

It's Complicated: An Examination of the Relationship Between  
Short-Term Mission Research, Practice, and the Standards of Excellence

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**Abstract**

Short-term missions (STM) involved over 2 million Americans in 2016 at a cost of nearly \$2 billion (Perez, 2016). Despite the popularity of STMs in the U.S., STMs have received considerable criticism regarding the cost and the impact these trips have on both goers and receivers. The Standards of Excellence (SOE) in Short-Term Missions were developed in an attempt to regulate and define best practices in STMs. Since their inception in 2003, schools, churches, and mission agencies across the U.S. have joined the SOE with a promise to incorporate the SOE into STM practices. However, the standards are not consistently operationalized, which makes assessing the SOE across organizations difficult. This study operationalized four of the seven SOE and measured the practices of 10 schools, churches, and agencies. Participants represent various SOE affiliation levels: accredited members, associate members, and non-affiliates. Each participant was scored according to the operationalized SOE, and the results were compared according to SOE status and organization type. In this pilot study, SOE accredited members were reflected by the highest overall scores from the operationalized SOE, followed by associate members and non-affiliates. Within each standard, however, some variability arose. A similar pattern was seen when analyzing the results according to organization type, as agencies had the highest overall scores, but they did not have the highest scores within each standard. These results lead to specific descriptions of STM practices that combine research and the SOE effectively and might be applied to additional STM organizations.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

Short-term mission (STM) trips mobilize millions of American Christians each year (Perez, 2016) and arose from long-term mission organizations in the 1960s (Howell, 2012b). Since 1998, the number of STM participants has more than quadrupled to reach 2 million participants each year (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). As STMs have risen in popularity, their critiques have also grown. STM research offers a critical perspective on the expense associated with STMs, the lack of equal relationships between participants and hosts, and an ineffective focus on individual participant behavior change without a way to measure this change (Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Howell, 2012b; Linhart, 2010; Priest et al, 2006; Ver Beek, 2006). Although short in duration, STM practice includes a long list of critiques.

Despite these criticisms from missiologists, sociologists, and hosts and participants, STMs continue to grow in popularity. Redirected attention toward each critique of STMs might allow each of these critics to consider STMs in a new way. Because so many people participate in and are affected by STMs each year, these groups of critics could benefit from research that addresses the critiques surrounding STMs based on actual STM practice in schools churches, and organizations. Specifically, STM practitioners might use such research to shape how they manage STM trips. Furthermore, missiologists, who have cited a lack of evaluation surrounding STM as problematic, might use an established evaluative tool to further examine STM practice and offer new insights on how to construct a trip. In order for this tool to be developed, however, a common foundation for evaluation should be developed.

One response to the criticisms surrounding STMs and evaluation comes from the Standards of Excellence (SOE) in Short-Term Mission. The SOE offer guiding principles for STM practitioners to use throughout a STM, but their current structure does not align with available research or provide concrete, measurable descriptions of each standard. Operationalizing the standards and using them to examine STM practice serves as one way to evaluate STM practice and address the critiques.

### **Short-Term Mission Overview**

#### **History**

Short-term missions are a relatively new phenomenon in the modern church. The mission movement in the church began before STMs became popular. At its most basic level, missions began with the “go” element of the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham was told to leave his homeland to follow God. Beyond this dimension, he was also told to “go” in order to be a blessing to others. His mission could not be completed in the same geographic space as the blessing was established (Wright, 2006). Discipleship became significant in missions when Jesus delivered the Great Commission in Matthew 28. He told the disciples to go into all the world and make disciples, not just converts. Missions includes moving to a new geographical location, as seen in the case of Abraham, but it also contains the translation of the gospel into a new social setting (Howell, 2012b). Missions also features the goal of understanding a new culture and building relationships (Ver Beek, 2006; Livermore, 2013). For example, Paul traveled to Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome during his ministry (representing the physical aspects of mission) and commented on social practices such as circumcision, marriage, and divorce in the context of each specific church. The ideas of going and integrating into social practice were

continued into the rise of the modern idea of long-term mission, which is often tied to William Carey, dubbed the “father of modern missions” for his work in India in the late 1700s. Carey’s model of mission which included learning the local language, scripture translation, and cultural adaptation grew worldwide and led to the first World Missionary Conference in 1910 organized by Joseph Oldham. This event was the first time numerous protestant denominations gathered to coordinate global missions efforts (Howell, 2012b).

Around this same time missionaries who had a fixed term of service rather than a life-long commitment began to surface. The LDS church, Mennonites, and American Friends had fixed-term programs established for young adults by the 1920s. The United Methodist Church began a similar program for recent college graduates in 1929. These programs departed from Carey’s model of learning the language and the idea of a missionary call as necessary for service, and all of the programs had a humanitarian (service) focus rather than an evangelistic intent (Howell, 2012b).

The STM movement began to take shape and gain popularity with the rise of international, affordable air travel in the 1960s. As ease of travel rose, more and more young adults were traveling beyond the United States, and long-term mission agencies developed programs to use short-term service opportunities as a recruitment tool for future long-term missionaries. Africa Inland Mission (AIM) was one of the first organizations to do this. AIM utilized college students, grandmothers and doctors as “interesting short-termers” because they did not represent the type of person they usually recruited for long-term service (Howell, 2012b p. 76). The advantage of these short-term ventures, as presented by AIM, was that short-term service would be the start to long-term commitment. Despite the fact these opportunities were not yet widely accepted

as stand-alone service, John Gration, AIM's associate home director, was among the first to use the phrase "short-term mission." AIM's intent was to impact the short-term missionary as a way to induce life-long change (Howell, 2012b).

Critics of the short-term movement have existed since its rise and have consistently had the same concerns since the time AIM was developing its short-term program. As early as 1967, articles were published questioning how STMs would affect long-term funding for full-time missionaries, whether or not STMs would inhibit people from becoming long-term missionaries, and whether or not STMs were worth the cost (Howell, 2012b). Similar questions, especially regarding funding long-term missionaries and cost concerns, persist in the literature today (Ver Beek, 2006; Priest et al., 2006).

Near the same time as AIM's development, independent STM agencies were gaining momentum that would eventually challenge the recruitment ideas of AIM. Youth with a Mission (YWAM) and Operation Mobilization (OM) were founded in the late 1950s and were pioneers in the STM movement. Both advocated for short-term work done by young adults in foreign countries. When the Peace Corps was launched in 1960, these two organizations were seen as the Christian alternative. YWAM never had the intention of recruiting long-term missionaries and marketed itself as stand-alone, short-term service from the start. OM did present itself as a tool supporting long-term missionaries at the start, but their focus changed and marketing materials promoted short-term service. The work of YWAM and OM began to create the popular view about STMs today that STMs are legitimate, stand-alone mission activities (Howell, 2012b).

Aside from YWAM and OM, other groups were also arguing in favor of STMs. In 1967, Short Terms Abroad (STA), an organization designed to recruit personnel for

various missions agencies and distribute the volunteers to the appropriate organization, released a newsletter supporting STM recruitment. Each short-term recruit was seen as a potential long-term missionary, and STA personnel used short-termer testimonies to argue in support of STMs as being theologically appropriate. Even in this short-term focus, though, trips were measured in months rather than days or weeks which have come to be more common. STA did not embrace weeks-long trips or stand-alone opportunities until the 1990s (Howell, 2012b).

In the 1970s youth ministry and STMs developed together, and the movement initiated by YWAM gained traction. Laypeople and youth increasingly participated in STMs, and their participation led other youth to participate (Schreiter, 2015). Widespread participation in STMs led to the creation of the Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders conference in 1981. By the 1990s, short-termers were widely called missionaries, and journals with a long-term missionary focus such as *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* and *Mission Frontiers* began publishing more about short-term missions. By 2000 an editorial in an *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* issue solely devoted to STMs suggested that church leaders should “quit complaining and make yourself useful” regarding STM (Howell, 2012b, p. 115). Editors acknowledged that not all mission-minded people supported STMs, but they should accept the practice and adapt. These published arguments for acceptance aided the development of STMs at the agency and church-to-church level. When respected, scholarly publications discussed STMs in a positive light, the agencies and churches began the same practice (Howell, 2012b).

Formal research related to STMs did not begin until the 1980s, and even then, the scope of the research was limited until around 2000 when major publications began to

address the practice. Priest and Howell (2013) compared the history of tourism study and STM research. Early tourism research was published in the 1960s, but it did not become a large body of research until the 1980s. Similarly, there was a limited capacity of STM research in the 1980s, but it became a popular subject of research by the 2000s from sociologists, missiologists, and theologians. The early research about STMs was a populist phenomenon and emerged from grassroots sources before entering the academic arena. The research argued that STM research has followed the same development pattern as tourism, but STM research began 20 years after tourism. They believe the two will continue to develop along a similar trajectory (Priest & Howell, 2013).

Variability in what constitutes STM is a complicating factor in the research. Three different emphases or ways of defining STMs emerge in the literature: length of service, type of service, and motivation for participating. Length of service is one component of how these experiences are differentiated from other mission work, as short-term is central to the very name of STM. For example, Howell (2012b) defined STM as “intentionally limited, organized, cross-cultural mission efforts for a pre-determined length of time without participants making a residency-based commitment of more than two years” (p. 47). Some scholars argued all mission work lasting less than two years is short-term (Peterson, Aeschliman, & Sneed, 2003; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012), yet others included short-term to mean anything less than four years (Priest, Dischinger, Rasmussen & Brown, 2006).

Another way of conceiving STM is by the type of service being performed by participants. Research with U.S. megachurches revealed the most common activities for STM involve construction projects, working with children (particularly through VBS)

and evangelism (Howell 2012b). Most literature qualifies trips as either service- or evangelism-based. Few, however, use learning or even service-learning when defining STM, which is a critique levied by STM scholars (Livermore, 2013; Priest & Priest, 2008; Linhart, 2006; Howell & Dorr, 2007; Van Engen, 2000).

Other scholars focused on the motivation for serving. In the STM narrative, participants are frequently intentional about distancing the motivation for participating in STMs from tourism because tourism is perceived as being motivated by enjoyment, not service (Howell & Dorr, 2007; Howell, 2012b; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Howell, 2009). STM participants distance their service from pleasure travel, even in fundraising letters (Howell, 2012b; Howell & Dorr, 2007). These researchers observed there was an effort to ensure STMs were clearly delineated as having a different purpose than a self-focus.

Additional perspectives regarding STM motivation emerged in the research. For example, Peterson, Aeschliman, & Sneed (2003) defined STM as “God-commanded” (p. 110), and Offutt (2011) defined STM as any group of people traveling with religious motivation, (not just Christian, which includes Mormon mission year and Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca). “Voluntourism” includes the desire to serve outside of one’s own community as a motivation for traveling, but it does not include religious motivation (Kushner, 2016).

Although there is not a universal conceptualization of the motivation for STMs, STM researchers discussed how STMs advance the Kingdom of God in two dimensions: *missio ecclesiato* and *missio Dei*. *Missio ecclesiato* is God’s mission for the church. It is the call for *all* people to go into all the world making disciples (Friesen, 2004; Howell, 2012b; Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007). An example of STM fulfilling this call is Henderson’s

(2009) discipleship model of transformative learning because it is about making both goers and receivers better disciples.

Missio Dei, the second dimension, is God's mission of reconciliation for this entire creation that ends with complete restoration (Schreiter, 2015). Related to STM, the argument is that STM should be seen as part of the larger missio ecclesiato and the even larger missio Dei (Friesen, 2004; Howell, 2012b; Schreiter, 2015; Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007; Farrell, 2013).

Most Christians and STM participants would agree STM fulfills both calls, but applying these can be a difficult process. For example, the intentional distancing of STMs from tourism limits missio Dei because it isolates STMs from all of God's creation (Howell, 2012b). When STMs are considered as part of the larger missio Dei, all forms of STMs (service, evangelism, learning) can be seen as part of the mission of God, and all areas of life can become part of STM (Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007). In these perspectives, it is argued that even tourism is part of missio Dei and therefore can be part of STM. Beyond tourism and STM, holistically understanding fulfilling God's mission allows participants and scholars to view the STM movement at a Kingdom level.

Some theologians argued that the STM movement should be seen as more than just a theology of conversions or a theology of meeting physical needs (Sanchez, 2008; Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007). They argued that only by recognizing STMs as a cultural practice rather than a fleeting phenomenon would there be the potential for larger levels of change and redemption within the movement. Considering STMs as a long-term practice may lead to structural and institutional change that will better bring STMs into missio ecclesiato and missio Dei (Howell, 2012b).

The increased acceptance of STMs in the church and formal research publications such as *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (especially in the areas of youth ministry) was consistent with the growth of STM involvement (Priest & Howell, 2013). Corbett & Fikkert (2012) found that in 1989, 120,000 Americans participated in STM. Nine years later in 1998, the number rose to 450,000, and two years later, 1 million Americans participated in STMs. The number more than doubled in the next six years with 2.2 million traveling in 2006 alone, and 50 percent of those traveling spent two weeks or less serving in the mission field. Priest et al. (2006) estimated that at least 1.5 million of these individuals served internationally. Approximately a third of Christian teens in America participate in an international STM (Trinatopoli & Vaisey, 2009). A 2004 survey of 120 seminary students found that 62.5% of students had participated in an international mission trip, and 97.5% of those same students expected to participate in such a trip in the future (Priest et al, 2004).

In 2006, all of this international mission work came to an estimated cost of \$1.6 billion in the U.S. (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012), and a 2011 study estimated the cost of STMs rose to \$2.7 billion (Offutt, 2011). As one example of this, Uganda received short-term missionaries from the U.S. who raised more than \$5 million in 2016 alone (Riley, 2016). Although the number of participants and amount spent are much greater than those experienced by AIM in the 1960s, the number of long-term missionaries remains relatively unchanged, which illustrates a failure of STMs to connect with long-term missionary recruitment (Priest et al., 2006).

## **Critiques of the Impacts of STM**

### **Funding.**

STMs are now accepted as stand-alone, legitimate service, and the current trajectory of involvement indicates that trend will continue (Howell, 2012b). Although the short-term trips and long-term missionary involvement are not rising together as was hoped in the early stages of the STM movement, literature regarding STMs still connects the two in on-field partnership and long-term missionary service (Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007). Priest et al. (2006) studied the numbers of long-term missionaries, and, like other scholars, noted there has been no significant increase in the number of long-term missionaries since the rise in popularity of the STM movement. However, 50% of the STM participants surveyed for the study said they had at least some desire to be a long-term missionary. Priest et al. (2006) argued the main reason short-term participants do not enter long-term service is funding. They claimed that donors are more likely to make a one-time donation for a STM than a monthly or annual donation over a number of years. "Like shepherds introducing sheep onto pastures formerly grazed only by cows, [STM] introduced a new species that directly competes for the material support base of the older species" (Priest et al., 2006, p. 438). Short-term service is still linked to long-term missions, but instead of recruiting more long-term missionaries as originally intended (Howell, 2012b), STM funding appears to inhibit funding long-term service (Priest et al., 2006).

Are STM worth the cost given the lack of growth in long-term missionary commitments? There is no clear answer, and there are arguments for and against funding STMs. On one side, STM participants may increase their giving to partner organizations

as a result of their experience. In this way, STMs can be seen as a piece of a long-term, effective, fundraising campaign (Ver Beek, 2006; Zehner, 2013). There is no guarantee that this financial support continues for long-term funding, however. In a study looking at the donation history of participants who travelled to Honduras, Ver Beek (2006) found that 75% of the 162 participants did not send donations to CIDO (the host organization) after the trip. Priest et al. (2006) studied the giving habits of STM participants, and they discovered no correlation between STM participation and giving. Instead, the observed increase in giving was directly related to the age of the donor. The oldest participants in the study, age 33-37, gave over twice as much money to long-term partners than those age 28-32. Participants 18-27 gave less than half of that given by the 28-32-year-olds. The researchers attributed the difference in giving to the idea that the older participants had a more discretionary income and argued that STM involvement was not the reason they gave to long-term partners. 18-27 year-olds comprised the largest number of participants, demonstrating that the largest group of participants is giving the least to long-term missionaries. Perez (2016) serves as a missionary in Guatemala, and she encourages the STM participants she hosts to consider long-term giving but finds she is often the first person to suggest this.

Another critique of STM funding is the use of the money that is raised and spent. Van Engen (2000) discussed the problem of STM and long-term funding through her analysis of a team that visited Honduras while she lived there as a long-term missionary. The team raised \$25,000 to fly to Honduras to paint, clean, and play with children at an orphanage that has an annual budget of \$45,000. She discussed the possibility that the team's money could have been better used as a donation rather than STM, but she argued

that use of funds is more complex than a plain cost-benefit analysis. Ver Beek (2006) also addressed the cost-effectiveness problem in Honduras when comparing how homes were rebuilt following a hurricane. Churches and agencies sent 31 North American teams to Honduras, and each team paid an average of \$30,000/team to build homes. The homes cost approximately \$2,000 each. The organization that hosted the teams also utilized a plan for nationals to help build their own homes and pay back part or all of the home's cost. The same homes were built, but homes built by nationals cost the host organization \$2,000 while homes built by the teams involved raising \$30,000. The teams' \$30,000 donations could have built far more homes than they did while in Honduras.

Ver Beek (2006) and others suggest the value of STMs is more complex than monetary cost-benefit comparison (Van Engen, 2000; Livermore, 2013). Financial donations during STM is another relevant factor in the funding battle. Immediate giving on-field may make a significant impact for a one-time essential funding project or staff additions. For example, Wuthnow & Offutt (2008) argued that an immediate \$25,000 donation from North Americans serving in Peru employed out-of-work ministers and advanced the long-term mission in a way the local church could not have completed without outside support. The combination of financial resources of participants and the human resources of hosts can further the mission and possibly justify the high cost of STM (Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007). Available resources, financial and otherwise, contribute to the funding discussion in research.

### **Relationships.**

Another way to consider the value of STMs is through the relationships they establish. As described above, Ver Beek (2006) directly compared the efforts of North

American teams and a local long-term agency in Honduras after a hurricane. He studied the relationships between the two groups and the impact of the interaction. He found there were no significant spiritual differences between the two groups after homes were completed, and he suggested that there is a possibility for a neutral relationship between long- and short-term missions when completing the same projects. Additionally, recipients of homes from both groups were equally grateful to have their own homes. He argued his findings challenge the idea that STM groups negatively impact national families and increase their dependency or are the best way to aid a developing nation. However, there was no positive impact, either. Ver Beek (2006) argues it is a neutral interaction, which is another critique of STMs.

Ver Beek's (2006) interviews discovered that the Honduran communities felt North Americans had missed opportunities to develop strong relationships with the locals, although they did say they learned from the missionaries. In contrast, 92% of the North American participants claimed to have had "meaningful contact" with the Hondurans (p. 487). The results indicate the extreme difficulty of accurately measuring the interaction between short- and long-term mission efforts. Richardson (2008) defined meaningful contact as "contact through which students were able to hear who the community people were, how they got involved in the ministry the students were serving, and some story of how God was at work in their lives" (547). However, in his discussion of relationships between hosts and STM participants, Richardson does not offer a way to assess if "meaningful contact" occurred during a STM.

Howell (2012b) addressed the need to consider relationships with hosts as well but did not use the "meaningful contact" language. Howell discussed unequal social

relationships in STMs, especially between American missionaries and long-term indigenous workers, as a negative impact of STMs. Linhart (2006) argued the current majority structure of relationships in STM practice promotes a view of the poor wherein the poor lack personal agency and the hosts do not feel empowered enough to confront the harm they see happening. Howell & Dorr (2007) analyzed the language used by STM participants and found that participants viewed recipients as “shrines” where they should teach Western evangelical ideas (p. 237). In other cases, the pace of progress (constructing a house in a single week) in North America can alienate the hosts and increase their work load because it does not coincide with the hosts’ ideas of time because their culture is not as time-oriented (Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Van Engen, 2000; Perez, 2016; McGuinness, 2016).

A number of case studies address this critique and argue that fully empowered and equal relationships exist and make STMs worth the cost, time, and effort. For example, Slimbach (2008) argued that the solution for unequal relationships is mindfulness. His research in global studies found that mindful participants were aware of their motivation in relation to the long-term ministry goals along with the consequences of their actions in local partners’ lives. Mindful participants also experienced deeper relationships with hosts that were characterized by equality. Preist (2008) offered another perspective for equal interaction through the case study of three nurses’ on-going relationship with a South African ministry. The nurses utilized their community connections and raised thousands of dollars and gathered shoes, medical supplies, and education curriculum to distribute during annual trips. Local leaders determined how to best divide the supplies regionally according to need. Priest argued that the combination

of social networks in the United States and South Africa and the long-term commitment of both parties created relationships that “mutually benefit [goers] and the people they travel to serve” (p. 258).

These perspectives focus on what goers can do to promote equality, but others discuss the role of local leaders in promoting equal relationships (Offutt, 2011; Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Sook Park 2008; Wexler, 2016; McGuiness, 2016). For example, Zehner (2013) found that when Thai leaders were directly involved in planning the STM, they positively evaluated the experience working with a STM team and identified that friendships were established. A similar situation was seen by Farrell (2013) when he studied the long-term relationships between a Christian mission network and La Oroya, Peru. Over the course of more than 10 years, the Peruvian church and a church in Columbus, Ohio worked together to strengthen the town’s infrastructure and local church. Together, the two groups created a partnership that led to legislative changes that stopped further lead poisoning by a local factory. Farrell (2013) argued that their perceived equal relationship made the changes possible.

Not all scholars agree, though, that fully empowered and equal relationships should be a goal of STM. Moodie (2013) studied the long-term relationship between sister communities in El Salvador and Illinois, and through extensive interviews she concluded the relationship was only effective because of an imbalance in power. Without disparities in the agency of each community, a relationship is not possible long-term. She argued that the relationship would not exist without difference, so eliminating inequality ends the relationship. The differences are “necessary” for the relationship in this perspective (p. 150).

It has been demonstrated that not all relationships between STM participants and hosts are positive (Ver Beek, 2006; Van Engen, 2000; Howell, 2012b), but little research has been conducted to consider the effects of negative relationships over time. Dennison & Akin (2011) are an exception in the field. These scholars studied recipient culture in Uganda and the economic, spiritual, and psychological consequences of STMs. The Ugandans they studied have participated in non-reciprocal relationships for so long that the locals do not see themselves with any power. Instead, they see themselves as helpless and waiting for the generosity of the world. The authors argued that in the same way it took years for this mentality to shape, it will take time and great effort and consideration to change it. Dennison & Akin (2011) suggested asset-based evaluations of the recipient community. The best ways to advance equality and change in the inequalities they observed was to identify the skills and talents of the Ugandan community and utilize those in programming to develop opportunities for the recipient community.

A dimension of the research and analysis related to equality and empowered relationships includes discussion of how money should be used in an equal relationship, and arguments are made to support both sending teams and sending money. Ver Beek (2006) found the Honduran community members, as well as five of the six local organizations at work with the North American teams, said it would have been better to just send money. However, the Hondurans thought their answer would have been different had the Americans developed better relationships with them. Community members said they were still willing to welcome teams if the teams came with the intent to build relationships, experience an outlook shift, and build lasting bridges of support for the local community. Slimbach (2008) reinforced these ideas in his research regarding

mindfulness. Another example comes from Offutt (2011), who found similar results in his interviews with church and NGO leaders in El Salvador and South Africa, the overwhelming majority of whom welcomed STMs despite the extra work and potential harm because of the relationship potential.

### **STM trip design.**

Relationship development involves the way the trip is designed as well as how participants interact with the local community. Trip design includes planning travel logistics, ministry specifics, and training for participants. After the trip design is complete, an itinerary for the STM from application to post-trip follow-through should be complete. Mutual design includes input from both the STM team leader and local host, combining relationships with logistics planning. Without an awareness of the power structures at work, mutual design is difficult (Schreiter, 2015). Ver Beek (2006) argued that the trip design determines whether or not participants experience an outlook shift as a result of the STM.

Trip design is affected by the STM's purpose. One way to consider trip design is through the objective of discipleship. For example, a structural perspective developed by Henderson (2009) is intended to create transformational learning for participants through continual debriefing. Henderson argued that pre-trip preparation, on-field debriefing, and post-trip follow-up should include similar themes in order to create an ongoing narrative for the STM. Friesen (2004), Arroyo Bahamonde (2007), and Priest & Priest (2008) echoed the idea of considering STM as discipleship. Each argued that decisions should include the local host in order to develop equality. Theologian and host pastor Arroyo Bahamonde (2007) has been treated as a subordinate in the planning phase by teams he

has hosted. He argued that the story of host-recipient interaction “is a story that needs to be reviewed with both gratitude and honesty, for the purpose of returning to the local church its responsibility and leadership role in mission” (232). Cooperation with an established, local partner should be the foundation in trip design (Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Priest & Priest, 2008). According to Arroyo Bahamonde (2007), cooperative design includes dialogue about the trip’s purpose, talents of participants, and a deep connection to missional theology, including *missio ecclesiata* and *missio Dei*. When local hosts and trip leaders can clearly articulate ministry goals and how short-term efforts align with long-term ministry, STMs are more likely to create long-term ministerial impact (Ver Beek, 2008; Sook Park, 2008).

Henderson’s (2009) emphasis on discipleship and cooperation are not seen as stand-alone structures for proper STM purposes (U.S. Standards, 2003; Slimbach, 2000). Seeing discipleship as an objective for STMs was not directly criticized, but Slimbach (2000) did critique the implementation of it he observed. He argued that the design itself can make or break a trip according to the size of the group, length of time spent serving, pre-departure preparation, and field residence, not just whether or not discipleship influenced the design.

Pre-trip preparation is mentioned by several scholars (Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007; Henderson, 2009; Slimbach, 2008), and Howell (2009) argued that all preparation is not equal. According to Howell, most popular preparation curriculum is not place-specific, and it does connect participant experience with the local context. A frequent solution to the problem of contextualization is to incorporate local history, politics, and literature of the culture in training alongside local work to better understand the many dimensions of

culture (Livermore, 2013; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Priest et al., 2006; Van Engen, 2000; Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007; Perez, 2016). When hosts' design involvement includes training and place-specific instruction, individuals are able to become aware of the specific situation they are about to encounter, and this has been demonstrated to lead to a meaningful connection with the host community (Farrell, 2013).

Arroyo Bahamonde (2007) documented the design process he experienced as a pastor in Peru when hosting STM teams. He operationalized the design process according to horizontal cooperation, an idea that describes equality in implementing a ministry plan. For example, he argued that when someone from the local church directs or co-directs each project, both participants and hosts are trained and debriefed simultaneously, extensive curriculum regarding social, political, and economic information about the specific location is provided, and each project is documented and reviewed in the long-term ministry plan, horizontal cooperation is demonstrated.

Cook & Van Hoogen (2007), have both spent time as hosts for STMs, and they presented another design model. Their research utilized Church Partnership Evangelism as a case study for mutual design in STMs. According to their experience, mutual design begins with prayer by the hosts for a team to come and intercessory prayer while the team is training. Once the team arrives, daily training and debriefing includes both hosts and trip participants and is focused on how to evangelize and disciple during a STM in a way that supports long-term ministry goals and long-term partnerships with the hosts and local community. This entire process should be facilitated by the local host.

The link to long-term goals is seen in additional research. Linking the short-term vision to the long-term ministry goals of the local church through discussion with local

leaders is a sign that mutual design is happening at some level. For example, Zehner (2013) found through extensive interviews with hosts in Thailand that neither evangelism nor church planting can be done only through short-term efforts. Instead, short-term teams can be used as an “exotic other” designed to increase local interest in the church that the local leaders can develop long after the team leaves (135). Using STM participants as “bait” can be part of the larger ministry goals of the local church if the church has a plan for retaining new relationships established through the efforts of the STM (Priest & Priest, 2008). Using STMs as one part of a larger marketing strategy can lead to mutually designed STMs and empowered relationships on-field (Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007).

### **Individual Experience**

#### **Training and preparation.**

After a trip has been designed, participants begin preparation and training. Various preparation curriculums are identified in the available literature. One training idea is rooted in cultural intelligence (CQ) (Livermore, 2013). Livermore developed CQ as a response to the inadequate cross-cultural preparation he observed. CQ measures drive, knowledge, strategy, and action, and he argued high levels of each will more likely lead to a successful, learning-filled STM experience. Each CQ capability is related to the others, and a high CQ in one area does not ensure holistic success during a STM. Instead, Livermore (2013) emphasized the importance of training participants in each of the areas and suggested ways to incorporate each of the capabilities into training and on-the-field times.

CQ drive measures a participant's interest in and motivation for adapting to another culture. It is most commonly seen among those who see immersion in local culture as important to learning and serving. CQ knowledge involves reading and studying about the differences between cultures and encourages participants to become acquainted with these differences before leaving their own culture. Additional research provides evidence that corroborates Livermore's ideas about CQ. For example, Linhart (2006) noticed how students lacked the proper CQ knowledge about taking pictures during the STM. In their own culture, students would not have been comfortable with a stranger taking a picture without their permission. They did not translate this idea to the specific culture and took pictures without asking permission. The participants isolated the STM experience from the larger culture and were unable to connect home culture to local culture (Perez, 2016). Mindfulness is a central tenet in CQ strategy. It measures the ability to plan for difficulties in cross-cultural interaction and is directly connected to knowledge and observation. Slimbach (2008) used CQ strategy when he presents his idea of a "mindful missionary," which is characterized by high levels of self-awareness and an understanding of how their actions affect others (p. 154). Finally, CQ action is the willingness to change personal actions in cross-cultural encounters through humility and openness to others' ideas. Livermore (2013) argued that CQ instruction should be the foundation of STM training.

Livermore (2013) presented concrete training tips that were tied to trip design. He argued that the objective should be the first thing discussed for a STM, and training should discuss how that objective will be met. He also said training should include practicing whatever ministry a team will complete abroad while they are still at home.

For example, if a team is going to teach English, training should include teaching an English as a second language course at home. Livermore (2013) did not advocate for a specific number of meetings, but he did claim multiple training sessions are necessary to learn what CQ is, measure current levels, and educate participants in order to increase their CQ levels.

Ver Beek (2006) and Van Engen (2000) also discussed preparation in structuring a trip. They argued preparation should address the purpose of the trip established during the design along with addressing each individual's motivation for participating. Ver Beek (2006) found in his study of several teams in Honduras that lasting change in participants increased as the amount of pre-trip preparation increased. In his study, the participants who reported they learned "a lot" during training demonstrated "significantly higher" life change scores than the rest of the team (p. 488).

Generic and specific curriculums have been developed by various organizations and are available for use by STM leaders and teams. One such organization is CULTURELink, an organization focused on education, equipping, and exposure. CULTURELink offers regular seminars for both short- and long-term missionaries through a standard curriculum. Their sole purpose is preparing churches, agencies and teams for effective cross-cultural interaction. Although they do not use the CQ language, similar themes exist. For example, CULTURELink's 10 training session curriculum includes conducting specific culture research (CQ knowledge), how to adapt in cross-cultural experiences (CQ action) and practical practice for adapting in simulated experiences (CQ strategy) (CULTURELink, 2016). Such curriculums are an available resource for STM leaders.

Many preparation curriculums are not the work of missiologists, and even seminary STM trips often lack a research-based preparation (Priest et al., 2006). Priest & Priest (2008) sought to fill this gap through their preparation research. After surveying over 5,000 participants, they found that appropriate training for an STM should include research about the local culture, required informational sessions/classes, studying the work of missiologists, leader training as well as participant training, curriculum derived from the work of scholars rather than laypeople, and discussion about how this training relates to everyday life, not just the STM experience. The authors argued that this training, paired with the actual STM experience, creates a learning-based, effective STM for participants and hosts. Sook Park (2008) found curriculums designed by missiologists were the most effective in decreasing paternalistic ideas among STM participants. Pairing academic perspective with real-life experience was shown to make a lasting, positive impact for individual participants. Place-specific cultural orientation along with domestic, local service prior to a STM greatly increased the benefits during the STM for both goers and hosts (Slimbach, 2008). Furthermore, on-going local service can be a useful tool to link pre-trip training with post-trip experience (Perez, 2016).

Terry (2004) studied the effectiveness of mid-term missionaries (three months of service) according to STM elements that could be measured and identified the preparation topics that led to the most effective ministry according to the long-term ministry goals. He created eight operational statements defining success in ministry and preparation and sent surveys using the statements to midtermers, career missionaries and national Christians. After three quantitative analyses of the combined surveys, he found language ability, religious climate, cultural adaptation of the midterms, understanding of

the assignment, and capacity for interpersonal relationships were significantly related to the success of the missionary on the STM. Terry (2004) argued that these topics should be included in training and incorporated into the design of the entire trip if the STM is to be successful. Research findings support that preparation should include language training (CQ knowledge), individual and long-term goal identification (CQ strategy), and spiritual preparation (CQ drive) designed in a partnership between the STM leader and local host (Terry, 2004; Preist & Priest, 2008; Slimbach, 2008; Richardson, 2008).

### **Post-trip experience.**

Just as research links preparation to effectiveness on-field, follow-through is related to individual impact on the trip participants. Individual impact is how a participant is changed as a result of a STM. Discussion about impact involves how long a change lasts after a STM experience, if any change is seen at all (Schreiter, 2015; Linhart, 2006; Ver Beek, 2006; Ver Beek, 2008; Trinitapoli & Vaisey, 2009). Van Engen (2000) argued that lasting, individual impact justifies the expense of a STM and defended individual impact as a motivation for participating. In her perspective, the trip should then be structured to identify ways participants are changed and develop those changes after the STM. One way participants do not abandon change is by having through follow-through.

Follow-through builds on the ideas presented in training and experienced by the participants on-field. In follow-through, ideas discussed throughout the entire trip process are consistent (U.S. Standards, 2003; Henderson, 2009). It is a continuation of the trip, not a follow-up where pictures are shared without intentional conversation (Livermore, 2013). Schreiter (2015) and Linhart (2006) found through a series of interviews and surveys that post-trip follow-through linked to pre-trip discussion ensured empowering

partnerships between hosts and participants and lasting impact on the participants.

Linhart (2010) assessed STM as a form of experiential learning. When he analyzed STMs under a particular education model, lasting impact was not found among participants unless reflection included debriefing specific experiences, support from teammates, and feedback. In his surveys and interviews, he found students who had experienced this type of debrief had noticeably different behaviors seven years after the STM experience than participants who did not. When InterVarsity developed a follow-up structure for students after a spring break STM that included large-group meetings and on-going local service for its STM programs, students experienced changes in their attitudes and perspectives that were still measurable six months after the trip (Richardson, 2008). Follow-through may begin during the trip through on-the-field debriefing, which creates space for reflection. When international STM participants in Peru joined local youth groups in Peru for contextualization and reflection, a mutual understanding of mission was developed. When the two groups debriefed together, U.S. participants experienced more lasting reflection sessions (Ferrell, 2013).

Cook & Van Hoogen (2007) advocated in favor of the use of modern technology in follow-through whereby each sending church establishes an infrastructure that encourages long-term relationship with hosts beyond the return to North America. Churches, both sending and hosting, should engage in an “ongoing process of communication” during follow-through that may utilize tools such as Skype or video chat to maintain relationships (p. 59).

**Encountering poverty.**

Within the models of STM and the various preparation and follow-up ideas, the theme of how poverty is understood is frequently seen in research (Howell, 2012b; Howell and Dorr, 2007; Corbett and Fikkert, 2012; Ver Beek, 2006; Trinitapoli & Vaisey, 2009). Increased awareness does not directly lead to increased understanding, however. Nearly every STM participant discusses how they encountered poverty and the way their understanding of it changed because of their STM experience, and interacting with people in different socio-economic standing has become an expectation of STMs (Howell and Dorr, 2007; Sanchez, 2008). The expectation to interact with the poor is part of the larger trend among North American Christians to be more aware of the existence of poverty (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012).

Encountering poverty is embedded in the narrative of STMs for both third- and first-world nation trips. Howell (2009) saw this understanding in several teams he studied. The poverty in wealthier nations was framed as spiritual rather than material poverty, but poverty nonetheless. This framed every STM as a trip based on plight and need, making each trip too similar and erasing the significant differences between each context and culture. If each culture is defined by poverty, then place-specific preparation is not part of the appropriate training (Howell, 2009).

Poverty expectation as linked to global awareness was also seen by Ver Beek (2006). He found the two themes most discussed by STM participants in his study were poverty/wealth and global awareness/consciousness/compassion. Most participants remarked about the appearance of great happiness among Hondurans despite the visible poverty, and the participants said they were uncomfortable with or more appreciative of

the North American lifestyle as a result. However, he also found the relationship between poverty and happiness to be a misperception about the happiness that indicates an incomplete understanding of poverty. Participants did not create a distinction between happiness (despite poverty) and hospitality (a cultural value). He advised against confusing good hospitality with happiness, which he argued is a problem often observed in those newly returned from a STM.

Nonetheless, encountering poverty can be immensely influential in the impact it makes on individuals. For example, Trinitapoli & Vaisey (2009) learned from the over 2,000 interviews they conducted that exposure to poverty was the most common theme discussed by participants, and they found that exposure to poverty abroad led to an increased awareness of local poverty. Van Engen (2000) argued that an encounter that helps participants understand the complexity of poverty may lead to an extremely positive impact for both the participant and host. She presented the work of the Christian Commission for Development, which structures learning-based STMs where participants dialogue with locals. This learning focus allows participants to better understand the injustice and oppression at the heart of poverty rather than limiting it to material dimensions. Van Engen (2000) used this deeper understanding as a reason that STMs are worth the high cost because it leads to a changed perception of the world. However, STM can be structured in ways that fail to promote interaction with local adults as equals, so participants may fail to view the poor as participants in life with personal agency, further skewing their understanding of poverty in a way that may not validate the cost of STMs (Howell, 2012a; Sanchez, 2008; Linhart, 2006; Slimbach, 2008; Perez, 2016).

Regardless of the exact encounter with material poverty, it is important for STM participants to be aware of the role poverty plays in global Christian relationships (Wuthnow & Offutt, 2008; Sanchez, 2008). It should be acknowledged, not ignored. If encountering poverty leads to a glorification of God by “living in right relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation,” then the STM may be well worth the effort and expense (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012, p. 74).

### **Conceptualizing long-term impact.**

Understanding poverty is not the only way STM participants may be changed by the experience. One pervasive rationale surrounding STMs is that the experience impacts the participants in some way. Van Engen (2000) argued that changing the life of a participant as the primary focus of an STM is not enough. Instead, individual impact is one outcome of many for a STM (Ver Beek, 2006). Van Engen argued that trips should challenge the idea that “everyone knows that short-term missions benefit the people who come, not the people here” (p. 21).

Much like participants expect to encounter poverty, returning from the trip as a changed person has become another expectation of STM participants (Howell and Dorr, 2007; Linhart, 2006). The individual impact has been found to be a motivation for going and a marketing tool used by the church, according to Livermore (2013). He argued that searching for experiences within the church rooted in individual impact is nothing new. However, the investment of billions of dollars primarily about individual impact is a shift in church thought. This may be a positive growth for the church. Linhart (2006) found through in-the-moment voice recordings during a STM, students could effectively use the experience to grow in self-awareness and understanding in ways that made them more

effective in ministry both during the STM and after. His study, however, utilized a trip with an expressed purpose to “instill a passion in the lives of students” (p. 453).

Henderson (2009) argued that participant impact as a motivation for STMs leads to negative trip outcomes. He acknowledged that participants are impacted by the trip, but so are the host communities. The change in both parties is seen in equal in this perspective.

Ver Beek (2006) also considered the relationship between STMs and participant change and used an image of a sapling to describe how participants were impacted. In his side-by-side comparison of North Americans and Hondurans, he saw moments of change in both the Honduran communities and the North Americans. The momentary change did not lead to long-term impact, however. He presented both groups as saplings. Individuals from both communities were bent and held in place for the trip and a short time after, but it was not long after the STM before both returned to their previous position (Ver Beek, 2008). Quantitative research supports this idea as changes experienced by STM participants entirely reverted to pre-trip levels three months or less after the STM (Livermore, 2013). Other research demonstrates that no measurable change occurs as a result of STMs. Ver Beek (2008) followed-up his own study with further analysis of the quantitative data measuring STM individual impact. Results of a meta-analysis of the impact studies showed that eleven of the thirteen quantitative studies between 1990 and 2008 demonstrated no measurable change in individuals after a STM experience in terms of spiritual development, attitudes regarding global issues, or financial donations.

In two separate studies of high school students and seminary students, Priest et al. (2006) measured ethnocentrism between students who had participated in an STM and those who had not. The survey found the levels of ethnocentrism between the two groups to be similar. The students with the lower levels of ethnocentrism participated in STM programs with learning as a stated goal, cultural training sessions, and continual coaching. The researchers recommended a further investigation into the structure of STMs to learn more about the individual impact the trips makes. Priest & Priest (2008) investigated structure, and they found through over 5,000 surveys that increased global awareness was a consistent impact from STMs when the conditions noted by Priest et al. (2006) were present.

Conversely, other research findings suggest that participant change is likely when particular STM conditions exist. Trinitapoli & Vaisey (2009) found STM made at minimum a moderately lasting participant impact in several denominations. Their self-reported findings indicated increased religious participation and more confidence in personal beliefs in adolescents participating in STM. The data collected over three years demonstrated that some of the change lasted longer than the sapling model would suggest, but even this data indicated the long-term change was minimal. Friesen (2004) conducted a similar study to Trinitapoli & Vaisey (2009) in surveying participants before a STM experience and again one year later. Participants had an immediate increase in the care for others after the STM, but the levels of prayer and Bible reading were over 0.2 points on a 1-5 likert scale lower than pre-trip levels one year after the trip for a large group of the surveyed students (Friesen, 2004).

The studies by Trinitapoli & Vaisey (2009) and Friesen (2004) both used self-reported data. Priest et al. (2006) researched financial giving and found that participants have a tendency to exaggerate their increased giving after a STM. More STM participants said they increased their giving than financial records demonstrated. Beyerlein, Trinitapoli & Adler (2011) combined self-reported data with quantitative surveys of 3,200 STM participants. They found that after a STM experience, participants were more actively involved in civic engagement. Specifically, those who participate in STMs were twice as likely to volunteer and 40 percent more likely to participate in a political event based on the behaviors participants described and observed by the researchers.

Priest & Priest (2008) argued that trip structure affects the likelihood of change, and this idea is supported by several examples. One such case is Friesen (2004). His study also compared the amount of preparation and debriefing involved in the STM. The students who received more preparation and an extensive post-trip follow-up indicated longer-lasting behavior change in Bible reading and prayer than the trip participants who did not participate in the same preparation and follow-through. Farrell (2013) discussed that in the case he studied in a long-term partnership, only the people who participated in the extensive pre-trip orientation and post-trip follow-up experienced impactful personal change in global outlook.

One idea that incorporates structure and impact involves the objective of the trip. A frequent theme in STM research is making learning as the primary purpose (Van Engen, 2000; Howell, 2012a; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). For example, Andringa (2001) discussed the importance of learning in collegiate cross-cultural situations, claiming that

learning leads to hope and opportunity for participants who are in college. In this perspective, education is just as important as service. Viewing all participants as learners best enables the group to engage the world with love and humility in order to be part of God's redemptive plan (Case, 2016). However, not all scholars affirm a learning purpose. Wexler (2016) argued that on-field learning operates at the expense of the communities being served. She argued that service-learning does not help the community. Instead, it limits the scope of relationships and values student output over community outcomes. Training is the place for learning, and on-field engagement should be viewed as service (Wexler, 2016).

In addition to the impact on participants, other concerns, such as trip structure and host relationships, are also critiqued, and suggestions for changing these practices are provided in existing literature. For example, Priest & Priest (2008) challenged trip leaders to relate the plan for preparation and ministry to outcomes. Henderson (2009) argued for a new structure for STMs with youth according how the participants' worldviews should be impacted. Corbett & Fikkert (2012) suggested agencies should use asset-based community development in their efforts to aid a community. The question remains, how do STM participants, advocates, and critics address the weakness? Slimbach (2000) argued:

“The way forward will not be for us to declare a moratorium on STM until its dysfunctional patterns are completely overcome. Nor will it be to align our selves with the new “manifest destiny” of global Americanization. Instead, our call is to boldly imagine new wineskins for the new wine of God's spirit-mission structures dedicated to comprehending God's vision of and for the world” (p. 6).

## **Standards of Excellence**

### **Background.**

Given variability in how STMs are conceptualized in terms of purpose and value, the Seven Standards of Excellence (SOE) in Short-Term Mission were developed as a way to develop “codes” or “standards for best practice” for STMs despite that variability. The seven SOE are intended to assess the entire STM process. The seven standards are God-centeredness, empowering partnerships, mutual design, comprehensive administration, qualified leadership, appropriate training, and thorough follow-through (Appendix A).

The seven standards were created over an eight year period. STM leaders at the National Short-Term Missions Conference (NSTMC) and Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders (FSTML) discussed the need for more consistent standards informally as early as 1995, and the topic soon became a formal discussion. A team of leaders began to come together in 1999 after STM leaders in the UK published “Global Connections Code of Best Practice in Short-Term Mission” and Canada published their own “Codes of Best Practice for Short-Term Missions.” The drafting process for the SOE began in 2001 with the FSTML Steering Committee, which included members representing Wheaton College, Adventures in Mission, STEM International, Youth for Christ, and Campus Crusade for Christ. Over the next two years, representatives from DELTA Ministries, Taylor University, Mission Data International, and more were added. Each organization was a regular participant at FSTML conferences. Additionally, formal STM researchers including Roger Peterson and Paul Borthwick joined the steering committee. Together,

over 400 STM leaders collaborated to create the SOE, and the Network of Youth Ministries and Alliance for Excellence in Short-Term Mission reviewed the standards because each had already begun drafting their own codes of best practice. Rather than develop three separate codes, they joined the FSTML, which the chairs of the Network of Youth Ministry and Alliance for Excellence in Short-Term Mission already served with. The SOE were officially announced in October 2003 at the annual FSTML conference in Atlanta (U.S. Standards, 2003).

### **SOE membership.**

Agencies, schools, and churches can become members of the SOE by demonstrating how trips meet each standard and how they maintain these standards. Membership is granted at two levels: associate or accredited. Associate members have pledged to intentionally incorporate the SOE in their planning. Accredited members are first associate members (for an indeterminate amount of time) and then can become accredited members through the peer review process. In this process a minimum of three SOE member representatives come to the organization that is applying for accredited status and “asses how the member organization is progressing in its pursuit to achieve excellence in all Seven of the SOE” (U.S. Standards, 2003). The peer review team offers constructive criticisms and recommendations before possibly granting accredited status, which may be granted even if further changes are necessary. Accreditation must be reaffirmed every five years through the peer review process. Associate membership is granted to both sending and receiving entities, but only sending entities may be granted accredited status (U.S. Standards, 2003).

**Relationship between SOE and STM research.*****Structure***

Each of the seven standards follows the same organizational pattern. The standard is named, and a one-sentence description of the standard is provided. This description is a non-operational clarification of the standard. Each standard is then expressed by three descriptors that offer further, non-operational clarification of the main idea. The descriptors are explained in greater detail and each descriptor is given a key quality indicator. The indicators are written as questions that help assess how an organization is meeting each descriptor and the overall standard. For example, one of the key quality indicators for empowering partnerships asks “What long-term relationships exist between sending and receiving partners? How do you cultivate these?” (p. 6).

Together, the SOE offer a response to the critiques seen in STM research in each of these topics. This study uses four of the seven SOE to connect research and STM practice: empowering partnerships, mutual design, appropriate training, and thorough follow-through. As seen earlier, critiques of each of these aspects of STMs exist. The standards address those critiques and offer solutions to each.

***Empowering partnerships.***

STM literature discusses the importance of cooperation in STM (Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Sook Park, 2008; Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007; Zehner, 2013). The SOE include the ideal role of each party in STMs. Empowering partnerships are seen as something that should be mutually beneficial and require equal interactions between adults, thus preventing the inequalities often seen in how STMs address poverty concerns

(Howell, 2012b; Sanchez, 2008; Linhart, 2006; Perez, 2016). STM critiques devote much attention to how participants are impacted by a STM experience (Ver Beek, 2006; Richardson, 2008; Slimbach, 2008; Priest, 2008; Trinitapoli & Vaisey, 2009). Linhart (2006) argued that developing adolescent Christians is a proper purpose for STM. The SOE addresses participant impact, and it responds by saying that the ultimate goal of the STM is a healthy partnership, “not to promote an unforgettable experience for goer guest participants” (p. 6). Although Henderson (2009) emphasized discipleship as a positive STM outcome, the standards argue that neither discipleship nor education should be the sole or primary purpose of a trip. Instead, they combine the cooperative emphasis in research with education and discipleship to promote trips that establish “healthy, interdependent relationships” (p. 6)

***Mutual design.***

Mutual design as a standard is concerned with how STM activities align with long-term strategies, the ability of STM participants to implement the ministry plan designed by the host, and the hosts' ability to enact their portion of the STM ministry. Local hosts should be involved in planning specific outreaches to be completed by the STM (Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007; Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Zehner, 2013). The mutual design standard extends this role to all areas of the trip, not just outreach. Therefore, the standard includes an awareness of how STM goals support long-term ministry plans. Sook Park (2008) argued that STM participants should be able to articulate the long-term vision of a partner ministry, and the SOE support his argument in defining mutual design.

***Appropriate training.***

Appropriate training, the fifth standard, describes the need for Biblical and on-going training by qualified leaders for all participants. It is assessed in three content areas: content of training, the need for on-going training, and the qualifications of the trainers. Livermore (2013) directly addressed STM training content in his description of cultural intelligence (CQ). Although the SOE language does not match that of CQ, the ideas are similar. The standard argues that appropriate training includes participant knowledge of a different culture (CQ knowledge), how to plan adapt to different settings (CQ strategy), how to perform a task while still engaging in relationships (CQ action), and how to develop self-awareness when crossing cultures (CQ drive). Appropriate training, according to the SOE, has pre-, on-, and post-field components. Terry (2004) presented that proper training includes similar themes in discussion throughout the trip, which supports the idea that training is ongoing. Finally, Priest et al. (2006) found that most STM training curriculums are not developed by missiologists, and Sook Park (2008) learned that the curriculums that were the result of academic research were more comprehensive. The SOE acknowledge the role of academic study in training and argue that the best way to train STM participants is through trainers who have a thorough knowledge of STMs, not just experience as a participant.

***Thorough follow-through.***

Thorough follow-through, according to the SOE, is characterized by pre-, on-, and post-field debriefing and evaluation by both sending entities and local hosts. Research argued that debriefing is an on-going, related process (Henderson, 2009; Friesen, 2004; Schreiter, 2015; Linhart, 2010). The SOE support this critique by emphasizing that debriefing includes processing pre-field training throughout the trip and connecting the

on-field experience to post-trip conversations. In addition, Arroyo Bahamonde (2007) and Cook & Van Hoogen (2007) argued that local hosts should assess the effectiveness of an STM as part of the larger partnership. The SOE also argue that sending and receiving partners should evaluate the trip. They should first evaluate the trip separately and then communicate the results with one another.

### **Measuring effectiveness.**

The structure of the SOE is helpful in presenting characteristics of an excellent STM and connecting research to the SOE, but the problem arises in the inconsistency in measurability. Evaluating the effectiveness of a STM is a challenge because the SOE does not provide measureable benchmarks for each standard or articulate definitions for several of the “best practices.” For example, a key quality indicator for mutual design states, “How does your training prepare goer-guests to humbly serve, seek unity, submit to field facilitators, and follow conduct guidelines?” (p. 7). The SOE does not provide a definition of humble service or submission, nor does it offer members a tool for evaluating the content of the training materials in these areas. However, other indicators are more clearly measured. For example, members can answer yes or no to the indicator “Are host receivers aware of your STM program’s values and goals?” (p. 7). The standards are supposed to be measured by the key quality indicators, but not all of the indicators are measureable.

If the standards are intended to assess the performance of an STM organization, they should be consistent and measureable across organization types and membership levels. The standards can be operationalized into measureable statements, and in order to do this, the concepts relied upon by the SOE language need to be defined. Research

demonstrating effective STM practice can be used to define general concepts like “appropriate” training and “thorough” follow-through. When a central definition of such concepts is articulated in ways that are measurable, tools can be developed to measure the extent to which STM organizations are implementing the SOE. It is important that the SOE are supported by research and the means by which to measure the degree to which the standards are met. If the SOE are to be used to assess organizations, then they should be clearly operationalized. This leads to the following research questions (RQ) about how the SOE are supported by existing research.

**RQ1:** How can the standards of empowering partnerships, mutual design, appropriate training, and thorough follow-through be operationalized?

**RQ2:** How can the operationalized standards be applied to STM practices?

**RQ3:** What is the relationship between SOE affiliation and the outcomes of the actual STM as measured by the operationalized SOE?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study used 10 organizations (four schools, two churches, and four STM agencies) with varying types of SOE affiliation (five accredited, two associate, three non-affiliates) to examine the practices of each organization's STMs. Four SOE were selected for the project: empowering partnerships, mutual design, appropriate training, and thorough follow-through. The selected standards were first described using language from the SOE. Each descriptor was then operationalized into individual components which were described at four scoring levels. These components were used to evaluate the practices of the ten organizations. Data related to the four selected SOE was collected from each organization's website as well as through email and phone interviews.

### **Participants**

Participants were selected according to their affiliation with the SOE, overall mission, and amount of information available on the organization's website. All participating organizations offer both domestic and international STMs and represent a variety of ministries, ranging from those with a sole focus on short-term service and those that also include long-term service options. SOE affiliates were selected from the provided list from the SOE website, Malone University was selected for its ease of access and familiarity, and the other organizations were selected primarily from the list of agencies provided by shorttermmissions.com and the results of Google searches for mission-based churches. The selected participants were chosen in order to include three SOE affiliation levels as well as three organization types (church, school, agency). Equally representing each SOE affiliation *and* organization type *and* accessible

information was difficult. Because this research project is exploratory, the researcher chose to seek balance in representation rather than equal numbers of types of organizations. The combination of organizations represents each possible organization type and SOE affiliation, and no category is represented by a single organization (Table 1).

Table 1

*Participant List by SOE Affiliation Status and Organization Type*

SOE Affiliation	School	Church	Agency
Accredited	Taylor University	Cherry Hills	Royal Servants
	Olivet Nazarene Univ.		DELTA International
Associate	Hope College	Summit Church	Touch the World
Non-Affiliate	Malone University		Overland Missions

### Measures & Procedures

The four selected standards were broken down into descriptors provided by the SOE. The 17 total descriptors were operationalized into components and described at four scoring levels that evaluated the degree to which a standard was met. Each category and the corresponding statements aligned with the key quality indicators created by the SOE for each standard (Appendix C). The categorical statements were numbered and lettered according to the SOE they were associated with (i.e. Empowering Partnerships was indicated by I with operationalized statements named as IA, IB, etc.).

The data collection sheet (Appendix B) was created with questions that corresponded to each of the components and that were used to evaluate the responses. The original components were modified after the first evaluation to ensure they accurately reflected organizations' practices. The collected data was entered into scoring rubrics (Appendix C) that were developed and revised with the descriptors and

components. All participating organizations (N=10) were scored for each of the 17 components. Fully meeting each component would result in a score of a 3, and a score of 0 reflected that the characteristics for the component were not present. The potential scores ranged from 0-51 according to the degree to which each component was met. The overall results were analyzed to investigate the relationship between the affiliation status of an organization and SOE, the relationships according to each standard, and the relationship between organization type and SOE performance.

## Results

### Overall Scores

The average score for the 10 organizations was calculated out of 51 possible points, and results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Organization Scores According to SOE Affiliation*

Organization Name	Total Score	Total %
<b>Accredited Members (n=5)</b>		
Cherry Hills Community Church	34	66.7%
DELTA International	41	80.4%
Royal Servants	47	92.2%
Olivet Nazarene University	42	82.4%
Taylor University	47	92.2%
<i>M:</i>	42.20	82.7%
<b>Associate Members (n=2)</b>		
Hope College	36	70.6%
Touch the World	45	88.2%
<i>M:</i>	40.50	79.4%
<b>Non-Affiliates (n=3)</b>		
Summit Church	35	68.6%
Overland Missions	33	64.7%
Malone University	38	74.5%
<i>M:</i>	35.33	69.3%

Overall, the average score was 39.80, (78.0% of all possible points). The median score was 39.50 (77.5%), and the total range of scores was 33-47. The mean score for all participants (N=10) was also calculated for each standard, and results can be found in Table 3. Mutual design earned the highest mean score for an individual standard, and thorough follow-through was the lowest.

Table 3  
*Score Comparison According to SOE*

Standard	<i>M</i>	Possible score	<i>M</i> %
Empowering Partnerships	9.30	12	77.5%
Mutual Design	9.90	12	82.5%
Appropriate Training	12.20	15	81.3%
Thorough Follow-Through	8.40	12	70.0%
Total:	39.80	51	78.0%

### **By SOE Affiliation Status**

When the data was analyzed by affiliation status, SOE membership level was related to organizations' overall score. Accredited members had an average score of 42.20 (82.7%), associate members had an average of 40.50 (79.4%), and non-affiliates had an average score of 35.33 (69.3%) (Table 4).

Table 4  
*Overall Score Comparison According to SOE Affiliation*

SOE Affiliation	<i>M</i> score	<i>M</i> %
Accredited	42.20	82.7%
Associate	40.50	79.4%
Non-affiliate	35.33	69.3%

Results were also calculated for each of the four standards according to affiliation status (Tables 5-8). Based on the overall scores, it was predicted that accredited members would have the highest scores for each standard and non-affiliates would have the lowest.

Within each standard, some variability arose. Accredited members earned the highest score of the three organization types in empowering partnerships and thorough follow-through. Mutual design score was equal between accredited and associate members.

Additional variability was seen within each component. The total empowering partnerships score followed the predicted pattern, but the component parts did not. Non-affiliates earned the highest score (greater than accredited or associated) in the component assessing the primary purpose of the trip, and associate members earned the lowest score of the three groups in the component measuring communication with the local host (Table 5).

Table 5  
*Empowering Partnerships Score Comparison According to SOE Affiliation*

SOE Language	Accredited Members ( <i>n</i> =5) <i>M</i>	Associate Members ( <i>n</i> =2) <i>M</i>	Non-Affiliates ( <i>n</i> =3) <i>M</i>
IA. The ultimate goal of a healthy partnership is to consider the needs and possible benefits of all participants.	2.20	2.00	1.33
IB. We acknowledge if the primary purpose of an STM is for discipleship of the goer-guests, or if the primary purpose is to provide an educational cross-cultural experience, the STM partnership has failed in its primary focus on the intended receptors.	2.00	1.50	2.33
IC. We pledge to establish trusting and accountable partnerships with each other as the over-arching design of our short-term mission efforts.	3.00	2.50	2.67
ID. We pledge to openly admit any personal benefits we hope to achieve as a result of our	3.00	2.50	2.00

partnership, while keeping the intended receptors' benefits as our primary goal.

Total	10.20	8.50	8.33
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Accredited and associate members earned the same score for mutual design, and this score was greater than the score of non-affiliates. Variability from this pattern arose in the individual components. Accredited and associate members had the lowest scores in several different components. Only the descriptor assessing how projects are directed matched the pattern of total scores for the standard (Table 6).

Table 6

*Mutual Design Score Comparison According to SOE Affiliation*

SOE Language	Accredited Members ( <i>n</i> =5) <i>M</i>	Associate Members ( <i>n</i> =2) <i>M</i>	Non-Affiliates ( <i>n</i> =3) <i>M</i>
IIA. We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies.	2.80	3.00	2.33
IIB. We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies.	2.20	2.50	2.33
IIC. We pledge to prepare all participants so they are likely to achieve the mutual design with humble, servant, teachable hearts.	2.00	2.50	2.00
IID. We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies.	3.00	2.00	2.33
Total	10.00	10.00	8.99

Appropriate training scores deviated from the overall score pattern. Associate members earned the highest score and non-affiliates the lowest, with little component variability. Associate members earned the highest scores in each individual component, and all three organizations earned the same score for the component evaluating how participant readiness is measured. The lowest score for any component was had by non-affiliates in the component measuring poverty orientation (Table 7).

Table 7  
*Appropriate Training Score Comparison According to SOE Affiliation*

SOE Language	Accredited Members ( <i>n</i> =5) <i>M</i>	Associate Members ( <i>n</i> =2) <i>M</i>	Non-Affiliates ( <i>n</i> =3) <i>M</i>
IIIA. We pledge to provide on-time biblical and appropriate training for all participants emphasizing the character traits, knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for effective ministry in an intercultural context.	2.60	3.00	2.00
IIIB. We pledge to provide trainers who are experienced and knowledgeable, and who can provide effective training and facilitate beneficial learning.	3.00	3.00	2.33
IIIC. We acknowledge that relevant training will benefit all STM participants, fostering understanding and growth, while helping to prevent offense, damage, and poor stewardship.	2.40	3.00	0.67
IIID. We pledge to provide trainers who are experienced and knowledgeable, and who can provide effective, on-going training and facilitate beneficial learning.	2.80	3.00	2.33
IIIE. We pledge to provide on-time biblical and appropriate training for all participants emphasizing the character traits, knowledge,	2.00	2.00	2.00

skills, and attitudes essential for effective ministry in an intercultural context.

Total	12.80	14.00	9.33
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Overall, thorough follow-through scores followed the predicted pattern

(accredited, associate, non-affiliates highest to lowest). One individual component did not follow the pattern: associate members earned the highest score for the component addressing debriefing conversations (Table 8).

Table 8

*Thorough Follow-Through Score Comparison According to SOE Affiliation*

SOE Language	Accredited Members ( <i>n</i> =5) <i>M</i>	Associate Members ( <i>n</i> =2) <i>M</i>	Non-Affiliates ( <i>n</i> =3) <i>M</i>
IVA. We pledge to provide appropriate and thorough debriefings to help all participants process the pre-field training, on-field implementation, events throughout each day, and any post-field challenges.	2.60	3.00	2.33
IVB. We strive to provide relevant debriefing in on-field re-entry preparation for goer-guests and post-field follow-through for all participants.	2.60	2.00	1.67
IVC. We pledge to candidly evaluate our mutual efforts among sending and receiving partners for all phases of the outreach.	2.20	2.00	2.00
IVD. We pledge that the results of evaluations will be communicated to relevant leaders.	1.80	1.00	1.00
Total	9.20	8.00	7.00

### By Organization Type

Similarly to accreditation status, overall scores were differentiated by organization type. Agencies and schools had an average score of 41.50 (81.4%) and 40.75 (79.9%) respectively. Churches earned a lower mean score of 34.50 (67.6%) (Table 9).

Table 9

*Total Score Comparison According to Organization Type*

Organization Type	Total Score	Total Score %
Church	34.50	67.6%
Agency	41.50	81.4%
School	40.75	79.9%

Based on the overall scores according to organization type, it was predicted that agencies would earn the highest score for each standard and churches the lowest. However, this anticipated pattern was not reflected in standard scores. Mutual design was the only standard that followed the pattern seen in overall scores. Agencies and churches earned the same score for empowering partnerships, and schools had the highest score of any organization type for appropriate training and thorough follow-through.

Within the components describing empowering partnerships, churches and agencies earned the same total score, and this score was higher than the score of schools. Total empowering partnerships score varied from the direction of the overall score pattern, and additional variability was seen in individual descriptors. In each of the components, except the component measuring communication with the local host, churches had a score greater than or equal to agencies, and agencies had a score greater than or equal to schools (Table 10).

Table 10  
*Empowering Partnerships Score Comparison According to Organization Type*

SOE Language	Churches ( <i>n</i> =2) <i>M</i>	Agencies ( <i>n</i> =4) <i>M</i>	Schools ( <i>n</i> =4) <i>M</i>
Empowering Partnerships			
IA. The ultimate goal of a healthy partnership is to consider the needs and possible benefits of all participants.	2.00	1.75	1.50
IB. We acknowledge if the primary purpose of an STM is for discipleship of the goer-guests, or if the primary purpose is to provide an educational cross-cultural experience, the STM partnership has failed in its primary focus on the intended receptors.	2.50	2.25	1.50
IC. We pledge to establish trusting and accountable partnerships with each other as the over-arching design of our short-term mission efforts.	2.50	3.00	2.50
ID. We pledge to openly admit any personal benefits we hope to achieve as a result of our partnership, while keeping the intended receptors' benefits as our primary goal.	2.50	2.50	2.50
Total	9.50	9.50	8.00

Within the mutual design standard, agencies earned the highest score, and churches and schools had the same score. Individual components varied from the idea schools and churches would earn the same score, and that the score of schools and churches would be lower than agencies. Agencies earned the highest score according to organization type for each component, but churches had the same score as agencies in two components. Schools matched the agencies' score in one component (Table 11).

Table 11  
*Mutual Design Score Comparison According to Organization Type*

SOE Language	Churches ( <i>n</i> =2) <i>M</i>	Agencies ( <i>n</i> =4) <i>M</i>	Schools ( <i>n</i> =4) <i>M</i>
IIA. We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies.	2.00	3.00	3.00
IIB. We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies.	2.50	2.50	2.00
IIC. We pledge to prepare all participants so they are likely to achieve the mutual design with humble, servant, teachable hearts.	1.50	2.25	1.75
IID. We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies.	3.00	3.00	2.25
Total	9.00	10.75	9.00

Schools had the highest total score for appropriate training, and this was reflected in component scores as well. Schools earned the highest score of any organization type for every training component. Churches matched the score from schools in the component measuring how hosts are involved in training, but churches had the lowest score by organization type in the rest of the components (Table 12).

Table 12  
*Appropriate Training Score Comparison According to Organization Type*

SOE Language	Churches ( <i>n</i> =2) <i>M</i>	Agencies ( <i>n</i> =4) <i>M</i>	Schools ( <i>n</i> =4) <i>M</i>
IIIA. We pledge to provide on-time biblical and appropriate training for all participants emphasizing the character traits, knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for effective ministry in an intercultural context.	1.50	2.50	3.00
IIIB. We pledge to provide trainers who are experienced and knowledgeable, and who can provide effective training and facilitate beneficial learning.	3.00	2.50	3.00
IIIC. We acknowledge that relevant training will benefit all STM participants, fostering understanding and growth, while helping to prevent offense, damage, and poor stewardship.	1.50	1.75	2.50
IIID. We pledge to provide trainers who are experienced and knowledgeable, and who can provide effective, on-going training and facilitate beneficial learning.	2.00	3.00	3.00
IIIE. We pledge to provide on-time biblical and appropriate training for all participants emphasizing the character traits, knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for effective ministry in an intercultural context.	1.50	2.00	2.25
Total	9.50	11.75	13.75

Much like appropriate training, schools had the highest total scores for thorough follow-through. They also had the highest total score in each component part. Agencies earned the same score as schools in the communication of evaluation results but had the lowest score of all organization types for re-entry preparation (Table 13).

Table 13  
*Thorough Follow-Through Score Comparison According to Organization Type*

SOE Language	Churches (n=2) <i>M</i>	Agencies (n=4) <i>M</i>	Schools (n=4) <i>M</i>
IVA. We pledge to provide appropriate and thorough debriefings to help all participants process the pre-field training, on-field implementation, events throughout each day, and any post-field challenges.	2.50	2.50	3.00
IVB. We strive to provide relevant debriefing in on-field re-entry preparation for goer-guests and post-field follow-through for all participants.	2.00	1.50	2.25
IVC. We pledge to candidly evaluate our mutual efforts among sending and receiving partners for all phases of the outreach.	1.50	2.00	2.50
IVD. We pledge that the results of evaluations will be communicated to relevant leaders.	1.00	1.50	1.50
Total	7.00	7.50	9.25

## Discussion

### Difficulties in Operationalizing the Standards

This study developed operationalized components to describe four standards within the SOE in order to establish a valid means of measuring the SOE. Creating the finalized standards was a process that featured several stages of revision in order to best create theory-based definitions of best practice and concretely describe what STM practices should look like.

Several standards were more difficult to operationalize than others. One reason for this difficulty arose when a SOE itself was disconnected from the available literature. For example, the empowering partnership SOE specifically states the *primary* purpose of a trip cannot be education or discipleship. Although those purposes are named as beneficial, the SOE does not include them as the sole or primary goal. However, in the literature, education and discipleship were identified as significant and legitimate primary purposes for a STM (Henderson, 2009; Van Engen, 2000; Slimbach, 2000; Livermore, 2013; Linhart, 2010; Schreiter, 2015). Instead of education and discipleship, the SOE identifies connecting with local partners as the proper primary purpose. The operationalized standard reflects the SOE's primary purpose, which contrasts with a majority of the available literature.

STM research emphasizes the need to consider relationships formed between STM participants they encounter on-site as another dimension of empowering partnerships (Ver Beek, 2006; Richardson, 2008; Slimbach, 2008; K.B. Priest, 2008). The empowering partnership standard encourages "positive" relationships in the STM context without clearly defining what constitutes "positive" or what that relationship looks like

(U.S. Standards, 2003). This becomes problematic when operationalizing the degree to which this standard is met. The SOE language and research was initially used to create the operationalized component description at a level of a 3 that “every team member can name someone they came to know and describe them beyond their socio-economic standing” in the first draft of the rubrics. However, organizations reported that every participant was able to name someone they encountered upon immediate return from the trip. Therefore, the operationalized description was not defining the relationships in a way that would differentiate organizations. A measurement of how long those relationships were maintained months after the trip would be more consistent with research. This study was an initial effort to operationalize the standards and demonstrates the significant need for more clarity in the standards themselves and for grounding them in research.

A similar trend is seen in the appropriate training standard because there is not a clear definition of what constitutes “appropriate.” Operationalizing training was difficult and underwent several revisions throughout the process. The first draft measured training according to Livermore’s (2013) cultural intelligence because his ideas were general enough to apply to several types of STMs but concrete enough to assess. Although the ideas outlined by Livermore are thorough, they are not all-encompassing, so the operationalized component was revised to name broad topics that should be included based on available research about training such as self-understanding, cultural knowledge, and ministry training (Linhart, 2006; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Perez, 2013; Howell, 2009). In addition to addressing these issues, training should incorporate a pre- and post-trip measurement of participants’ knowledge in each of these categories. This

allows trainers to structure the curriculum to each specific group as well as assess the effectiveness of the training.

Measuring the evaluation component of thorough follow-through required a similar process. The SOE states that STMs should be evaluated by all parties involved and the results shared with those parties. These two characteristics were more easily measured separately and were divided for the scoring. This distinction more thoroughly assessed each organization because only one organization fully met both components. Breaking the standard's description into two components revealed where actual practice did not align with the standards. Olivet Nazarene University, for example, has trip leaders and hosts evaluate the trip, thus satisfying one component. However, the results are not shared. Only the trip leader sees all evaluations. Local hosts do not receive the evaluation information from trip leaders. In contrast, Royal Servants includes evaluations from both goer-leaders and hosts and shares every result with all relevant leaders. Rather than retain the single, multi-dimensional original component, creating two operationalized descriptors provided a more refined reflection of the STM practice. Once again, the SOE generally states that evaluation should occur, but it does not provide a description of what an evaluation should actually include.

The relationship between STM funding and empowering partnerships was also a challenge to operationalize. How a STM is funded represents part of empowering partnerships, and it is connected to the criticism of expenses associated with STM seen in available research (Priest, 2006; Ver Beek, 2000; Zehner, 2013; Wuthnow & Offutt, 2008; Perez, 2016). As part of empowering partnerships, the component described the best use of funds as leaving a portion of funds with the local church (Ver Beek, 2000;

Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007). However, several organizations stated their belief that this practice leads to a dependency that does not promote long-term empowerment, which is also supported by research (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Denison & Akin, 2011).

Furthermore, several organizations chose to use additional funds in other ways. Summit Church and DELTA International both regularly leave physical gifts such as American food, diapers, or other necessities with the local pastor. Cherry Hills Community Church mentioned that nearly every group takes up a love offering during the trip, but sometimes the offering is for a specific, non-church purpose such as providing an expectant mother with a Cesarean section. Situations such as these are not addressed in the operationalized standard.

The disconnect between the SOE and available research was one challenge in operationalizing each standard. The inter-connected nature of the standards in actual practice was another. For example, funding is related to empowering partnerships as demonstrated above, and it is also part of mutual design. Hosts complete extensive work to welcome a team. Just as these same Americans would bring a gift to share at a party as a thank you to the host, giving gifts for the hard work of hosts is often considered appropriate. However, although physical gifts seem like a blessing, they may not be ideal, just as construction trips that use no local labor can damage the local ministry long-term (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). For example, if a team leaves a gift of rice for the local host, but the local host usually purchases rice from a local farmer to sustain the farmer's income, the gift may harm that local on-going relationship. Instead, giving a small monetary gift (so as not to develop dependency) recognizes the local host's hard work. The poor performance of several organizations in this operationalized standard caused the

researcher to reexamine the operationalization, but the language of the standard reflects the literature.

Another intersection between multiple standards came in assessing empowering partnerships and mutual design. The SOE identifies mutual design as involving the host and goer-leader in every part of the STM process. Arroyo Bahamonde (2007) and Zehner (2013) argued that planning should include the STM leader visiting the host prior to a team's arrival. Therefore, highest scores were awarded for organizations that included set-up trips where the trip leader visits the host to plan ministry sites. Organizations such as Olivet Nazarene University, Taylor University and DELTA International specifically said they intentionally do not complete a set-up trip. Instead, they believe trusting the local host to coordinate ministry sites creates a more empowered relationship. The operationalized components reflect both research and the SOE, but they may fail to integrate two standards.

After using the available literature and considering the inter-related nature of the standards, several other components were revised. The earliest versions of several components were found ineffective for actually measuring the degree to which a practice was employed. The revised versions of the components were useful in this particular study, and this pilot study reinforces the need for tools to measure the degree to which the SOE are being met. Additionally, the scope of this project was limited. Ten organizations is not a large enough sample size to determine trends representing all STM organizations. A larger sample size would enable the development of more specificity in operationalizing the standards and subsequently the ability to create a more comprehensive assessment.

### **Patterns in Results**

Although the trends were variable, patterns emerged regarding both affiliation status and organization type. For example, the difference between the scores of accredited and associate members indicates that affiliation status differentiated how trips are planned and implemented. Accredited members have demonstrated or explained through a peer review process how they incorporate each SOE. Associate members pledge to incorporate the SOE, but they do not have to demonstrate how they do so. The way the SOE are met may not be consistent as the SOE are currently structured without operationalization, but the provision of *some* demonstration appears to differentiate scores according to affiliation status. Accredited members earned higher overall scores than associate members by 3.3%, though the margin of difference is small. Organizations with higher levels of SOE membership have higher overall scores, but accreditation does not guarantee that the score will reflect excellent practice according to the SOE, as Cherry Hills is an outlier among the accredited members. Without Cherry Hills, the difference between accredited and associate members rises to 7.4%. It is possible that knowledge of the SOE by non-affiliates may influence practice. Malone University was the only non-affiliate familiar with the SOE and scored higher than the other non-affiliates.

When scores were compared according to organization type, agencies and schools earned similar scores, and churches had the lowest overall score of the groups. The number of each organization type was not equal, and along with the small sample size, this limited the reliability of the results in representing larger trends. Nonetheless, as scores for each of the standards were analyzed, several trends emerged. Appropriate

training was one such standard. Schools earned the highest scores for appropriate training. It is possible that the higher scores in training relate to the overall purpose of these institutions, which is education, and translates into its' performance in the SOE.

Agencies earned the highest scores in mutual design. Each of the agencies used in this study work with missionaries who are not required to be affiliated with the STM agency. Perhaps, in order to maintain these by-choice relationships, agencies have had to learn how to work in cooperation with the local host in order to continue using them as a resource. In contrast, Summit Church works with missionaries financially supported by the church. If the missionaries are unsatisfied with how a trip's design is happening, they may not be able to speak out in fear of losing funding. A larger investigation into the relationship between STM organizations and long-term partners may reveal a trend between organization type and mutual design.

Despite the limitations of the measures, several trends emerged related to best practices for appropriate training. Creating appropriate training was a common concern in the available literature (Henderson, 2009; Livermore, 2013, Van Engen, 2000). Appropriate training was the SOE with the second highest score (1.2% behind mutual design). These findings suggest most organizations are aware of what needs to be included in training, as this was the strongest area for five of the ten organizations and among the highest overall score.

Touch the World (TTW) and Hope College, both associate members in this study, devote extensive resources to pre-trip training and feature several practices other groups could incorporate. TTW is a specialized training organization, and it could be expected that such an organization would score well in this standard. Hope College's training

manual outlines how student leaders should facilitate each training session and incorporates academic sources as well as provides connections to on-campus resources. Hope's performance contributes to the high scores of schools in training and contributes to the relationship between institution purpose and SOE performance as seen above.

### **Improving Practices**

The results of this study point to ways STMs could improve their practices based on observed behaviors of participating organizations. Empowering partnerships is one area where STM organizations could adopt new strategies. Touch the World (TTW) is one example of working with a partner to understand how a STM fits into the larger ministry needs and goals of the host. TTW works with a partner for at least 2 years before a STM is sent. During this time, TTW staff and local partners complete comprehensive community assessments. STMs are then structured to meet the local needs in a way that sustains long-term progress for the local church and community. TTW expends large amounts of resources before sending an STM, which increases the potential for empowering the host in the process and coming to know the community as an equal partner in ministry. Not every organization can pour 2 years of preparation into a STM, but every group can work to understand the receiving community prior to travel.

Follow-through, including STM trip evaluation, is another area where STM could improve based on the practices of a participating organization. The lack of comprehensive evaluations for STMs influenced the creation of this study. Thorough follow-through, which includes evaluation, had the lowest scores. Based on the rubrics used for this study, Royal Servants earned the highest evaluation score, and the practices seen there could be integrated into the other organizations. Royal Servants assesses STMs

with participants, trip leaders, hosts, and the entire Royal Servants staff. Additionally, Royal Servants gathers data from parents of students and collects data 4 months after a trip for continued evaluation. Mission organizations should work to incorporate more parties into evaluation. Royal Servants meets personally or Skypes with every host to evaluate the trip's preparation, execution, and results. All trip leaders gather at the yearly staff conference to share their experiences and evaluate the trips according to seven different categories developed by the full-time staff (decisions for Christ, new locations evangelized, new ministries established, host ministry goals furthered, increased partnership with national believers, impact on participants, and feedback from sending supporters). Data is collected through surveys and interview analysis. Other organizations can look to Royal Servants as a comprehensive example of evaluation and implement evaluative processes that continue to develop empowering partnerships.

Through follow-through is another standard with components that could be improved. Debriefing and re-entry preparation are two component parts of follow-through that are performed well by Taylor University. Taylor employs several tactics that would be useful to other organizations. Taylor's debriefing includes mandatory journaling for month-long Lighthouse trips, and trip leaders are required to read journals 1-2 times each week. Trip leaders use these confidential notes to better understand the problems participants face and then frame the frequent debriefing accordingly. In the phone interview, Taylor's coordinator shared that this practice helped her navigate a broken group dynamic and discover the true feelings of each participant. When the team dynamic was addressed, their cohesion during ministry improved. Taylor University also includes story preparation in debriefing. Students develop and practice

sharing 30-second, 1-minute, 5-minute, and 15-minute speeches about the trip to help students share their experience upon re-entry. These planned and practiced speeches also help students retain their experiences after the trip, as reported by Taylor's long-term metrics.

Each of these practices are translatable to STMs of various purpose and length. Together, they demonstrate the possibility of a consistent list of best practices that could be tailored for each STM. If this tool is developed, each general practice could be altered according to the length of service, the behaviors and attitudes of participants, and include input from multiple parties in crafting the STM.

### **Future Research**

This study revealed several best practices for STMs that are already being utilized, but it can be expanded through future research. One current limitation regarding STM research involves how information about these organizations is gathered. This particular project arose partially from the presence of self-reported data in evaluating STMs. The rubrics were designed with the intention of increasing accuracy in measuring the practices of each organization. However, data collection was completed by contacting members of each organization to gather most of the data. Therefore, at least some of the information about each organization was self-reported, and it is therefore subject to the same potential inaccuracies as discussed in the literature review (Priest et al., 2006). Furthermore, some of the data needed to thoroughly assess STM, such as information about how relationships are sustained post-trip, is not collected by the organizations. The needed data does not currently exist in this component. Future research could address the

troubles surrounding data collection, including who reports the data and what evaluation is completed by organizations.

Additionally, further investigations into the long-term impact of short-term service would be useful. Existing research does not explore participant impact for long stretches of time after a trip. Friesen (2004) and Priest et al. (2006) each studied participant behavior and perceptions up to one year after the trip. Additional longitudinal study on participant impact may also relate to the purpose. Several organizations' trips included a changed perspective or mindsets for participants, yet there is no evaluation of how well that purpose is met. Even if the evaluation includes how participants are immediately changed, such as with Taylor University, it does not assess how long that perspective change lasts. The same investigation could be conducted regarding change in the local communities. If a team constructs a building, how is that building used years after the trip? If the church gains several new members as a result of the STM team's visit, how long does the church retain those members? Data understanding the long-term impact of STMs on both participants and locals is not present in current literature, and adding it to the research may offer valuable insights into STM practice.

Although the rubrics address the key quality indicators for each of the four selected standards, accurately measuring each component according to actual practice rather than self-reported data would require the researcher to act as an outside reviewer who observes the entire STM process for each organization. Observing the process as an outsider would be helpful in measuring practices as they actually occur rather than as a participant or staff member describes. Future research should include a more in-depth

look at the practices of a STM organization to better determine how and if the SOE are met.

Another topic for future research is comparing domestic and international service. This could be done on multiple levels such as how the trip impacts participant behavior after a trip, the level of similarity in training, and the impact of a language barrier on participant experience. Several studies advocated for cross-cultural experiences close to home as a prerequisite for international service (Howell, 2012a; McGuinness, 2016; Riley, 2016). Exploring the relationship between the two types of service could offer insight into how to best prepare students for STMs.

Additionally, another avenue for further study would be to understand the relationship between affiliation level and organization type. This study isolated the two, but future research could integrate them. For example, Cherry Hills Community Church is an accredited member, and it scored seven points lower than the next accredited member. However, it was only one point lower than the other church, the non-affiliate Summit Church. Does organization type impact the score more than affiliation level? If the study were replicated on a larger scale, would all churches, regardless of affiliation status, receive the lowest scores? Additionally, Cherry Hills has had to demonstrate to a peer review committee how it incorporates the SOE, yet its score was the second-lowest in the study. Future research could explore how this outlier earned its accreditation status.

### **Conclusion**

This study measured the SOE on a limited scale, and it contributes a starting point for an evaluation system for STMs. Integrating the SOE with available literature and practice and developing clear and well-articulated benchmarks for achievement is a step

toward offering an evaluative tool for STMs in order to best utilize the 2.2 million volunteers leaving North America to serve through a STM. The ten participating organizations provided a useful sample to pilot operationalized standards that make measuring the degree to which the SOE are practiced possible. This research advances the conversation surrounding STMs and serves as a tool used to measure STMs.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Seven Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions

**1. God-Centeredness** An excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and his kingdom, and is expressed through our:

- Purpose — Centering on God's glory and his ends throughout our entire STM process
- Lives — Sound biblical doctrine, persistent prayer, and godliness in our thoughts, words, and deeds
- Methods — Wise, biblical, and culturally-appropriate methods which bear spiritual fruit

**2. Empowering Partnerships** An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent, on-going relationships between sending and receiving partners, and is expressed by:

- Primary focus on intended receptors
- Plans which benefit all participants
- Mutual trust and accountability

**3. Mutual Design** An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants, and is expressed by:

- On-field methods and activities aligned to long-term strategies of the partnership
- Goer-guests' ability to implement their part of the plan
- Host receivers' ability to implement their part of the plan

**4. Comprehensive Administration** An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants, and is expressed by:

- Truthfulness in promotion, finances, and reporting results
- Appropriate risk management
- Quality program delivery and support logistics

**5. Qualified Leadership** An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leadership for all participants, and is expressed by:

- Character — Spiritually mature servant leadership
- Skills — Prepared, competent, organized, and accountable leadership
- Values — Empowering and equipping leadership

**6. Appropriate Training** An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach, and is expressed by:

- Biblical, appropriate, and timely training
- On-going training and equipping (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
- Qualified trainers

**7. Thorough Follow-Through** An excellent short-term mission assures evaluation, debriefing and appropriate follow-through for all participants, and is expressed by:

- Comprehensive debriefing of all participants (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
- Thoughtful and appropriate follow-through for goer-guests
- On-field and post-field evaluation among sending and receiving partners



**Appendix B: Data Collection Sheet**Data Collection**Group:**

School

Agency

Church

**Purpose**

What is the purpose of the STM? (IC)

**Empowering Partnerships (I)**

Do some funds raised by the STM remain with the local church even after the STM?  
Who makes the final decision on how funds should be utilized (IA)\*

Are participants able to share the specific story of someone they worked with? (IB)\*

How does the STM leader communicate with the local host? (ID)\*

When considering the specific ministry, what potential benefits for both goer and recipient are identified? Which benefits are prioritized? (IE)

**Design (II)**

What is the role of the host in trip planning and preparation? (IIA)\*

How are trips costs and funding part of the planning process? Do some funds remain with the local church even after the STM, and who makes the final decision on how funds should be utilized? (IIA)\*

When planning the trip, does the STM leader travel to the country where they will be serving? Are specific ministry sites discussed? (IIB)

When selecting specific ministry sites, what is the influence of local, long-term ministry goals? How do the goals of the STM relate to the goals of long-term ministry partner? (IID)

What is the format for daily training and de-briefing on-field and who is present? (The host?) (IIC)

**Training**

Cultural Intelligence: How is readiness of each participant measured, especially according the four interest areas listed below? (IIIA)

*Drive (interest and motivation for adaption); Knowledge (reading and studying about the differences between cultures); Strategy (mindfulness/plan for difficulties); Action (willingness to change)*

What is the role of the host in training? (IIIB)

How are trainers selected? What kind of training have the trainers received? (IIID)

How are participants oriented to poverty? (IIIC)

**Follow-Through**

How are relationships established on the trip evaluated? Are participants able to share the specific story of someone they worked with? (IVB)\*

Are the same themes present for pre-, on-, and post-field discussion? In what ways and when do these discussions occur? (IVA)

How do participants prepare for re-entry? What happens after they return? (IVB)

How is the overall trip evaluated by the team? The host? How are the results communicated? (IVC)

**Appendix C: Scoring Rubrics**

**Empowering Partnerships:** An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, inter-dependent, on-going relationships between sending and receiving partners.

Priest, 2006; Ver Beek, 2006; Zehner, 2013; Van Engen, 2000; Wuthnow & Offutt, 2008; Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007; Perez, 2016; Slimbach, 2000; Livermore, 2013; Linhart, 2010; Schreiter, 2015; Richardson, 2008; Priest, 2008; Howell 2012b; Linhart, 2006; Howell & Dorr, 2007; Moodie, 2013; Denison & Akin, 2011; Offutt, 2011, Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Farrell, 2013				
<b>SOE</b>	<b>IA.</b> The ultimate goal of a healthy partnership is to consider the needs and possible benefits of all participants. (KQI 2.1)	<b>IB.</b> We acknowledge if the primary purpose of an STM is for discipleship of the goer-guests, or if the primary purpose is to provide an educational cross-cultural experience, the STM partnership has failed in its primary focus on the intended receptors. (KQI 2.1)	<b>IC.</b> We pledge to establish trusting and accountable partnerships with each other as the over-arching design of STM efforts.	<b>ID.</b> We pledge to openly admit any personal benefits we hope to achieve as a result of our partnership, while keeping the intended receptors' benefits as our primary goal.
<b>3</b>	A portion of all the funds raised remain with the local church.	The primary purpose of the trip is connecting with local partners.	STM leaders and hosts both initiate communication before, during, and after the STM.	Benefits for all parties are named, and local benefits are prioritized.
<b>2</b>	Both parties address the cost-effectiveness of the STM and reach a mutual decision how to use the funds.	Connecting with local partners AND individual education and/or discipleship are equal purposes of the trip.	Communication occurs before, during, and after the STM, but it is entirely facilitated by the STM goer-leader.	Benefits for both sides are named, but local benefits are not prioritized.
<b>1</b>	Leaders on both sides discuss how STM funds will be used, but the goer leader makes the final decision alone.	Education and/or discipleship is the primary purpose of the STM. Connecting with local partners is secondary.	STM leaders only speak with the local leaders for part of the trip, not before, during, and after.	Benefits from one side only are identified and addressed.
<b>0</b>	No financial support is given to the long-term partner.	Individual education and discipleship are the only purposes of the STM.	No communication with local hosts exists.	No benefits are discussed for either side.

**Mutual Design:** An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants.

Arroyo Bahamonde, 2007; Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Priest & Priest, 2008; Slimbach, 2000; Zehner, 2013; Livermore, 2013; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Priest et al., 2006; Farrell, 2013; Van Engen, 2000; Sook Park, 2008				
<b>SOE</b>	<b>IIA.</b> We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies. (KQI 3.1)	<b>IIB.</b> We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies. (KQI 3.1)	<b>IIC.</b> We pledge to prepare all participants so they are likely to achieve the mutual design with humble, servant, teachable hearts. (KQI 3.2)	<b>IID.</b> We pledge that each outreach will be cooperatively designed to include specific mission opportunities and on-field activities which both partners believe to be aligned with long-term strategies. (KQI 3.1, 3.3)
<b>3</b>	The local church leaders direct or co-direct the ministry.	The goer-leader visits the host prior to the trip for set-up and views specific ministry sites.	Hosts participate in or are invited to ongoing training and debriefing.	Every ministry activity directly correlates to a specific, long-term ministry goal of the host.
<b>2</b>	Local church leaders are present for the project, but they do not direct the project.	The goer-leader communicates with the host about specific ministry sites prior to the trip but does not actually visit.	Hosts participate in or are invited to most discussions with the team but are not welcome at all ongoing training and debriefings.	Most of the ministry activity aligns with long-term goals, but at least ministry activity does not correlate to a specific, long-term ministry goal of the host.
<b>1</b>	Local church leaders are not present for the project. They consult, but do not direct the project.	The goer-leader does not discuss ministry specifics with the host prior to the trip.	Hosts are not invited to any daily debriefings and ongoing training.	Most of the ministry activity does not align with a specific, long-term ministry goal of the host.
<b>0</b>	The project happens with no direction from local partners.	There is no contact with the host leader prior to the trip.	Daily ongoing training and debriefings do not exist in the structure.	The STM ministry activity does not align with a specific, long-term ministry goal of the host.

**Appropriate Training:** An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach

Livermore, 2013; Linhart, 2006; Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Priest et al., 2006; Van Engen, 2000; Perez, 2013; Howell, 2009; Sanchez, 2008; Wuthnow & Offutt, 2008; Priest & Priest, 2008; Terry, 2004; CULTURELink; Farrell, 2013					
<b>SOE</b>	<b>IIIA.</b> We pledge to provide on-time biblical and appropriate training for all participants emphasizing the character traits, knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for effective ministry in an intercultural context. (KQI 6.1)	<b>IIIB.</b> We pledge to provide trainers who are experienced and knowledgeable and can provide effective training and facilitate beneficial learning. (KQI 6.3)	<b>IIIC.</b> We acknowledge that relevant training will benefit all STM participants, fostering understanding and growth, while helping to prevent offense, damage, and poor stewardship. (KQI 6.1)	<b>IIID.</b> We pledge to provide trainers who are experienced and knowledgeable and can provide effective, on-going training and facilitate beneficial learning. (KQI 6.2, 6.3)	<b>IIIE.</b> We pledge to provide on-time biblical and appropriate training for all participants emphasizing the character traits, knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for effective ministry in an intercultural context. (KQI 6.1)
<b>3</b>	Training addresses self-understanding general and specific cultural knowledge, and effective cross-cultural ministry.	Hosts provide STM leaders and/or participants with background research on the receiving culture and language.	Training includes an orientation to poverty described as a complex issue with many dimensions.	Trainers have received formal training from a missiology-based , academic curriculum.	Participant readiness according to each training topic is measured pre- and post-training.
<b>2</b>	Of the mentioned training topics, only three are addressed in training.	Place-specific knowledge and language is offered in training, but it does not source from the host.	Training includes an introduction to poverty, but it does not represent the dimensions of poverty.	Trainers have some experience, but they have no formal training from an academic setting of their own.	Participant readiness is measured pre- or post-training.
<b>1</b>	Two or more of the topics are not addressed in training.	Regional or general cross-cultural instruction is provided, but it is not place-specific.	Poverty is defined materially only.	Trainers are familiar with cross-cultural encounters, but they have no real training experience.	Participant readiness is discussed but not measured.
<b>0</b>	None of topic areas are addressed in training.	No specific language and cultural training is provided.	No poverty education occurs and/or "the poor" is an acceptable descriptor.	Trainers have no experience or training of their own.	Participant readiness is not measured or discussed.

**Thorough Follow-Through:** An excellent short-term mission assures evaluation, debriefing and appropriate follow-through for all participants.

Henderson, 2009; Friesen, 2004; Arroyo Bahmonde, 2007; Priest & Priest, 2008; Schreiter, 2015; Linhart, 2006; Linhart, 2010; Farrell, 2013; Cook & Van Hoogen, 2007; Perez, 2016; Trinitapoli & Adler, 2011; Richardson, 2008; Ver Beek, 2006; Van Engen, 2000; Priest, 2006				
<b>SOE</b>	<b>IVA.</b> We pledge to provide appropriate and thorough debriefings to help all participants process the pre-field training, on-field implementation, events throughout each day, and any post-field challenges. (KQI 7.1, 7.2)	<b>IVB.</b> We strive to provide relevant debriefing in on-field re-entry preparation for goer-guests and post-field follow-through for all participants. (KQI 7.1, 7.2)	<b>IVC.</b> We pledge to candidly evaluate our mutual efforts among sending and receiving partners for all phases of the outreach. (KQI 7.3)	<b>IVD.</b> We pledge that the results of evaluations will be communicated to relevant leaders. (KQI 7.3)
<b>3</b>	Debriefing conversations occur during the pre-, on-, and post-field seasons. Themes in each time frame are repeated.	STM participants discuss re-entry several times before leaving the STM. Upon their return home, participants meet at least three times (in person or digitally) to continue to process their re-entry.	Both goer-leaders and hosts evaluate STM according to stated goals.	Both goer-leaders and hosts evaluate the effectiveness of the ministry goals outlined in the design and communicate the results to one another.
<b>2</b>	Debriefing is only present in two of the three stated times. Themes are repeated in some sessions but not all.	STM participants discuss re-entry prior to completing the STM, and they meet once after the trip.	Either the host or the goer-leader evaluates the STM according to stated goals.	Both goer-leaders and hosts evaluate the STM, but only one party shares the results.
<b>1</b>	Debriefing only occurs in one of the three stated times.	Re-entry is discussed as a group, but no post-trip meetings occur.	The STM is evaluated in some way, but it is not in relation to clearly stated ministry goals.	The goer-leader and/or the host evaluates the STM, but information is not shared.
<b>0</b>	Debriefing never occurs.	Re-entry is never discussed.	No evaluation occurs.	No evaluation occurs.

**Appendix D: Email Template to Collect Information**

Salutation

Hi. My name is Alicia Meyer, and I am a senior at Malone University in Canton, OH. I am currently working on my honor's thesis on the topic of short-term missions under the direction of my adviser, Marcia Everett, Ph.D.

I'm exploring several facets of short-term missions work including working toward empowering partnerships, structuring trips with local hosts, training participants, and following-up with all parties involved. I'm also exploring how the specific purpose of a short-term trip influences the outcomes.

Data is being collected from ten different schools, churches, and organizations across the nation to complete my research. Your organization is part of my research because [insert reason here].

I've gathered data based on the information posted on your website, but there are still several gaps in my research. Would you be willing to support my thesis by answering a few simple questions about how your trips operate?

Depending on your preference, I can email you a brief list of general questions that you can respond to on your own time, or I can schedule a phone interview to gather information that way.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. I will plan on following up with you via phone if I haven't heard back from you by Oct. 6.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Alicia Meyer  
[ammeyer1@malone.edu](mailto:ammeyer1@malone.edu)  
(419)956-1259

**Appendix E: Scoring Sheet****Organization:**

Final Score:

**Empowering Partnerships**

IA	3	2	1	0
IB	3	2	1	0
IC	3	2	1	0
ID	3	2	1	0

**Mutual Design**

IIA	3	2	1	0
IIB	3	2	1	0
IIC	3	2	1	0
IID	3	2	1	0

**Appropriate Training**

IIIA	3	2	1	0
IIIB	3	2	1	0
IIIC	3	2	1	0
IIID	3	2	1	0
IIIE	3	2	1	0

**Thorough Follow-Through**

IV A	3	2	1	0
IV B	3	2	1	0
IV C	3	2	1	0
IV D	3	2	1	0