

“Learning Service” in International Contexts: Partnership-based Service-Learning and Research in Cape Town, South Africa

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In this paper we explore an approach to developing and implementing service-learning and community-based research in a study-abroad program in Cape Town, South Africa. Drawing on a notion of partnerships reflecting the values of accompaniment and transparency, and influenced by the importance of learning service, we outline an intentional, engaged pedagogy and program design emphasizing collaborative inquiry and partnership development. However, such an approach is challenging and demands that we include an ontological project as part of our work. This, we believe, is crucial if global service-learning (GSL), often taking place in the Global South, is to become a robust, critical, and ethical practice.

For our programs, transparency begins with our own preparations with our own students, a reflexive understanding that even the nature of service is a shared construction and not something we bring whole cloth into the service locale. (Simonelli, Earle, & Story, 2004, p. 54)

[T]he reading ... assigned for our first seminar, ‘Learning Service or Service Learning: Enabling the Civic’ (Boyle-Baise et al., 2006) has shown me that service is truly not monolithic. I finally understand what the authors meant when they said, ‘Service can be deconstructed in order that students might puzzle through it from the inside-out’ (p. 25). It took for me to truly become engaged with [organization] in order to allow the experience to break down every pre-conception I had of what it meant to ‘serve’ others. (student reflection, 2012)

A number of debates have surfaced recently about higher education’s role in relation to issues of globalization and argue for curricula that take on these issues. Nussbaum (2007), for instance, suggests that because higher education produces the next generation of citizens, we need to ask ourselves about the kinds of civic values, dispositions, and attributes our students should hold as they go out into the world. Global service-learning and community-based research, as forms of community engagement, are seen as important practices in this regard and are argued to have a huge impact on students’ sense of self and identity formation (Engberg & Fox, 2011; Fitch, 2004). They can be important ways of providing transformative learning spaces, which contribute to a student’s *way of being* and engaging in the world

(Bamber, 2008; Monard-Weissman, 2003a, 2003b). This impact is often heightened when students are involved internationally (Crabtree, 2008; Hartman, 2014; Kiely, 2004, 2005; King, 2004).

In this paper, we discuss the development and implementation of service-learning and community-based research in a Stanford University study-abroad program located in Cape Town, South Africa. We describe our sustained *partnership approach* along lines suggested by Simonelli, Earle, and Story (2004) where partnership is about *accompaniment and transparency* in a context where inequality is rapidly increasing. We argue for an engaged pedagogy and program design emphasizing collaborative inquiry and *learning service* (Boyle-Baise et al., 2006). Learning service, that is, understanding the different possible meanings of the word so that one can learn and reflect on how to truly be of service to community members, is challenging and requires an intentional curriculum that engages students in community relationships and critical reflection. Because it is challenging, we include an ontological dimension to our work (Barnett & Coate, 2005) – we reflect intentionally on our own meaning and understanding of the world and ourselves in it as part of our practice. It is these considerations and features of our program that we believe contribute to the understanding of global service-learning (GSL).¹

Background

Stanford University’s Bing Overseas Studies Program in Cape Town opened to students in January 2010 after a long gestation period. The story began in the 1970s when Anthropology Professor James

Gibbs advocated with the Stanford Overseas Studies office to open a center outside of Europe where its existing five centers were then located. Gibbs suggested Africa.

The Overseas Studies office did eventually expand its centers beyond Europe, but Africa was not included. With the coming of the new century, however, things began to change. In response to growing student and faculty interest, Stanford began adding Africanist scholars to its faculty. These new faculty members in turn invigorated and helped expand the campus Center for African Studies. In 2002, African Studies faculty picked up the advocacy campaign for an Overseas Studies program in Africa begun about 30 years earlier. These faculty hoped that an Overseas Studies center in Africa would be distinguished by opportunities for community engagement – both through service-learning and community-based research.

The director of Overseas Studies then invited Tim Stanton to organize and lead a three-week “September Seminar” in Cape Town in 2003. With a focus on community and economic development in post-apartheid South Africa, Stanton guided the students around the Western Cape introducing them to individuals and organizations involved in this work. It was intense experiential learning combined with discussion and reflection with leading practitioners and activists. Student feedback was positive and with growing campus interest and confidence that a high quality program could be developed, the Overseas Studies Director then invited Stanton to offer two academic, quarter-long pilot programs in Cape Town in 2006 and 2008. Stanton designed these programs around a similar community and economic development focus, but included intensive service-learning and community-based research with Western Cape nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Based on the success of these pilots, Overseas Studies opened the permanent program in 2010.

The Cape Town program is based in a small center near the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) Health Sciences campus. While local UCT academics and a visiting Stanford faculty member offer several conventionally taught courses each quarter, the program emphasizes and is structured around academically-based community engagement through service-learning and community-based research. The program enrolls 22-24 undergraduate students during each of its two operating ten-week academic quarters (Winter and Spring in North America). These students, mostly juniors, well represent the highly diverse demographic characteristics of Stanford’s undergraduate student body except that women outnumber men, as is the case in all of the University’s overseas programs. The students also come from a

wide range of disciplinary backgrounds.

Students report that they are attracted to the program because of its location and emphasis on community engagement. Given these motivations, rather than require service-learning, we strongly encourage it; only one student of the 230 students in the program to date has not signed up for the service-learning. Fewer students (3-8 per quarter) choose to engage in program-sponsored community-based research.

Learning Service in Cape Town: A Framework for Practice

The South African context – past and present – requires us to think carefully about how we design our program. In this section, we outline the framework guiding the development of our curriculum in both service-learning and community-based research.

Service-learning or Learning Service?

Recently there have been an increasing number of students (especially from the U.S.) travelling abroad on international service and cultural immersion programs, especially to the Global South (Cermak, Christiansen, Finnegan, Gleeson, & White, 2011; Crabtree, 2008). For many in the field, global service-learning – as is true with its domestic practice – offers an excellent opportunity for students to gain an understanding of very different contexts – often of great poverty and rich diversity. Through these experiences, practitioners hope to inspire students to become engaged and caring global citizens (Cermak et al.) and to experience some degree of personal or social transformation (Kiely, 2004, 2005; King, 2004).

However, as with domestic practice, when not done well global service-learning is viewed by many as potentially problematic, perhaps more so due to the cross-cultural challenges students, practitioners, and community partners must face. Indeed, global service-learning is often perceived to be a kind of “tourism” (Prins & Webster, 2010; Salazar, 2004) which can lead to unclear information regarding just who the community is (Link, McNally, Sayre, Schmidt, & Swap, 2011) and how it functions. In addition, there is often a lack of attention paid to the differential power relationships between students and their international host communities, and little understanding that service relationships can reinforce sensitive, internal divisions within them (Camacho, 2004; Cermak et al., 2011; Mitchell, 2008). Many of these programs do not always achieve the reciprocity they strive for (Grusky, 2000). Looking at students’ experiences on an international development course, Kassam (2010) asks an important question: What pedagogical framework assists in transforming stu-

dents from those who know about the major challenges of the twenty-first century to those who know how to respond to such challenges in a particular socio-cultural and ecological context?

Addressing these concerns requires quite a different stance, and we draw on Boyle-Baise et al.'s (2006) work as a starting point. They ask:

What might happen if, instead [of learning about something other than service through service] an exploration of service itself grounded classroom studies and field work, fostering explicit consideration and critique of ethics, standards and distinctive forms of learning through work with others? (p. 17)

Boyle-Baise and her students write about an experience in a service-learning course where the learning was directly about service itself. Using the term learning service, they recast service “as something to be studied, as well as something to be done” (p. 17). Service, as an object of interest itself, enables “students to envision activism as a means of civic engagement” (p. 18). The course did not propose a particular form of service-learning; instead the students studied various versions of it from charity to social change paradigms (see, for example, Morton, 1995):

When service itself was the object of examination, we could ponder it as a person, place and thing ... [W]e directed our whole attention to making meaning of service, rather than to learning something else through service, as is often the case...we stepped back from it and studied its distinctive forms, underlying ethics, and different qualities. (Boyle-Baise et al., p. 22)

Learning service thus implies engagement with service, engagement with our own relationship to service, engagement with others in the service relationship, and engagement with the context in which service takes place. Because learning service implies focusing very intentionally on oneself in service with others, on one's service relationships and on the meaning of service itself, it is a very useful and rigorous way to teach when contexts are complex and extremely unequal – South Africa is a useful case in point. Simonelli et al. (2004) have made a similar argument to Boyle-Baise et al. (2004) about the need to guide students into questioning their own definitions of service, i.e., to learn service while being able to take account of their expectations “and need to feel some kind of achievement” (Boyle-Baise, p. 55). Learning service asks students to reflect on their experience critically, together with considering the meaning of service itself. Through an *intentional process* where we seek to *understand service*, we can begin to assist our students – and ourselves – to be more open about and critical of our own assumptions and worldviews.

Relationships and “Being” in Service

We do not only think of this approach in facilitating student learning in our courses but in our approach to partnership work as well. For long-term sustainable partnership development work, Simonelli et al. (2004) argue that we need an “understanding [of] how the community or neighborhood fits into the larger power environment or political landscape” (p. 55). In particular, they state as one of their program goals to “[p]rovide long-term accompaniment to communities in their process of autonomous ... development” (p. 44). Through their program working with a small Zapatista support community in the rainforest of Chiapas, Mexico, they learned that “to be involved with ‘helping’ autonomous communities meant that we must accompany them based on their guidelines, or *acompañar obediciendo*” (p. 46; emphasis in the original). This captures well our own approach and beliefs.

Central to ethical and sustainable community engagement is building relationships, often across complex boundaries. This is not an easy or uncomplicated issue (Anzoldua, 1987; Giroux 1992; Hayes & Cuban, 1997; McMillan, 2009, 2011; Simonelli et al., 2004; Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin, 2000), as crossing boundaries is about negotiating complex power relations. Doing it with integrity and authenticity entails an engagement first and foremost with the self. Learning in complex unfamiliar contexts therefore is not just about knowledge and action – or knowing and doing. It is crucially about being as well (Barnett, 2004, 2009; Barnett & Coate, 2005), i.e., about the essential nature of the student, visible and present in the learning process.

Implications for Curriculum

Barnett (2004) argues that understanding (knowledge), acting (skills) and being (self) are core components of higher education. Furthermore, *knowing* can never be separated entirely from *being* as knowledge is taken in by students and thereby shapes their being to some extent; in other words, knowledge cannot be separated from knower. Acting is also not formed through a simple process of identifying skills (Barnett & Coate, 2005, p. 94). Skills are deemed desirable because they are embedded within notions of what counts as competency within a certain subject area. However, it is the domain of being that Barnett and Coate argue is the significant area where curriculum change ought to happen for contemporary times – times of ongoing uncertainty and “super-complexity”:

the way forward lies in construing and enacting a pedagogy for human being. In other words, learning for an unknown future has to be a learn-

ing understood neither in terms of knowledge or skills but of human qualities and dispositions. Learning for an unknown future calls, in short, for an *ontological turn*. (p. 247; emphasis added)

Furthermore, we need to understand the concept of engagement, which is an important concept related to student learning. For Barnett and Coate (2005), what is important is both *operational engagement* (engaging in the activity at hand) and *ontological engagement* [engaging (oneself) in the activity, which in our case is participating responsibly in an ongoing partnership relationship]. A curriculum for the twenty-first century needs to engage both ways.

Our Practice: Service-Learning and Community-based Research

Following Barnett and Coate (2005) above, our approach to community engagement therefore begins with the premise that to engage meaningfully in service-learning or community-based research, and develop and sustain relationships that these activities require, we need to include an *ontological project in our work*: both ourselves and our students must surface and consider critically our views and feelings about service. This raises a range of questions: What is our role as a Stanford academic program and as Stanford faculty and students wishing to engage in service in the Western Cape? With whom should we partner in the community and what kinds of relationships should we seek to form? What is it in fact that we can contribute that will be welcomed by and useful to our partners? We must engage ourselves and our students in thinking about these kinds of questions to better understand our outsider roles in development work in this particular context – one of great disparities between rich and poor that is struggling to recover from centuries of colonialism and racist social engineering enforced by a repressive regime.

Two principles are important here. First, in this context we emphasize not just the success or otherwise of the service and research projects that the students undertake (though we strive to see that they are successful). And whereas in both the students' service-learning and the community-based research we carefully place students in NGOs and civic organizations with service and/or information needs to which the students can respond successfully, we place equal or greater emphasis on these experiences as a journey of discovery, a process of learning and change for everyone involved – ourselves, the students, the community partners, and by extension the community members our partners serve.

A related second way in which we approach community engagement is through developing ongoing sustainable partnerships with a limited number of

NGO and civic organizations in the region. We emphasize both "sustainable" and "limited" in order to locate appropriate service-learning and research opportunities for students; to establish a community among us all focused on learning over time how to work together effectively with short-term, part-time student volunteers; and to ensure that the Stanford Cape Town program is strongly connected with the local community (see Simonelli et al., 2004 for more on this). We are diligent in developing our partnerships based on principles of reciprocity and mutual learning, which are expressed through our learning service mission and a range of program activities. Consistent with our principle of working to create equality among the partners, we often involve staff from these organizations as teachers in our seminars. In addition, all the partners meet regularly in Partner Forums to review and learn from our practice and engage in capacity-building activities such as financial management skill-building, designing volunteer orientation programs, and collaboratively learning new skills in working across academic and community borders.

The Service-Learning Activity

Students spend three days per week each quarter in their community placements. Our long-term partnership approach enables us to place (different) students with the same organizations over consecutive quarters, so following students can continue projects begun by earlier ones, thereby leveraging the contributions students make to these organizations and their communities.² This practice also enables the partners to learn over time how to most effectively work with our students.

However, placing students with our diverse yet limited set of partner organizations creates tensions with many students who are used to selecting the service work they do from an extensive menu of offerings at the campus center for public service. In addition, many students arrive in Cape Town with strong desires and expectations related to their academic and career goals. They think of themselves as coming to South Africa with special skills and abilities to contribute, which may not match up well with the actual needs and desires of our partners. Our commitment to our partners, however, is that students' service projects should become what are most needed by the host community organization (Simonelli et al., 2004). The rub for the students and for us comes when students realize that the needed tasks – administrative work, data collection, educational tutoring and mentoring, community mobilizing, marketing, fundraising, and report writing – are often not what they had in mind. These tasks can appear to be mundane, unglamorous, and not necessarily, at least on first impression, good preparation for a professional

career. And if the students correspond with their faculty advisors on campus, they may hear that such tasks are “not worthy of a Stanford student’s time.” So, we often encounter tension in the first days of the program, helping students learn how to relax their expectations and see what the partners actually need as opposed to what they had imagined was needed.

While we try to place students in a societal sector that they are interested in, e.g. health, education, small business development, youth, etc. (for more details on our partner organizations, see <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/programs/bosp/explore/cape-town/community-engagement/partner-organizations-cape-town>), much of the learning they acquire is often far less about a specific topic as it is about adjusting their goals to the culture and expectations of their placement, and learning more about themselves and the politics and ethics of service. This responsive approach to service in partnership with a limited number of organizations, focused primarily on serving their needs as they understand them rather than students’ interests and desires, is challenging, particularly with students with high expectations, ambition, and perhaps an inflated sense of what they have to offer. The required service-learning seminar thus becomes a critical context in which to help students work through these challenges and contradictions.

*The Service-Learning Seminar*³

Given the stark inequalities in the Cape Town and South African context, students and the communities within and with which they learn and serve face serious challenges on a day-to-day basis. Students struggle with many aspects of this context and talk often about the reality in which they and their community partners engage (see the challenges section below for more detail on these issues). Because of this, we believe that an *intentional curricular approach* underpinned by ethics and confrontation with the increasing global inequalities of our age is demanded. Here lies the focus of the service-learning seminar: foregrounding students’ abilities to think of themselves in the world as caring citizens with a past and future. Critically reflecting on the service relationship – who serves whom and how – is an important part of shaping that understanding and of coming to *be* in new ways. We encourage students to dig deeply to uncover their service intentions, values, and beliefs and consider how well they fit in a very different reality such as South Africa. We encourage an exploration of local resources, assets, and knowledge to re-focus the service ethic, i.e., not just to look for problems or needs that can be addressed but also to observe and appreciate the huge resources that exist with which we can assist and from which we can learn. Therefore, the seminar curriculum includes the

following issues:

- Exploring self and service, intentions, assumptions, and biases (Boyle-Baise et al., 2006)
- Reflecting on what it means to be a *global citizen* (Nussbaum, 1997, 2002; Soudien, 2006)
- Understanding the origins of service-learning (Pollack, 1999; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999)
- Understanding *community* (Ndzendze, 2012; Rohleder, Swartz, Carolissen, Bozalek, & Leibowitz, 2007)
- Understanding self and experiential learning (Kolb, 1993; Mezirow, 1990)
- Analyzing histories and community assets (Freire, 1970; Ismail, 2009; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1997; Mathie, 2003)
- Understanding service in contexts of inequality (Camacho, 2004), the importance of border crossing (Hayes & Cuban, 1997), and the effect of border crossing on relationships (Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin, 2000; Winkler, 2013)
- Debating ethics, paradigms, and politics of service and the ‘service gaze’ (Butin, 2003; Mitchell, 2008; Morton, 1995; Prins & Webster, 2010; Salazar, 2004; Simonelli et al., 2004)
- Understanding reciprocity in service (d’Arlach, Sanchez, & Feuer, 2006; Henry & Breyfogle, 2006)
- Understanding international development debates and paradigms in a context of service and the importance of partnerships therewith (Escobar, 1999; Oldfield, 2008; Robins, 2003; Taylor & Paulsen, 2010; Worrall, 2007)
- Understanding service as a dimension of global and local citizenship (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2009; Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011; Nussbaum, 1997, 2007; Saltmarsh, 1996).
- Sustaining insights and re-imagining service in the context of globalization (Keith, 2005; Kiely, 2004).

The seminar pursues these issues across three domains: self, organization, and the broader (community) context. These align closely with Barnett’s (2004) notions of being (self), knowing (context), and doing (organizations), and help to make visible for us what learning service entails.

Self. We start with ontological questions about self, about being. Here we ask students to reflect on their multiple social identities and the ways in which they serve as barriers or resources in their new international context. Consistent with Mitchell’s (2008) frame-

work, the discussions in the seminar often focus on important issues linked to critical service-learning and issues of power and inequality. However, many of the partner sites are not set up to offer opportunities for students to experience activists working to redress these inequities directly. According to Morton's (1995) typology, most of the community efforts would fall under the project or charity paradigms (and not the social justice paradigm). Because of this, and because we believe that it is important for students to explore their own intentions, assumptions, and world-views as part of the service experience, we spend time exploring the notion of paradigms of service. This seems to give students a voice and a chance to locate themselves and their organizations within a broad field. It also provides them with an opportunity to understand some of the tensions and contradictions they may experience in their placements.

Context. Self is both embedded in context and outside of it. The knowing dimension requires students to learn about the Western Cape and South African context and situate their previous knowledge within the reality of being in this location. Here we discuss issues of power and inequality in service (e.g. Camacho, 2004; Keith, 2005; Rohleder et al., 2007), as well as how these issues play out in the broader South African, and specifically, Western Cape, context. Broadly, this gives students new ways of knowing about themselves in a different context, which we would argue is important for students to develop and use in other contexts. It also helps them to recognize that knowledge and wisdom reside in communities outside the university.

Organizations. This domain deals with the non-profit sector and the specific organizations at which the students are placed. We explore debates about development, the shift from community needs to community assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003), and how organizations do development work. Crucial here, too, is the notion of 'indigenous modernities' (Robins, 2003) and the intersection of development and context. The "development sector" in South Africa, while still very active, has been a crucial voice historically for many communities. Students get to hear these narratives and see the activities of development work from our community partners. This assists students with understanding how their approach to service and their service activities fit in with the organization's broader goals and activities, and how their organizations fit within the broader contested paradigm of development.

In summary, then, we reflect with our students on personal service intentions and values; we seek to understand the role and culture of our organization partners who provide students with access to very diverse communities in exchange for their service;

and we examine the broader community context in which we work. And streaming throughout these explorations is our facilitation of students' reflection on their concrete experiences working in marginalized communities in the context of these issues. Through this process students develop a deeper understanding of the often very small contribution service-learning can make to the lives of others, as well as to their own, with the service-learning partner organizations becoming an extension of the classroom in their own right.

Community-Based Partnership Research

In addition to service-learning, the Cape Town program encourages students to engage with our partner organizations by responding to their information needs through community-based research. Here, too, we take a partnership approach with the intention of developing a limited set of relationships with organizations that can sustain long-term inquiry projects that students can contribute to each program year.

As with service-learning, community-based research has multiple, diverse definitions and expressions. We subscribe to an "engaged scholarship" model (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Nyden, 2006; Stanton, 2008; Stoecker, 1999) that emphasizes service-learning's values of collaboration, reciprocity, and partnership in the southern African context where community development strategies and healthcare systems must respond to increasing poverty and infectious disease (e.g., HIV/AIDS) and complicated, interconnected challenges related to providing effective care and equitable economic opportunities to all segments of the population – both rural and urban. Through the practice of what we call Community-Based Partnership Research (CBPR), we engage students in bringing helpful clarity to some of these challenges and at least modestly improved understandings of effective strategies for resolving them.

CBPR should have an intentional *public purpose* with direct or indirect benefit to our partners and their communities. It should represent some degree of collaboration between the student(s) and their partners as they negotiate and carry out each stage of the research *process*: determining the research question, planning the research, gathering the data, and analyzing the data. The desired *product* of the research should both be of value to the community partner (and hopefully lead to improved life in its community) and also contribute to advancing knowledge about the issues researched academically (Stanton, 2008). (Occasionally students develop two products, one shaped for an academic audience and one for a community audience.)

We require students opting to do CBPR to commit

to at least two quarters of research activity in Cape Town – either Winter and Spring Quarters or Spring and Summer (North American calendar). Students starting Winter Quarter take a preparation seminar that introduces them to methods and approaches to CBPR and supports their development of a feasible research plan with one of our partners, which they carry out Spring Quarter through the program's research seminar. Students committing to the Spring and Summer Quarters take the preparation seminar in spring and work independently over the summer on their projects.

We have structured the CBPR program around the theme of research as a form of community service. The projects are designed with the goals of building new knowledge and skills for students, responding effectively to community health and development information needs of our partners, and ultimately contributing to improved life for Western Cape residents.

We, therefore, do not sponsor or encourage students to undertake research in Cape Town that springs solely from their academic interests or imaginations, which is a common approach to undergraduate research at Stanford and many other universities. It is this tension that arises between a student's desire to research a topic of his or her choosing and our desire to respond directly to information needs of community organizations and groups in South Africa that motivated us to take a learning service approach to the CBPR seminar just as we have done with the service-learning one.

Community Research Seminar

The research seminar introduces students to rationales, approaches, methods, and controversies related to partnership-based, community research and enables them to prepare for, plan, and launch their projects in collaboration with their assigned partners. The curriculum includes:

- Concepts of community development and the role of research (Escobar, 1999; Shanin, 1997; Stoecker, 2005)
- Concepts of community and its role in health and development (Bell et al., 2002; Farmer, 2003; Patrick & Wickizer, 1995)
- Community-based research – theories and diverse practice (de Koning, 1996; Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Israel, Shulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Nyden, 2006)
- Community partnerships and collaboration in community-based research – issues, challenges, and principles (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008; Wallerstein, Duran, Minkler, & Foley, 2005)

- Qualitative data gathering in community-based research – practice, paradigms, strategies, and assessing community assets and liabilities (Brown et al., 2008; Hancock, LaBonte, & Edwards, 1999; Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Wang & Pies, 2008)
- Researcher roles and challenges in collaborative community-based research (Mihe-suah, 1993; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Oldfield, 2008; Stoecker, 1999)
- Translating community information needs into research questions and developing a collaborative research plan (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008)
- Power relations and the role of researchers and development professionals in the community (Chavez, Duran, Baker, Avila, & Wallerstein, 2008; Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998)
- Community-based research ethics and review boards (Reid & Brief, 2009)

The first-quarter research seminar assignments are designed to enable students to get acquainted with their community partners and the communities which their research will address, understand the need for their research and its community context, and identify and consider the challenges they will face in carrying out their work. As a means of getting acquainted with their communities of focus, an early assignment asks students to undertake a “photo-voice” (Wang & Pies, 2008) study of the site(s) in which they will be doing their data gathering for presentation in the seminar. To begin to understand the context of their research, a second assignment asks students to identify two or more key individuals (informants) to interview. They also present their interviews in seminar, so the whole group learns about all the projects underway and can “workshop” the challenges and issues identified.

A number of challenges arise for students as they begin to develop their research projects through the seminar, so a great deal of class time is devoted to examine and develop suggestions for addressing them. One critical challenge that comes up for anyone engaging in collaborative work is building and sustaining trust with one's partner. For undergraduate students from the U.S. seeking to do this with community-based activists and NGO staff in Western Cape communities, who often have a well-developed skepticism about students' abilities and commitment to contribute, this is especially acute.

The research projects undertaken by the students are both diverse and often complex, focusing on such issues as indigenous interventions to protect children from domestic violence, financial self-sustainability

in South African NGOs, evaluation of the social cohesion impact of a social development fund, and probable impacts of the proposed National Health Insurance Scheme on rural female farm workers. (A listing of all projects completed can be found at: <https://undergrad.stanford.edu/programs/bosp/explore/cape-town/community-engagement>.) To monitor and supervise these projects during the second quarter, we meet with students periodically in a typical research seminar where they present on some aspect of their ongoing research and report on their progress and problems, which the seminar group then discusses. When complete, which may take up to a year of independent work on Stanford's campus after the second quarter in Cape Town, students submit their research reports to us and to their NGO partners and research sponsors. Some of these projects become students' departmental honors theses, in which case the students obtain campus-based faculty advisors from their major departments. Those students not pursuing honors recognition continue to work with the Cape Town research seminar instructor via email and Skype. It is noteworthy that two students' research reports were recognized with the prestigious Firestone Medal for Excellence in Undergraduate Research at their graduation ceremonies, an indication that this service-learning approach to research is beginning to gain acceptance and recognition from campus-based faculty members, who are the ones selecting the awardees.

Student Outcomes

The program is too young and we have yet to have time to complete a careful analysis of its outcomes in a systematic way. However, over these five short years we have observed most participating students being transformed by their experiences in Cape Town. We see these outcomes in students' papers, presentations of their service-learning and research projects, student evaluations, and in our conversations with students during and after the program. We hear comments about this transformational impact after students return to campus and years after they have graduated. The outcomes we see and they tell us about include knowledge development, project-related skill building, critical reflection skill building, cultural learning – both cultural humility and cross-cultural capacity building – and emotional development through deepened understanding of what it means to serve.

One of the issues we address toward the end of the service-learning seminar is how to assist students in sustaining new insights they might have gained during the program. This is important if we are to facilitate in students new ways of *being* after Cape Town instead of having their experience become one more

item in a “shopping basket” of international (and local) service experiences at different stages of their collegiate career. In developing and facilitating this work, we are concerned with interdependence and connectivity, with values and social identity – about “Ubuntu” – whether service is local or international.

The outcomes we seek in students undertaking CBPR are similar to those in service-learning, but focused more on partnership building and research as a form of community service. We assess student learning through a sequential series of writing assignments, which support students as they identify and work with their community partners, articulate and negotiate their research questions and plans, and carry out their early data gathering. The values-oriented student outcome we seek is a new understanding of scholarship as service that responds to and is carried out with those with information needs.

Community Partner Outcomes

It is evident from continuous feedback we receive from our partners that our emphasis on partnership and service has resulted in our students' ability to contribute substantially to their efforts.

Service-Learning Outcomes

Our students have completed numerous substantial projects through their service-learning. For example, at one of our partners, The Clothing Bank (TCB), an NGO that focuses on women's empowerment through enterprise development, our students have played useful roles in a range of projects including devising interview questions for applicants for TCB's training program, assisting with marketing and fundraising, and developing a tool for coaches working with the women on their skills development. At another organization, Hoops 4 Hope, two students developed a mentoring program linking community youth with University of Cape Town students; at the same organization, another student helped develop aspects of their website.

Many of our students also have been involved in mentoring and tutoring, in some cases developing curricula from scratch and running workshops. In other cases the service that students provide is more of a support to the organization, enabling staff members to focus more directly on their communities, something that is difficult for students to do who come in for a short period of time and do not speak the native language. An example here is a student who completed his service at an organization headed up by grandmothers who were caring for their grandchildren in the context of HIV/AIDS. The parents of the children had died of AIDS and so the grandmothers had taken up the parenting role. The organization

is based in a predominantly Xhosa-speaking community and the student, with no Xhosa behind him, was unable to offer the support and training offered by the organization to the grandmothers. He had to settle for more administrative tasks, which took him some time before he saw them as useful. Through the seminar he finally realized that the organization and grandmothers needed him to complete the administrative tasks so that they, as community members who speak Xhosa, could do the training and development work.

Our partners consistently report their pleasure working with our students and appreciation of their contributions. They value the students' flexibility and willingness to learn about the community and organization rather than about a particular topic. They have sensed the support and opportunities for reflection that the program offers students, which has encouraged them to offer additional reflection opportunities on site.

Community Research Outcomes

In the research program, our students have contributed both needed information and outside evaluative perspectives on programs and strategies they have examined. One student completed a biodiversity corridor feasibility project with Goedgedacht, a rural anti-poverty program. The student produced a lengthy report that offered detailed maps of the proposed corridor across the Riebeecksrivier Valley and a preliminary inventory of flora and fauna in the area that could be encouraged and protected through the establishment of such a corridor including those necessary for successful farming in a region soon to be affected by climate change. She also developed a list of strategy recommendations for eliciting support and alliance for such an effort from farmers in the Valley, especially those who would have to contribute portions of their lands to the corridor.

In a study on the impact of local women's efforts to protect children from domestic violence, also with Goedgedacht, a student interviewed the "safe house mothers" and other residents of the farm worker communities, Goedgedacht staff, and Department of Social Development social workers to identify benefits and challenges of this local strategy for protecting children who live in violent households. Her report assisted Goedgedacht in making the case to the Department that the safe house mothers deserve recognition, qualifications training, and compensation for their work.

What is most gratifying is how some of our partners have been able to use the students' research on behalf of the community members they serve. For example, Woman on Farms used a student's investigation of the healthcare access challenges of women farmworkers to lobby effectively with Parliament as

it legislated South Africa's national health insurance program. Another student's research enabled an education NGO to mount a data-driven advocacy campaign aimed at addressing inequitable school teacher allocation policies.

Challenges

While evaluative feedback from our students and community partners has been extremely positive, our work over the past five years has also brought many challenges, many of which relate specifically to our institutional and geographical contexts. We have identified some of these throughout this article. Here we discuss a few additional ones.

Institutional Context

Stanford is a leading research university. While in recent years interdisciplinary inquiry and instruction have increasingly gained support and interest from faculty and students, the University remains organized primarily around academic disciplines that emphasize "contribut[ing] to the basic research that forms the foundation for all future discoveries" (School of Humanities and Sciences, 2014). In such a context, applied, qualitative research that addresses the practical information needs of small community organizations has not been prioritized or widely practiced. Similarly, the most respected (by faculty) and prized (by students) service-learning opportunities are those with Washington, DC-based government agencies and well-established and resourced NGOs such as the World Bank.

In establishing the Cape Town program with a commitment to partner with small, grass-roots community organizations, we thus encountered many hurdles. It should not be surprising that one has been gaining academic recognition and respect for a program that is distinguished by interdisciplinary experiential learning at the grass-roots and applied, qualitative research. As related above, faculty affiliated with the Center for African Studies enthusiastically supported the program's launch, which gave it immediate respectability. Then as cohorts of students returned from campus sharing their deeply critical service-learning experiences – both what they did and the depth of what they learned, campus confidence grew quickly. Many students turned their Cape Town work – both service-learning and research – into honors theses, or built upon it in course work. It quickly became apparent to many campus colleagues that students' time in Cape Town was a pivotal moment in their undergraduate careers, one that often determined students' goals for careers and graduate study. Due to these accomplishments and increasing student interest in such experiences, the Overseas Studies campus

office is investigating ways to add Cape Town-style community-engaged service-learning and research into the curricula of many of its other centers.

Though this reputational challenge has been successfully addressed, the Cape Town program continues to contend with the rather entitled, self-referential goal orientation students bring with them, which is focused on how the program and its community engagement activities can best serve the students' academic and personal interests. This self-centered stance is often combined with self-confidence verging on arrogance, which is animated by a sense that these students' highly developed skills and knowledge can enable them to have a large, positive impact on the people and problems they expect to find in South Africa. These attitudes are multi-faceted, and arise from social class, family background, peer pressure, and academic expectations of faculty. But they are exhibited by a large, broadly representative group of students who come from a highly diverse student body financially, ethnically, racially, and every other way. What these students have in common is a sense of accomplishment from having been admitted to Stanford, which is encouraged once they matriculate by the University's high expectations for what they can achieve while on campus and after graduation.

A related challenge arises from Stanford's approach to encouraging undergraduate research. Most undergraduate research programs at Stanford and other U.S. universities encourage students to engage in and practice academic scholarship through pursuit of their own ideas and interests, or perhaps those of faculty advisors or mentors. Such programs are very successful at inviting students to expose themselves to methods and values related to academic scholarship, contribute in modest ways to academic knowledge in a variety of fields, and seriously consider pursuing academic career paths. However, as with much conventional university-sponsored scholarship, these endeavors, however intellectually exciting, are often irrelevant to concerns and problems in the world, especially in local and regional communities. Occasionally they are even harmful to people and these communities when students take up valuable time of residents and NGO staff with interviews and other data gathering strategies and then return to campus to conduct their analysis and write up their research without ever providing anything back to the communities in which they were conducting the research. This kind of "touch and go" inquiry has resulted in many organizations and communities becoming resistant to cooperating with faculty and student researchers, especially in indigenous population areas of the North and across the Southern Hemisphere (Escobar, 1997; Illich, 1997; Kaplan, 1998; Mihesuah, 1993; Scheyvens & McClennan,

2014). South Africa, because of its historical and political, not to mention geographical attractiveness to scholars from the North, has been especially targeted in this way with the result that NGOs and communities are increasingly suspicious of the motives of students and scholars and skeptical of what is to be gained by cooperating with them (Mahlomaholo & Matobako, 2006; Prins & Webster, 2010)

In the face of this many of our students with special skills and/or research interests see them as related to problem-solving in the world. They imagine their research "doing good for" people in need rather than sharing their scholarly skills in such a way as to help people with needs to learn more about their contexts so they can solve their own problems. Our interest, as described earlier, is in making our academic resources – in this case trained undergraduates – available to serve the needs of our partners. We, therefore, have taken a hard position that students do service-learning only with one of our NGO partners. The only research, which the Cape Town program will support, is research in response to the partners' information needs. This program orientation and the two-quarter residency requirement result in few students actually undertaking research. However, as described above, the outcomes of students' work have been substantial, and the experiences the students have carrying them out, while sometimes frustrating, yield great learning for the students and a deep sense of accomplishment. Students make the transition from a self-focused "doing for" orientation to service to one of "traveling with" as an ally. Our community partners, at first reluctant and skeptical about what students can offer, now suggest more projects than our students can address.

Geographical Context

As with the institutional context, where we do our work impacts what we do and the way we do it. With its vast economic disparities demarcated by historical racial oppression and social engineering, Cape Town is a complicated, challenging place to be. The NGO sector has played a critical role addressing the social and economic challenges historically and currently faced by the underclass in heroic and often innovative ways. Because of this difficult but rich history, our partner organization staff, while often without traditional academic qualifications, have deep experience and wide-ranging knowledge and skills in community organizing and effective service. Some of them are extraordinarily innovative and entrepreneurial, which has been demonstrated by establishing path-breaking approaches to economic empowerment of jobless, uneducated women, environmental education of children, etc. What they lack in so many cases, however, is ample, secure financial and technological support,

access to training and development programs, staff qualified to carry out monitoring and evaluation, etc. And while citizen activism was prized during the anti-apartheid struggle, a strong volunteer tradition does not yet exist in South Africa, and few organizations have the knowledge (much less the staff resources) to recruit and make effective use of part-time volunteers, a very different situation than students would find if they choose to volunteer with U.S. nonprofits, many of which have staff members assigned to recruit and coordinate volunteers.

Thus, when we started seeking NGO partners to host our service-learning and research students, we were often met with skepticism that the students could actually be of assistance or resistance to hosting students due to a simple lack of personnel and/or time to figure out how to make good use of them. It was in response to this that we set out on our “partnership approach” to service-learning, outlined above, that animates both the curricula of our service-learning and research seminars as well as our commitment to work with our partners over the years so they can learn experientially and through our forums and consultation how to use our students well.

Related to this challenge is a more general one: the shock that many students experience when they arrive in Cape Town and are confronted with poverty conditions unlike any they may have seen before. South Africa’s history of racism and its heritage are profoundly disturbing to many students. It stimulates them to reflect on how this heritage relates to the troubled, racist history of the United States. For the sensitive ones this can be very difficult to absorb. Being in Cape Town, visiting the townships and hearing personal stories provoke deep, difficult feelings related to identity, privilege, and guilt, and sometimes feelings of helplessness in the face of it all (see Kiely, 2004 for more on this).

Once again the service-learning and research seminars become important venues for helping students reflect on and come to terms with these observations and feelings. Through class discussions, assigned readings, guest speakers, and reflective writing, they can come to see the richness in poor communities, the strength of the human spirit, the heroic work of many South Africans seeking to redress the wrongs of the past, etc. Most importantly they can come to attitudinal standpoints that enable them to return home with new or renewed commitment to be a force for social justice at Stanford, in their home communities, or in their future community(ies).

There are two other challenges worthy of note: the need to establish safe and affordable ways for our students to travel back and forth from the partners, many of which are located in township communities with extremely high crime rates; and a growing trend at

least in South Africa of cash strapped NGOs seeking to use the hosting of volunteers as income generating activities by requiring the sending institution to pay (sometimes significant) fees. To date we have addressed this latter challenge by working to ensure that our student volunteers contribute effective, useful work activities and products of high value to the partners, and by providing the partners with staff development opportunities through our Partner Forums. Nevertheless, these issues remain vexing ones, which we continue to explore with the partners.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed a framework for a global service-learning program in Cape Town, South Africa with a focus on partnerships as accompaniment and learning service as key elements of ethical and sustainable practice in a context of extreme inequality. A key element for staff and students working with this approach to community engagement is understanding the importance and complexity of relationships – and of service relationships in particular. Because they always involve partners with different levels and kinds of resources, service relationships are necessarily about power. If we take as our starting point, that development – understood as a process of engagement and not a set of outcomes (Taylor & Paulsen, 2010) – is sustained through relationships, then building partnerships over the long-term is core to our practice of service-learning and CBPR in terms of program goals, structure, and pedagogy. Indeed, in contexts of extreme inequality such as South Africa, not building and attending to relationships is unethical and irresponsible, and ultimately ineffective, and not emphasizing to students that they must join these relationships and contribute to them at the possible expense of not pursuing their own interests can be tantamount to malpractice.

Prioritizing goals and outcomes at the expense of sustaining relationships seems increasingly encouraged and expected in our globalized world. Our experience, however, leads us to believe that to do so will lead us astray. We feel compelled by the context as well as our principles of practice and our pedagogical approach, which are underpinned by values of community or “ubuntu” and social justice, to embrace relationships with our partners as the key “module” of learning service. Building an engaged, academic program is not just designing a theoretical model, processing students through it, and crunching the results. Rather, for us, it has become much more of an ongoing way of learning service with local communities and organizations in ethical, mutually beneficial ways – on behalf of our program, students, and partners.

Through reflecting on our practice, we believe that

our partnership-based learning service approach, while not without challenges, reflects an institutional philosophy and curricular design that can be developed across geographical and cultural borders to produce the kind of student-citizens who are critical and reflective thinkers able to understand the relationship between local and global concerns and act on them in our increasingly unequal world.

Notes

The authors developed and led this program from 2009 - 2014. They were joined in 2011 by Jen van Heerden, who contributed immensely to the program and the partnerships described in this article.

¹ This term refers to both service-learning and community-based research.

² We work with about 25 organizations of which about five have been partners since 2010.

³ Examples of our syllabi for both service-learning and research are available at <http://globalsl.org/wiki/gsl-practice-research-wiki/gsl-tools-and-syllabi/model-syllabi-and-syllabi-templates/>.

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