

Empathy Beyond US Borders

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How and why is immersion travel from the United States used to produce concern about and action against injustice in the Global South?



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3 Questions

- 1.** Why has immersion travel taken off in the last few decades?
- 2.** How does immersion travel work to produce awareness and action?
- 3.** What comes of immersion travelers?

Question #1 Answer

1. Why has immersion travel taken off in the last few decades?

2. How does immersion travel work to produce awareness and action?

3. What comes of immersion travelers?

Rise of the New Global Civic Engagement

27% of U.S. religious congregations (75,000) *a year*

1 million individual U.S. volunteers overseas *a year*

2012: **4,400 high schools** with global citizenship curricula (up from 32 in 1997)

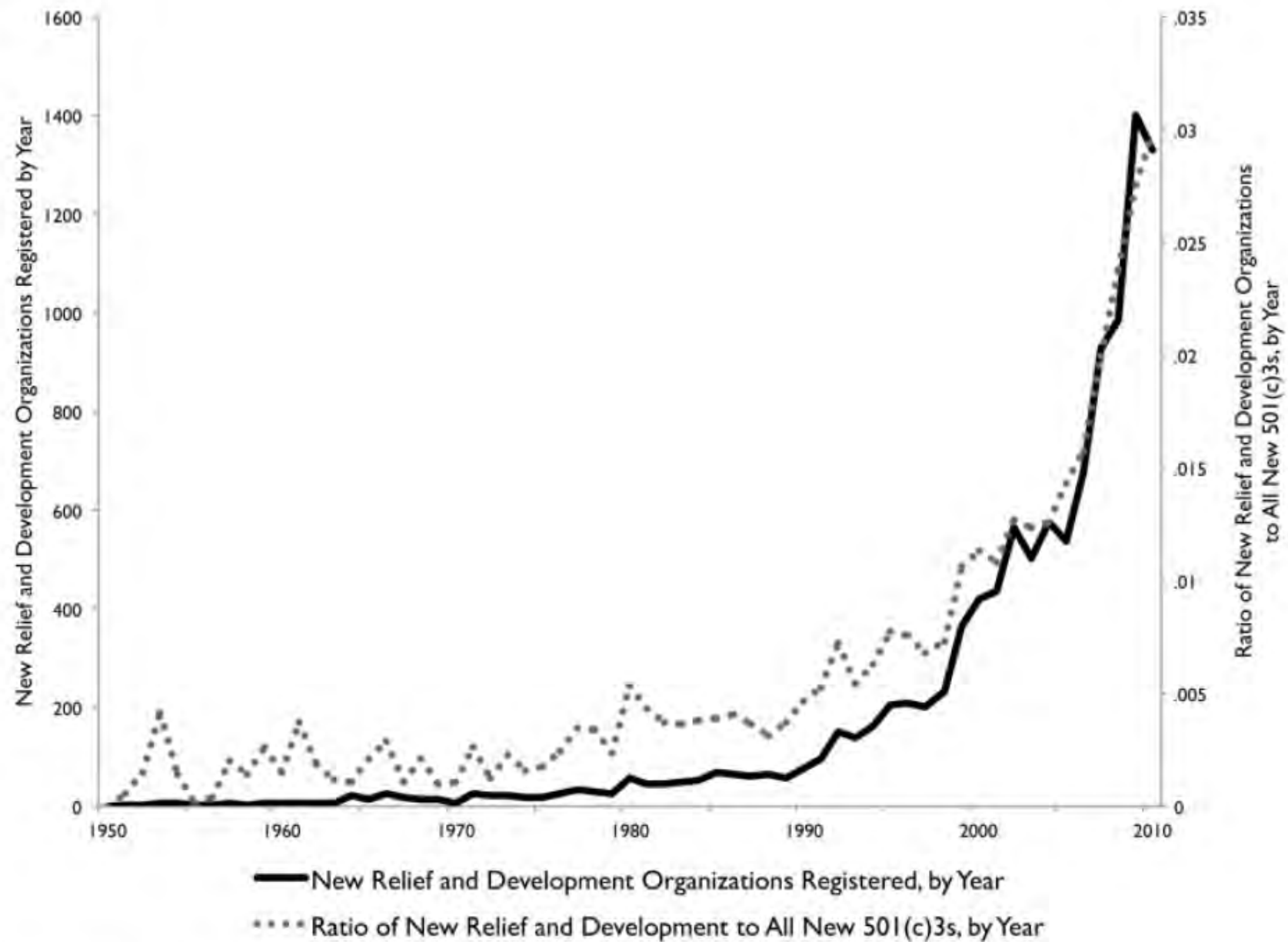


Figure 1. New Relief and Development Organizations Registered with IRS, by Year

Source: IRS Business Master File via the National Center for Charitable Statistics

(Schnable 2015)

Question #2 Answer

1. Why has immersion travel taken off in the last few decades?

2. How does immersion travel work to produce awareness and action?

3. What comes of immersion travelers?



“Raising
awareness.
Inspiring
Action.”



Data sources

Pre/Post-Trip Surveys:

- 180 of 217 did pre-trip survey (83%); 68 of 180 did post-trip survey (38%).
- Final response rate: 31%

Participant Observation

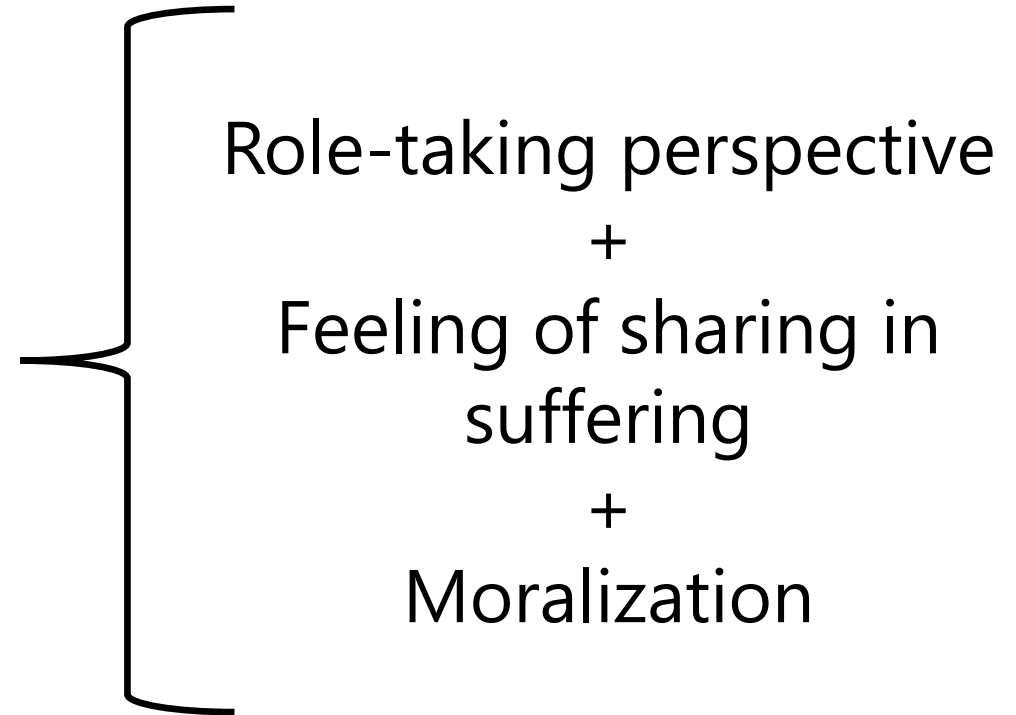
- 6 week-long trips: 2 secular colleges, 1 religious college, 2 seminaries, 1 congregation
- Field notes

Interviews

- 36 of 44 post-trip interviews
- 40-120 minutes each

Empathy strategies

Interactive templates that civic organizations use to establish an obligation to global others by producing an emotional sense of suffering, a perspective of those who suffer, and a moralized sense of the need for action.



Relational empathy strategies

Face-to-face interaction

Attempts at conversation/dialogue

Autobiographical account of suffering

Migrant shelter in Mexico.



Discussions with Mexican activists



Mixed outcomes

Doris, a middle-aged Latina female, fluent in Spanish:

“For me, the human interaction was definitely an important part of the trip...but it [migrant interaction] is sort of like the seasoning—the salt and pepper. It’s a horrible metaphor, sort of like **nothing that I learned from the migrants** themselves was particularly shocking, or revealing, or **stayed with me**. It was important to listen to them and hear different stories, but **it wasn’t the thing that**, you know, stayed with me and **captured my imagination**.”

Mimetic empathy strategies

Simulated experience of suffering

Bodily activity in context

Guided by activists/brokers

Arizona side of border wall
near Douglas.



Desert hike along migrant trails



Migrant artifacts



Strong, Felt Outcomes

"I thought [the desert hike] was a haunting experience, mostly because we were, like, physically walking *in the tracks of these people*, a matter of hour or days before they had been there."

"Overall I thought the experience was great to be in that *physical place* where migrants were ... [The hike was] *physically exerting*, even though we went a very small portion of what migrants actually do ... It was cool to not just read about it or hear someone, but to *physically use your body*."

"I *think about* what or who those objects [we saw in the desert] *represent*. These people who are leaving their homes, leaving their families, to go and pursue a better life in the US."

Mimetic empathy strategies are popular...

WHERE WILL YOU SIT?

EXPERIENCE HUNGER IN A WHOLE NEW WAY



THE PLACE WHERE YOU SIT, AND THE MEAL THAT YOU
EAT, ARE DETERMINED BY THE LUCK OF THE DRAW

**NOV
16**

6:00pm | 6th Floor of Library



A Day in the Life of a Refugee, World Economic Forum, 2019

'I think it is very important for us to bring the simulation to Davos, for participants to spend even 45 minutes in our shoes, because people like us often feel the world forgets us. They make policy and other decisions at their level, not ours. They don't know what life is like on the ground.'

David Livingston Okello. Former child soldier/IDP

We again brought A Day in the Life of a Refugee to Davos in January, 2019.

Thank you to all who found the time, a sacrifice we know, to attend and even speak further about strategic solutions, whether at policy or other levels, to the global challenge of displacement. If you would like to seek further engagement go [here](#) or [email us](#). It's a conversation we love to have.



What is 'A Day in the Life of a Refugee'?

A few steps 'in the shoes' of those forced from home by war ...

[read more ...](#)



Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we offer simulations? How are they written? Who is involved ...

[read more ...](#)



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The Tunnel of Oppression is a collaborative program within the Division of Student Affairs and was collaboratively planned by: The Paul Robeson Cultural Center, The LGBT Student Resource Center, The Center for Women Students, University Health Services, Office of Residence Life, Office of Judicial Affairs, The Center for Ethics and Religious Affairs, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Special Populations, SMART, NAACP, International Student Services and the Multicultural Greek Council.

IMAGE: Penn State

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Question #3 Answer

1. Why has immersion travel taken off in the last few decades?
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Changes?

- Individual-level changes in pro-immigrant emotions and attitudes
- Individual-level changes in economic and activist behavior
- But... conflict, confusion, and difficulty about doing enough “back home”

Empathy Beyond U.S. Borders: the Challenges of Transnational Civic Engagement

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