

# Discovering What Motivates Student Participation in Service Learning: A Model for Healthcare Educators

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## PURPOSE

Service learning experiences can build skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, cultural competence, marketing, financial management, conflict resolution, and ethical reasoning. Service learning is a beneficial pedagogy.

Therefore, the research question being addressed in this study is how student perceptions and motivation factor into international service learning trips and their impact on physical therapy and occupational therapy students' current education and future clinical practice?

## METHODS

Participants were graduate students in either a physical therapy doctorate program (n=33) or occupational therapy masters program (n=2) The participants were volunteers in Peru, Guatemala and Costa Rica between semester breaks in 2009 and 2010. All volunteer experiences were a week long.

Participants completed a pre and post experience questionnaire to gather perspectives on why they chose to participate in a service learning opportunity and what they gained from it in reference to their education and future profession.

Responses were imported into QRS Nvivo 9 for thematic coding and qualitative analysis.

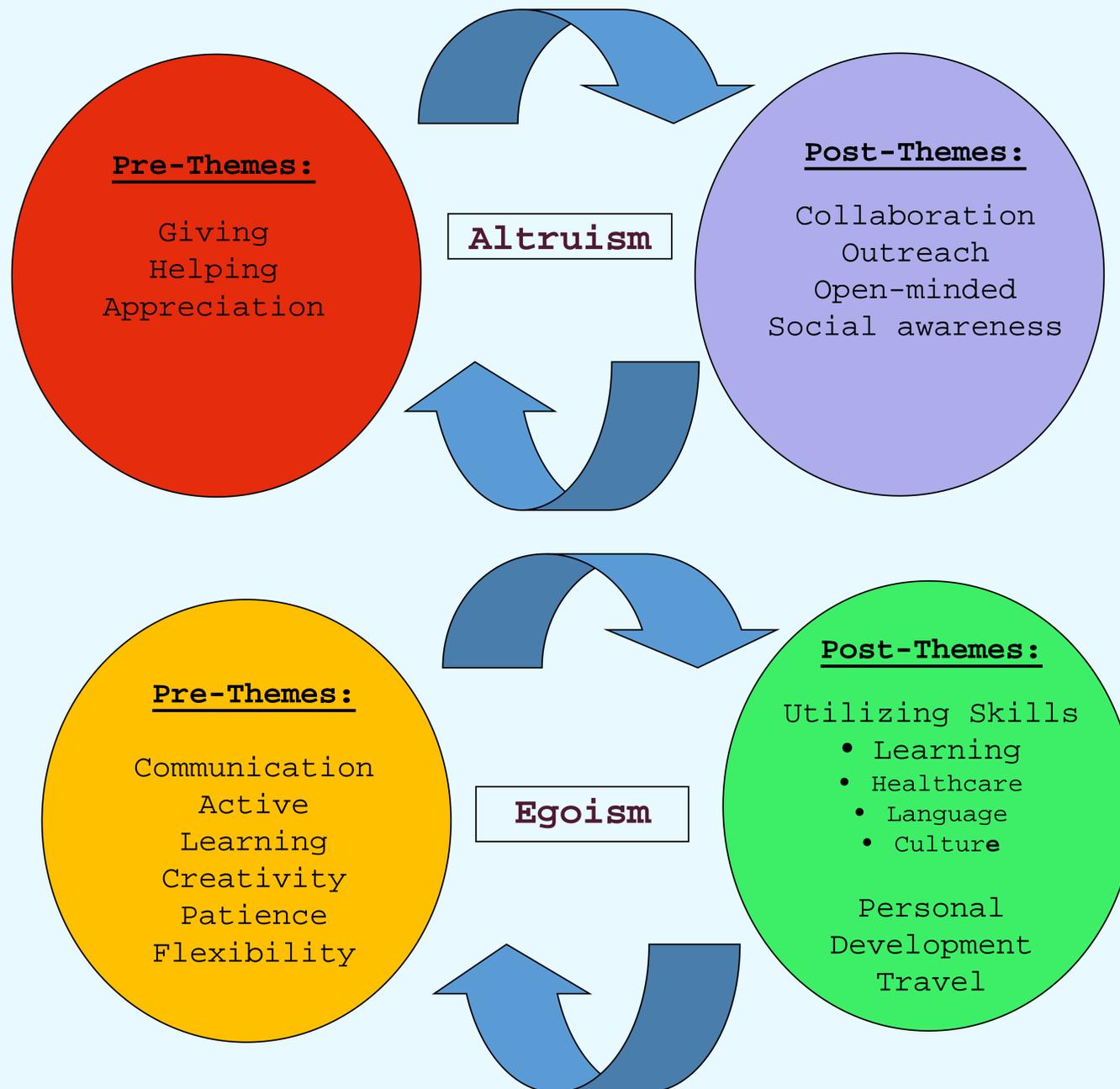


## RESULTS

### Student Perceptions Service Learning Model (SPSL)

#### Pre-Experience

#### Post-Experience



## DISCUSSION



- Egoism primarily drives the motivation to participate in a international service learning opportunity
- Post-experience data revealed an increase in altruistic traits and a decline in egoism themes
- Conversely, ego-driven traits emerged as a result of the altruistic experience
- Self motivation have gradations and can overlap and therein lies the debate whether or not someone has to be altruistic by nature in order to benefit from service learning
- An increase in altruist traits could lead to more empathic care in their future clinical practice

This study identified motivating factors which could help shape program development for international service learning opportunities offered to health care students. It also supports the use of international service learning to develop altruism in a health care student that can eventually reflect in their future clinical practice.

## REFERENCES

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