is to view the trips as a modern pilgrimage (*Short-Term Mission* 55). Pilgrims focus on the

journey and the process. They are not “escaping to Otherness,” like tourists, nor are they entirely settling in a land and becoming a full-time missionary (Howell *Short-Term Mission* 57). Howell’s premise is that many short termers are primarily motivated by their own spiritual growth, rather than by the change they can create in the lives of those with whom they work. Howell and Dorr cite short-termers description of their trips in terms of growth, journey, and hardship as evidence of the similarity to pilgrimage (245). Thus, short-termers could be motivated to participate in a mission trip because they seek a pilgrimage and want to grow. Short-term mission trips often have a profound impact on how a young person views himself or herself. These positive changes become a source of motivation for others to join subsequent trips.

Career Functions:

Volunteering can have a positive impact on a person’s vocational goals and can allow them to develop professional skills (Clary and Snyder 157). Career is sometimes related to knowledge seeking, as it provides opportunities to test out future vocations (Dávila and Díaz 84). During the nineteenth century, there were very few religious occupational roles available to women in American society (Hoyle 1996). Most evangelical churches espoused doctrines that considered women unfit to preach; and therefore, they were restricted to smaller roles within churches and even the mission field (Midgley 2005).

Contemporary research also reveals a desire for vocational clarity and advancement. Post-travel interviews found that students would often focus on how specific encounters on the trip impacted their life (Howell and Dorr 249). Short-termers

used these encounters to understand what God wanted them to do with their life (Linhart 452). Rolf Muuss explains this phenomenon as an “identity moratorium” -when a person is in a heightened state of emotion, and thus examines everything looking for values to call their own (Muuss 262). Linhart applies Muuss’ identity moratorium to short-term missions, stating the trip often becomes a process of self-examination. Short-termers, according to Linhart, explore every encounter as a means to understand their vocation or further a sense of calling (Linhart 454).

Social Function:

Volunteering provides the opportunity to share an experience with others, which allows relationships to grow and strengthen (Clary and Snyder 157). Smith et al., another functional theorist, labels this function as the social adjustive function. Smith’s social adjustive function is defined by positive social rewards for the participant (Clary et al. 1518). These rewards come in many forms: for some, it might mean seeking deeper friendships with other volunteers; while for others, it might occur at greater relational distance, such as being inspired by the testimonies of missionaries back from the field (Hoyle 1996). Hoyle describes how women were sometimes motivated by listening to testimonies and sermons from missionaries, as well as by being inspired by reading missionary biographies (1996). Likewise, short-termers often cite missionary testimonies or friends who participate in short-term missions as a motivation to go.

Contemporary youth ministries place a premium on relational connection among the participating students, and the continued growth of short-term mission trips arose, in part, by benefiting from these relationships. Root describes how North American Church

youth group culture has switched from attending summer camps together (in the 1970's), to rock and roll religious concerts (in the 1980's), and now to the short-term mission trip (315). For young adults growing up in the church, their youth group often times provides their strongest social support. Trinitapoli describes how identity formation begins during adolescence and religion can play a large part in that (122). He explains how a transcendent experience frequently occurs on short-term mission trip can have life-long impact (122). The combination of peer pressure to be involved in a mission trip along with the desire for shared experiences on the trip demonstrates the significant influence of social motivation. Since women historically did missions together, forming women's missionary societies and working together on foreign fields, I expected that this motivational factor would be prominent among women in the research because of how strong social motivations have been for women in the past.

Protective Function:

Caring for others, "may serve to reduce guilt over being more fortunate than others" (Clary 1518). Katz labels the protective function as "the ego-defensive function" stating that the ego defensive function allows a person to ignore basic truths about him or herself; and therefore, protect themselves from the realities of the world around them. Katz writes, "many of our attitudes have the function of defending our self-image" (172). A few women missionaries, during the nineteenth century, noted that they were motivated by guilt over how locals were treated by colonizing powers; and therefore, they desired to go and attempt to help make things better for local populations (Hoyle 1996).

Feeling guilty over the plight of others remains a motivation today. Globalization, including many technological advances, enables young people in the West today to be much more conscious of their connection to all of humanity, regardless of political or geographic borders. Howell and Dorr report that some trip participants report a sense of guilt when asked about their motivations. Participants felt guilt over not feeling more of a sense of conviction over their privileged status in life, honestly confessing that they had volunteered primarily in order to travel (Howell and Dorr 254). Guilt can be a strong motivation; Howell notes this and indicates that most short-term missionaries believe that a sense of conviction should be a motivation for young travelers.

Methodology

Research Methods

My research for this project commenced in fall 2013, when I began a two-semester process to write my thesis. With the help of my advisor, we read literature on gender and development, as well as Christianity and development, which lead to the draft research question. After additional research in short-term missions and gender, I settled on a question which evaluates how gender would affect the motivations of those participate in short-term missions. During my research process, I quickly discovered very little had been written on the motivations for short-term missions. In an effort to better understand this, I interviewed a family friend, Ellen Livingood who is the President of Catalyst Services. Catalyst Services is a global mission-consulting agency for churches and major mission organizations. She informed me that she knew of no one researching short-term missions and gender, but that she would be very interested if there were.

I decided a qualitative process would be best for my research, as time constraints would limit the number of participants (sample size) that I will be able to evaluate. Further, qualitative research would allow me to interview those who had participated in short-term missions in much greater depth. Interviews also allow for an analysis of motivations through the narrative that respondents use to describe how and why they participated.

Data Collection:

The data collection was accomplished by interviewing seventeen people about their motivations for a short-term mission trip. Eleven were women and seven were men. Interview candidates were selected through Bethany Community Church in Laurel, Maryland; Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, and Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. The survey respondents currently reside in many places, from New York City all the way to the Republic of the Congo. All of the respondents consider themselves evangelical Christians, and were between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five when they went on their first mission trip. The participants came from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds; therefore, different classes were represented within the answers.

I chose these respondents because I already had a personal relationship with them. Due to the time constraints of this research process, I decided that interviewing short-term mission participants I already knew would be best for this project. I recognize that in a larger scale research project, a random sample would be best. The existing relationships created an environment of trust for the interviews, which allowed the participants to

speaking in complete candor. I recognize that having a preexisting relationship could potentially skew the data, as they may not say exactly what they are feeling for fear of how I might react or because they thought I wanted to hear something specific. The relationships could have also affected the interviews as participants could have limited what they discussed if they felt that I (the interviewer) already knew about some aspect of their experience. This would limit the quality of the interview (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg 13). The objectivity of the interviews would then be in question. Also, having a pre-existing relationship could skew my analysis of answers, as my subjectivity could be questioned: Would the pre-existing relationship inform the way I questioned and then evaluated the answers given (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg 15)? Nonetheless, I decided that for my research, it would be best to interview those with whom I had a pre-existing relationship because doing so provided for efficiency in data gathering and also added relational depth and context for the interviews. At the beginning of each interview, I gave a brief summary of the work I was doing; and then informed the participants that they would remain anonymous, and could, therefore, speak freely. Each participant was briefed that though the interviewer might know what they were talking about, they should answer as though a third person were in the room with us who had not gone on the trip. While evaluating the responses, I did my best to objectively analyze the interviews and separate my relationship from the quotes that were used.

The interviews were conducted in person, on the telephone, via Skype, and a few were done via email, as the respondents were in areas with limited Internet access. Each participant was asked about their past experiences on mission trips; and, if they had been on multiple trips, about how their motivations had changed (see Appendix A for a list of

questions). The short-term mission trips varied in location, length, and purpose. A few places visited were: Kyrgyzstan, The Bahamas, Kosovo, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Zimbabwe, and Haiti. The questions were crafted around the six functional motivation types, and the interviews sought to determine which applied to each participant. If respondents had a lot to say in one area of the six functions, then the conversations would usually stay focused there for some time; and then touch upon the other functions briefly.

There are potential limitations within my sample including the relatively small size of the sample, variation of purpose within short-term mission trips, gender balance of participants, their socioeconomic political backgrounds, limitations with using friends (and whether their use raised ethical concerns), and lastly, how to question their motives without leading their answers. Initially, I was concerned about the sample size; however, the research for this project alleviated much of this concern. A smaller sample size allowed for deeper analysis of the group, including more thorough interviews. Making sure I had interviewees who had been on different trips was important. Though functionalism explains that people can do the same thing for different reasons, I wanted a wide spectrum of short-term mission trips because I felt that variation of data would allow for a broader understanding of short-term missions. I did not do an analysis of the socioeconomic class of the interviewees as I had participants from low-income families, middle-income families, and higher income families. All had raised support for their trips, though some funded parts of their trip. The socioeconomic and political class of the respondents might affect their answers; however, the consistency of responses would indicate that it is not a significant factor.

I am primarily concerned with the motivations of women for short-term mission trips because I am personally committed to seeing an expansion of roles for women in missions. I decided that the number of interviews should not be split fifty-fifty women-men, though it should be close. I decided closer to sixty-forty women-men would be better, as interviewing a few more women would provide more data on women's motivations. However, I was cautious to not have the split be much larger, as understanding men's motivations is informative to understanding women's motivations. I collected data in April 2014, over ten days. Data was then analyzed to determine what the primary motivations for female entering short-term missions were, and how they differed from their male counterparts. The process of analyzing the interviews was done over a period of one week by listening to audio recordings of the interviews, while looking at notes taken during the interviews and noting the overarching motivations in each interview. Specific quotes and examples were pulled out of each interview to illustrate the importance of a specific motivation to a participant.

I coded the responses by examining quotes and classifying them into one of the six volunteer functions; however, several quotes could be classified under more than one category. Using Clary, Katz, Smith and a few other functional scholars, I applied my understanding of the six functions to classify the quotes as follows: the value function forms from altruistic and moral behaviors, whether shaped from a childhood in a Christian household, or feeling a sense of call, or reading the Bible and understanding that it encourages missionary work. Understanding functions are motivations stemming from the desire to learn and educate oneself. Responses might include a desire to learn the language or to understand poverty better. Enhancement is

about enhancing one's life through the experience of the trip. It could be simply described as the bragging function. For participants in short term trips, it often centers on positive feelings the trip invokes, such as feeling needed while serving. Career functions center on the desire to set oneself up for vocational advancement and include evaluating whether a particular career field (such as being a long-term missionary) is a good fit. Career functions can be similar to understanding as they often provide training and new knowledge to the participant. Social functions were reflected in comments about relationships, including how others may have shaped the respondent's idea of participating in a short-term mission trip. For example, if one's best friend encouraged the person to go, or if hearing the testimony of a long-term missionary helped to inform a decision to participate. Finally, protective functions are about protecting ones' self-interests and ego. Though it would be easy to confuse protection as having the goal of protecting those who one is serving, it is based out of ego and is often reflected by feeling guilty for the life when compared to others. The next section will analyze the results of sifting the data generated by the interviews according to these six functions.

Results

Ten women and seven men were surveyed and the results refuted many of the original assumptions. The data collected was purely qualitative and is informed by the quality of answers and not by any numerical scale. The results revealed that both women and men are primarily motivated to participate in short term mission trips due to *social* and *understanding* functional motivations. *Values* was the next most discussed

motivation, and was highly significant to the survey candidates. *Career, protective* and *enhancement* were all motivators, but were much less important for participants.

Social Functions:

Social motivations were the leading motivation for women, and the second leading motivation for men. All ten women answered with significant answers regarding social functions and five out seven men answered with significant answers. The other two men had strong social motivations however; it was not their leading motivation.

Answers were generally centered on relationships with family and friends who encouraged them to participate. Some participants noted that, after going once on the trip, they would return because of the relationships they built with the people in the area they were serving. One of the most commonly mentioned motivations for both men and women was the desire to go because their friends either were going on the trip, had previously gone on the trip, or had gone on similar trips. As will be discussed in the conclusion, the desire for deeper relationships creates a positive opportunity for team development and also to direct this energy towards building lasting relationships cross-culturally with those being served.

One man noted that, though he was nervous at first, after hearing about his friend's trip, he decided he would go the following year. He said, "After hearing about the experiences they had, you are more willing to go and less scared about stuff. You know? Especially, when you are age sixteen" (Interview with Isaac¹). For Isaac, the experiences of those who had gone before had allowed him to imagine himself going and

¹ All names have been changed in order to anonymize the participants.

experiencing similar things. Before hearing their stories, he indicated he was nervous to go. Isaac also emphasized his age. It was significant because, for him at age sixteen, what his friends were doing and how he related to them was crucial. The same respondent later said, “I did it a lot for social reasons. At first, it was the popular thing to do. Once you reach a certain age, it was the thing you do, and I had a lot of friends going” (Interview with Isaac). Again, Isaac notes his age, and this time includes that “it was the thing you do” (Interview with Isaac).

Young adults face many pressures from their peers, and these pressures are not always negative. Short-term mission trips were important to Isaac and nearly all the other respondents because so many of their peers were going, and they were encouraged by their social influences to participate. Trinitapoli’s analysis of youth motivations describes how social pressures help to form their identities. Therefore, there is little surprise that social functions are a leading motivation, given their age, but what is striking is how important it was to participate in a short-term mission trip regardless of gender. Both men and women in an evangelical Christian setting where short-term missions is commonplace are likely to find social pressures to go, regardless of their socioeconomic class or gender.

The fact that short-term missions is a “popular thing to do” for young evangelical Christians was a common theme for both men and women. One woman also noted, “It just seemed like something people do” (Interview with Ann). Ann made a very similar statement to the one made by Isaac. Ann was in middle school when she participated in her first short-term mission trip, and grew up in a church where her older peers were going on short-term mission trips every summer. Ann’s parents had met while abroad as

missionaries. Ann reflected that her world saw going on a short-term mission trip as another function of growing up in a youth group. Similar to Ann, Emma went on her first mission trip because her youth group went every year. She says,

It was what our youth group did. We went to Andros Island and ran a Bible camp; and now, I could finally go with everyone and do it as well. In that sense, I was following the crowd- this is what the youth group did, and as a member, of course, I would go! (Interview with Emma)

Emma notes a concern for going because it was what people did. For her, it seemed like a negative reason to go on a mission trip. She later stated that she saw faith-based motivations as far better reasons to go. Social functions are strong in young adults, as friends and their peers often dictate their life. For Emma and Ann, this meant participating in short-term mission trips.

A few participants were influenced by social factors outside of their youth group. Some heard about short-term mission trip through their friends at school and decided to join. “Well, I definitely would not have gone if it was not for my good friends, as I would not have known about it. But then, they also talked about how much it had impacted their lives and I decided I could not pass up this opportunity” (Interview with Bethany). Bethany was a school friend with the girl she alludes to for more than five years before she went with her to Andros Island. The impact in the friend’s life was visible to Bethany; and therefore, she decided to go. Bethany’s relationship with her friends motivated her to go because it allowed her an opportunity she felt she could not miss. This reflects the historic trend of women missionaries participating because of testimonies of other missionaries and friends (Hoyle 1996).

For almost all of the respondents, short-term mission trips provide opportunities for the participants to deepen their relationships with existing friends on the trip and to

make new friends. They expressed a desire to create lasting relationships with those with whom they served. The strong influence of relationships, which is classified as the social motivation, was indistinguishable between women and men. It was extremely important to both.

Family social motivations were also popular themes in the responses. James went on his first mission trip to Guatemala in the tenth grade. He noted that his parents dragged him on his first trip, which he was later glad about. James continued to go on the same trip for the following two years. “The first time I didn’t want to go. My parents literally dragged me there. But after that, I went back two more times because I loved it” (Interview with James). Others got involved because their parents or siblings were going on the trip. “My dad is who got me into the trip. It was an entire family thing, except for my two youngest sisters who were age two and three” (Interview with Cami). Family relations and friend relations were important to both men and women.

Understanding Functions:

Understanding was a prominent motivation for both men and women. Men discussed it negligibly more frequently than women. For men, understanding was the leading function with six out of seven men giving significant answers; while for women, it was the second most popular function, with seven out of ten giving significant answers. Virtually all respondents noted a desire to better understand the culture, country, and/or the people. They expressed a desire for experience and adventure. One man stated, “It was an experience I had never had. And I wanted to learn more” (Interview with Zachary). Clary et al. describes understanding as chance for participants to gain new

skills and knowledge about different places (1518). Zachary is a prime example, noting that he wanted to learn more about Andros Island, as he knew very little about it before going. Respondents often noted that they knew next to nothing about the countries they were traveling to, prior to going the first time. When asked about how much they knew of the area, many answered they knew very little beyond a handful of very general things such as the language spoken or the dominant local religion. Most had some knowledge that the area they were serving was quite poor, and some knew only the predominant race of the country. One respondent said, “I knew nothing! Not a single thing!” (Interview with Cami). Cami was not alone in feeling that she knew very little about the area she was traveling too, with several others noting similar things. Cami’s comment exemplifies a systemic issue of many short-term missions, the lack of training about the areas short-termers are traveling to. Not having an understanding of the complex political and economic context on the field could significantly impair the volunteer’s ability to effectively serve. Howell and many other scholars emphasize the importance of investing time in the preparatory phase to develop understanding of the cultural context of those to be served (Howell “Mission to Nowhere” 211; Schwartz 32).

The desire to learn more about the areas she was serving in motivated her to go, as she wanted to understand the culture and lifestyle of the people of Andros. The same respondent noted that, after going back to Andros Island several times, she began to research the historical and political background of the Bahamas. Cami’s motivations continued to grow from a desire to better understand the context of where she served.

One woman noted, “I didn't know exactly what to expect. Other than the bugs. I expected to be pushed out of my comfort zone and do things I may not have been

comfortable with” (Interview with Jean). Jean’s desire to be taken out of her comfort zone is a common theme among short-term missionaries according to Howell and Dorr. Often times, stepping out of a comfort zone means stepping into the so called “unknown,” “foreign” or “exotic” culture and signifies a difference between the two places and people. It also can note an element of hardship, which provides new insights (Howell and Dorr 245).

Others also expressed a desire to learn about the cultures of their destinations, which they previously knew little about.

The first time I went, what really motivated me was experiencing a world outside of the world I already knew. And to experience what it would be like, first to see what it would be like to leave the country and second what a different lifestyle would be like. (Interview with Matthew)

Matthew noted that, for him, the prospect of experiencing something different than what he already knew is what motivated him to go see the unknown and experience a different style of living. Many respondents described a desire to better understand and explore cultures around the world.

The motivation to better understand the world is often formed by the U.S. centric news and media. One girl noted that the news does not begin to cover or explain what she saw.

You hear about things. You read about things in the news; but until you actually experience it, to see how poor and how these people have nothing. It really, like, opens your eyes and you feel for them and care for them so much more. (Interview with Bethany)

Bethany describes how short-term mission trips can be eye opening; and having her eyes open, allowed Bethany to grow in her empathy and understanding of their suffering.

Howell and Dorr note that this is common among short-termers. They explained that

short-termers often hope to experience suffering first hand (252). Bethany's account illustrates the empathy of suffering that Howell explains is considered an honorable thing by Christians, as the Bible emphasizes empathy and shared suffering.

Understanding is also reflected in the hope to develop skills that can be used in every-day life. Though this could be confused as an enhancement or a career function, the basis of understanding is learning and desire to know more. Career and enhancement focus on one's professional achievement and on one's view of self. One respondent desired to improve her Spanish skills, while others were hoping to learn how to share the gospel in everyday conversations. Melissa states, "I wanted to learn how to share the Word of God with ease in everyday conversations" (Interview with Melissa). While Melissa's sentiment grew from her values, her statement reflects an understanding functional motivation, as she desires to learn skills, which then allow her to live out her faith.

Values Functions:

Both men and women revealed values motives in a great many comments, and nearly equally across both genders in volume and the passion with which their values were shared. All ten women discussed values for a portion of their interview, and five out seven men discussed values in a meaningful way. Two stated it was hardly a factor at all. Nearly all described feeling called by God to participate, and indicated how their Christian background affected the values. They described responding to the Great Commission in the Bible (*missio Dei*), or cited other biblical references. Many women noted feeling a sense of call, though not all were entirely sure how to articulate the feeling. One responded:

I've always felt a tremendous peace with the decision. I don't know that I felt a specific calling for my first trip other than a deep longing to participate. The peace and definite positive decision came after the trip and the amazing experiences I had while there. (Interview with Melissa)

Melissa equated her peace to a confirmation of a calling, believing that God desired her to go on the short-term mission trip. She noted that she was originally supposed to go to the Philippines, but at the last minute it was switched to the Bahamas. Though the switch could have been emotionally difficult, Melissa noted that she still felt incredible peace to go on the trip - no matter where. She believed God could use her wherever she was sent. Others noted that the Bible was a clarifying tool to understand their calling from God to participate in a short-term mission trip or become a full-time missionary. Katherine had been on four short-term mission trips and who would later become a full-time missionary, stated:

The Bible was key to my understanding of what 'mission' was about- sharing the good news of the Gospel through sharing your life and serving. God used his word to teach me what that 'call' looks like. The Bible also gave me understanding that I was called to 'do mission' wherever I was; I didn't have to go overseas to a foreign land to become a missionary. Being a missionary, rather, is serving where God puts you. This is why some of my 'mission trips' were state side. (Interview with Katherine)

Katherine is referring to *missio Dei* and Jesus's Great Commission in Matthew, which she noted clarified her call. Katherine explained that life is a mission field - that no matter where she is or what her career is, she is always a missionary.

Howell and Dorr would categorize both of the women's responses as fitting into the frame of Christian obedience, fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) to go and make disciples of all nations (241). One nuance of gender difference in the interviews was that women shared that they felt called to participate, while the men more

often described their values in language suggesting it was more of a “good” thing to do - aligned with their beliefs.

Not all women noted a sense of call. Instead, a few described how their Christian upbringing and value system influenced their decision.

I grew up in a Christian home, so sharing the Word of God was always implanted into my mind. Since I was pretty nervous about going to do this, I kept reading my Bible to see all of the ways that Jesus served during his time on Earth. Thinking about how Jesus spent his time with the least, I knew that spending time with normal children couldn't be too hard. (Interview with Alex)

Another noted: “I grew up in a family where a personal relationship with Jesus was very important - as was telling other people about who Jesus is. This short-term mission trip provided the perfect outlet to do that. And play with a bunch of kids!” (Interview with Jean). Both Alex and Jean discussed how their upbringing in a Christian family emphasized sharing the Word of God with others. For Alex, her understanding of sharing her faith took many forms; and so, she was ok with being asked to work with children.

Men more often described how the Bible or growing up within a Christian household instilled missionary values, which motivated them to participate. “I grew up being taught to help other people and I was intrinsically motivated by a personal desire to help people in need. My parents set a strong example of providing assistance to people in our community in need” (Interview with Cody). Cody grew up in an evangelical Christian home; where his parents encouraged him serve in ways that help others. The values instilled in him as a child still reign true in his life, as he is now entering the workforce looking for jobs in in international humanitarian aid.

Other men noted how they initially participated in the trip for social or experience related motivations, but they continued to participate in short-term mission trips because they knew God was calling them to it. "I started going because I thought it would be a fun new opportunity, but I keep going because I know that we are doing some really great things for those communities, and that this is something that God really wants me to be doing" (Interview with Wesley). This quote is multi-faceted. Wesley begins by going for enhancement motivations, to enhance his life with fun new things; but he kept going because he recognized that it was something God expected and wanted him to do. Because of his religious values, Wesley was willing to continue serving God and the communities. Wesley did not say that he felt called to go, which was the same as all of the other men. Not one man noted that he felt a call from God to participate. In contrast, several women did say specifically that they felt called by God to go.

The difference here is another of the nuances of gender that the research revealed. Women frequently expressed the idea that they were called to go. In contrast, men felt it is important to go because of their Christian faith, but did not articulate this in the vocabulary of a call. When discussing a sense of call, respondents often meant that they believe God was calling them into ministry, specifically in these cases to the short-term mission field in order to fulfill Jesus' commandment to go make and disciples in all nations. The responses are gendered in that women have been socialized to express their feelings; and are, therefore, more willing to discuss their calling. Men have been socialized to not discuss their feelings. While this difference could arise simply because men do not feel called to go, I assert that it is more likely that men are less willing to discuss their feelings due to socialization. Further research needs to be done in this area.

The values function was important to both men and women, and is a crucial element to short-term missions. Without a spiritual emphasis, the short-term experience would not be a mission trip, but a volunteer trip. One thing that defines a short-term mission trip is the emphasis on Christ and obeying his command in the Great Commission.

Career Functions:

Surprisingly, very few respondents of either gender replied with answers related to the career function. Only a few noted that prior to their first mission trip, they thought they might become a missionary or that they were participating to see if they wanted to go into full time missions/ministry. Two women provided in-depth answers revolving around career functions, and only one man answered with career motivations. One woman described how, after attending a missions' conference, she felt called to go into full time ministry. She decided that her first step would be a short-term mission trip.

I made a commitment to set the plan in motion to pursue full time mission work, starting with going on a short-term mission project within the next year or two. After experiencing short-term projects, I would then consider committing long term to overseas mission work. (Interview with Katherine)

Katherine saw short-term missions as a preparatory step to a career in long-term missions. Her plan allowed for her to test and see if she was truly being called to vocational ministry. After participating in five short-term mission trips, she became a full-time missionary in Lebanon. More often, respondents indicated that they had considered missionary work, but were being called to other areas. Some commented that they had come to understand that mission work occurs anywhere; and therefore, one's neighborhood is as much of a mission field as Andros Island or Guatemala. "Missions

can occur anywhere. Once you realize how much people need help overseas, you start noticing it in your own backyard. For me, that meant Baltimore and Washington D.C.” (Interview with Isaac). Isaac had an eye-opening experience, like several others have noted above. Isaac was able to understand poverty for the first time by going on a short-term mission trip. It is not just overseas, but was also in his backyard. Going on a short-term mission trip helped Isaac to recognize the similarities between his hometown and where he was serving. He saw daily life as a form of mission work.

A career in mission work was not something most respondents wanted. However, living a life of mission was. Participating in short-term mission trips often develops a life of mission, as participants were taught, among many things, to share their faith openly. “I came back with a 15 year old heart full of Jesus and wanting to share Him with everyone I knew” (Interview with Melissa). Melissa’s experience with a short-term mission trip fulfilled her desire to become better at sharing the gospel and allowed her to see life as a mission field.

Protective Functions:

Not all motivations for serving others arise from altruistic impulses. Protective motivations come from an ego-based defense mechanism explains Katz. Clary et al. explains that protective functions center on protecting oneself from their ego and from internal/personal conflicts. Protective motivations, for both men and women, were revealed in the research interviews only through the undertones of their answers. Only one man and one woman gave in-depth answers, which centered on protective functions. Others revealed protective motivations by their answers, but never to the same degree as

the top three leading functions. Several respondents noted that, at the time of the trip, they were going through some difficult things. Going on the trip allowed them to escape their pressing problems and sort out answers away from societal pressures, while also feeling better about themselves. Though many alternatives exist for respondents to escape their problems, short-term mission trips provide a supportive social setting, and team leaders who can often provide personal counsel. Short-term mission trips also emphasize deepening relationships with God, which then allow participants to gain better perspective on their issues. Natalie expressed this sentiment:

I was more trying to figure out more about myself, in general. I was going through a lot of stuff back home. During my second year, I was going through more, with family issues and friends' issues. Going allowed me to grow in my faith. It brought me closer to the Lord. (Interview with Natalie)

Natalie was escaping from family and friend issues while participating in a short-term mission trip, which allowed her to protect and guard herself. Stepping out of the situation gave her clarity and provided fresh insight into the problems. It also gave her new depth in her relationship with Jesus. Other respondents indicated a desire to find themselves. "I was looking to have some fun, but of course it was also to have some eye opening experiences and to find where I belong and how I could help out" (Interview with Zachary). Others were motivated by the poverty of the area, stating that they would refuse to work in a wealthier area. "Oddly, since it is a poverty-ridden area, it motivated me. I feel as though I wouldn't go to a wealthy area to serve" (Interview with Jean). Jean is clearly serving with a particular personal benefit in view. She is giving to those who have greater needs than others because, for her, it is not as gratifying to give to those who have more. Katz would explain her answer by saying that she is giving to those who are truly

in need as a way to reduce the guilt that she might have been feeling about having so much (172).

Ego and expectations of short-term mission trips can be related, as some short-term missionaries expect to do a lot of good only to discover that their impact is not as large as they would have expected. One respondent explained she was disappointed by her trip:

I think I was actually disappointed at the time because when I was going I was expecting that I was going to help a lot of people and make a big difference. Kind of the general attitude that the organizer took was that they were trying to develop us; the volunteers, and I didn't like that too much. I thought, 'No! I am here to help people. Don't try and make me better.'
(Interview with Ann)

Ann was expecting to make a large difference, but instead discovered that the trip had a two-fold purpose: helping those they were there to serve and to develop the middle school students on the trip. Ann struggled with the idea of being made "better," as she expected that she was going to help suffering people, not be helped herself. Most short-term programs have a two-fold agenda to make some kind of faith-based impact on those being served, but also to shape the short-term missionaries themselves. Koll writes that short-term missions have a two-fold goal, of both transforming the lives of those who are being served and those who are serving (93). Ann was concerned with serving others on a large scale, and did not want to be helped - as she felt they needed help more. By her own admission, she limited her openness to learn and be changed.

Enhancement Functions:

Enhancement is the motivation to gain positive feelings from volunteering and is similar to protective functions, in that it can be ego based. The difference is that protective functions form out of negative feelings and motivations, whereas enhancement

motivations center on positive feelings and impact. Men and women's responses varied between ego-selfish motivations and holistic self-realization. Two women and three men answered with relatively strong statements about enhancement functions. Enhancement can be hard to discern, as it is often a very personal matter – and thus not openly shared. Interview questions asked about how their trip made the respondents feel, seeking to discover if the trip empowered them, resulted in a new sense of importance or in an increase in self-esteem. A few respondents noted that they felt purposeful and grown up, as they were given leadership responsibilities that they hadn't experienced elsewhere. These responsibilities included leading vacation bible schools and teaching kids only a few years younger than they were. One man stated that, "you feel good and kind of purposeful and that kind of stuff" (Interview with Isaac). It allowed him to see his life as having a larger purpose; and therefore, boosted his self-esteem. Isaac's responses about these positive feelings were one of the few enhancement functions directly mentioned by either men or women. Feeling purposeful, was noted by another man respondent who said,

I like to see the impact that I am having, I like to look at the end of the day and see what I accomplished. I especially like when it's for a bigger purpose than myself, when it's like, oh, ok, I accomplished this homework assignment, cool - it's for me, but when it's like look how I helped these people build and it's going to improve the quality of life and their community, it's a lot more meaningful. (Interview with James)

James needed the validation of seeing the impact he had. At the end of the day, James needed to see how he had helped to make things better. Like Isaac, James noted that he felt a larger sense of purpose on his short-term mission trip, and that he was empowered by the work he was doing. For men, purpose was the primary thing mentioned in this

motivational category. Women expressed somewhat similar motivations, but did not use similar language. One woman noted that participating made her feel grown up:

I think it made me feel grown up. I had been on a plane. I had been out of the country. I had seen more of the world, but then also I had a chance to teach and lead kids younger than me. It made me bolder when talking to people about the gospel or anything. I had to articulate why I would go. (Interview with Cami)

Cami felt empowered - but not through purpose - but through feeling grown up. She had experienced things that grownups dealt with. She managed and taught a group of children, and also was forced by circumstances to articulate her beliefs. The results reveal that women felt empowered, while men felt purposeful. This is another nuanced difference. Cami felt grown up after participating in a short-term mission trip, while James and a few other men noted that they had purpose. The difference between the two is gendered because the men did not note that they feel power, as it was something they already had on the trip. The women noted that they felt empowered and grown up as they were given leadership roles, much like women in the past who participated in mission work. Women were encouraged because they were allowed to accept leadership opportunities. Women did not comment that they felt purposeful - which could be because they felt a sense of call and already assumed that what they were doing had a divine purpose. A calling is another form of empowerment because no one can question whether God called you to do something except for God himself. Therefore, though women and men reveal enhancement motivations, there are slight differences in how men and women express their inclinations.

Other Findings:

Interestingly, no one noted the specifics of the particular culture where they had visited. Their answers could have been used to describe any mission trip. Howell, Friesen, and Koll, all note how often the location of the short-term mission trip does not matter to the participants. The focus is on doing. A problem with this phenomena is that the young missionaries tend to view all urban poor as the same as those they have met, having no understanding of the different causes for poverty (Howell "Mission to Nowhere" 206). Many of the respondents' answers could have been about other trips. A few of the respondents who went on the mission trip to Andros Island did note specific cultural practices that they found compelling. One man explained, "I think that definitely seeing the country was a big incentive. And I think that seeing the culture there was really interesting. The people there are very welcoming. I love the whole Island time thing" (Interview with Matthew). For Matthew, seeing Andros Island / the Bahamas was a huge motivation to go. Upon arriving, he found the culture to be quite interesting. Matthew also generalized his understanding of the Bahamas when he said that the people there are welcoming - as he only met a handful of the locals to Andros Island.

Other than noting "island time" and the laid-back lifestyle of island living, Matthew commented very little about cultural practices and differences. Matthew described Andros Island as having island time, which for him was great. However, by saying this, Matthew made a value judgment about how he saw time as less important to the locals; and therefore, nothing went according to schedule. His assumption of time is problematic because he was distancing himself (and American culture) by labeling Bahamian culture as having "island time." Matthew's lack of cultural understanding can

be partly explained by the lack of preparation that is typical of many short-term mission trips. Both men and women mentioned very little about preparation before leaving for the trip. Fundraising and other logistical items were mentioned, but discussions of history, culture, and other expectations were not discussed.

Conclusion

With the increasing number of short-term missions, more studies need to be done on the motivations of short-term missionaries, as well as gender differences within short-term missions in areas other than motivational theory. This paper sought to evaluate whether gender was a factor in the motivations of short-term mission participants. It argues that gender is not a factor, as the results revealed that both men and women participate equally due to the same three motivational categories: social, understanding, and values. Clary et al.'s motivational framework was used to codify motivational factors from respondent interviews, and these interviews revealed no significant differences in the motivations of men and women. Men and women answered with social, understanding, and values as their leading motivational types. Career, enhancement, and protection were far behind in the number of comments by the participants, as well as the passion with which they described them to the interviewer. In this study, only slight variations by gender were noted in the responses. For example, in the values functions, the interviews discovered that women often articulated a call into short-term mission work. Men decided it was a good thing to do because of their faith, and did not articulate a calling. In the responses coded as enhancement, men felt purposeful and women found a new source of power and maturity.

Systemic issues can exist within short-term missions, and several of these were reflected in the interviews with short-termers. For example, since motivations are not bound to gender, why are the duties on short-term mission trips often gender-specific? Perhaps, historical continuities of gender have been reinforced through conservative evangelical ministries, but further research is needed in this area. Ethical questions also arise given that many participants go primarily for social reasons. This is not an inherently unethical practice; however, short-term teams will need to put an emphasis on building relationships between those who are serving and those who are being served. Howell recommends a partnership approach to short-term missions between the young evangelicals and those who they are serving. He writes,

Would it not be desirable to build, at the congregational level, a partnership approach to short-term missions and to cultivate specific relationships over the long term, possibly involving exchanges in which leaders from partner congregations abroad could visit their counterparts on this continent to serve and learn in their own short-term mission experiences? (“Mission to Nowhere” 211)

Trips could be designed with advanced team-building and consistent follow-up to enhance friendship. Strategies can be adopted to build long-term relationships in the countries that are served. In addition to having a high regard for relationship building, encouraging participants to see their trips as opportunities to grow and learn is also important. Schwartz states, “Anyone promoting short-term mission projects should make it clear that those going to serve are learners” (31). Often times, short-term missionaries see their role as going to instruct and teach; and therefore, they are blind to the reality that they have much to learn – both in terms of preparation and from those they seek to serve. An attitude of shared discovery and learning can and should be created.

A multi-faceted approach will be needed to address the systemic issues within short-term missions. Leaders need to raise the bar for participants in terms of training requirements and on the ground performance. There needs to be more prep work done beforehand for students to understand the political and economic context where they will be serving. Reflexivity also needs to be taught to those who are going on short-term mission trips. Short-termers need to be aware of the implications their race, gender, class, nationality, and any other part of them that could create a power divide. Another aspect of preparation should be cultivating the participant's sense of calling and purpose, perhaps through building shared and deep understanding of the Biblical mandates that are relevant for short-term missions. Leaders can set high standards of performance that grow out of the participants desire to live out their values, which arise from taking their faith seriously.

Often times, scholars writing about short-term missions are asked if they are for or against short-term mission trips (Howell *Short-Term Missions* 44). Within the evangelical Christian community, members are starting to realize that there are systemic issues; however, they are asking the wrong question. It is not matter of whether one is for or against short-term missions, since the concept of mission is inherently a part of evangelical faith (regardless of the duration or location of missionary activity.) Instead, better questions can be asked about how to both establish and then follow best practices for these well-intentioned projects. As of this writing, important questions persist: How can short-term missions address the ethics of the money being spent, the sexism within the division of tasks, and other issues that arise. I have seen great benefits from short-term missions, and have been positively shaped by them. However, I recognize the way

they are being conducted is often deeply flawed. It is my hope that my efforts, and ongoing research by many others, will result in continual growth in the effectiveness of short-term missions.

Appendix A

Sample interview Questions

Background questions:

1. Please state your name and age:
2. How many STM trips have you participated in?
3. How old were you when you participated?
4. Where did you go?
5. What organization did you travel with?
6. What was the primary purpose of the trip?

Thinking back on the time before you went on your first short-term mission, can you tell me what things motivated you to volunteer?

Value Questions:

How did the bible shape your decision to go and participate?

How did you feel a sense of calling to go?

Social Questions:

Did you have good friends on trip with you? If so, how did having good friends on the team affect you to go?

Did you grow up around people who participated in short-term missions? How did their experience impact your decision?

Career Questions:

Before you left, did you have a sense that God might be calling you to be a vocational (full time) missionary?

What new skills were you hoping to learn or develop on the mission trip?

Understanding Questions:

How did your understanding of the area you were working in affect your decision to participate?

What new things did you expect to experience or learn on your trip?

Protective:

Was anything going on in your life that influenced your decision to participate?

Enhancement Questions:

How did your experience make you feel?

Did you have previous ministry experience that you enjoyed that influenced your decision to go?

Concluding Questions:

Can you tell me how your motivations have changed since your first mission trip?
Do you have anything else you want to say about short-term missions trips?

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