

TRAVERSING THE BUMPY ROAD OF LEARNING: EXPLORING FACULTY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM IN TANZANIA

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Cultural differences, peer relationships, personal coping styles, dealing with conflict, developmental stage, and life experiences of the students don't only shape student learning but affect faculty as well. Effectively assisting students with their emotional experience in a course taking place in a remote area of Africa can be an interesting challenge for faculty. The purpose of this narrative is to explore the subjective experience of two faculty members from different disciplines as they accompanied a group of interdisciplinary students for a month of immersion service-learning. Drawing from their personal journals, the authors reflect on the challenges in service-learning and the personal impact of leaving the traditional classroom to accompany their students on the bumpy road of learning.

"Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." - African proverb

Nancy's Journal (June, 10, 2008):

"What a couple of days! Some discussion among the students—cracks beginning to evolve. Faculty are taking different positions, and tensions are arising within the leadership team—appears to be a clashing of generational values and roles. It is such a reminder of the challenges for us "teachers," and also how hard it is for me to be a student; how complex it is to assume a facilitator role in an experience like this. It is difficult to draw boundaries when one minute the topic of discussion is the state of one's bowels, and the next attempting to help students make meaning out of experience."

Introduction

In May 2008, an intrepid group of ten interdisciplinary students and three faculty members set forth for a month-long service-learning project in a rural district of Tanzania located in Lake Victoria. We faced our leave-taking with high hopes intermingled with anxiety, not knowing exactly what we were

facing or what was expected of us when we arrived, in spite of many months of preparation. Several in the group were experienced travelers and about half were quite familiar with African culture, while at least three of the students had never traveled out of the U.S. But regardless of experience, no one was immune from the ups and downs of the powerful learning experience in Tanzania. As the social scientist members of the team, the authors of this paper, Nancy and Sharon, initially set out to capture and evaluate the kind of learning that took place through our students' journals. However, we quickly discovered that just as the emotional journey of the students' learning became a prominent focus, so too were our own affective responses. We realized that before we could tackle an analysis of the student's learning, we needed to explore the impact of this experience on ourselves.

The faculty perspective in the unique and intimate partnership of learning that occurs in international service-learning is an important piece of the larger narrative; but it often is left unexplored. Warner & Esposito (2009) refer to the experience of "immersion service-learning" as being a particularly richly

transformative learning opportunity as students and faculty live and work side by side for an extended period of time. They claim that "the impact of service-learning on faculty and their teaching is an integral factor in the outcome of student engaged learning (p.511)." Thus, they suggest that students and faculty living and working together as co-learners enhances the learning possibilities for the student. Philosopher Paolo Friere (1970) commented frequently in his writings on the role of the "teacher as learner" as imperative in a democratic society:

"Although the teachers or the students are not the same, the person in charge of education is being formed or re-formed as he/she teaches, and the person who is being taught forms him/herself in the process...There is, in fact, no teaching without learning" (p. 30-31).

International service-learning, or immersion service-learning, is an increasingly popular educational platform within a broad range of disciplines in higher education. This particular application-based approach to education provides an alternative to traditional study abroad programs for both students and faculty in higher education, combining the benefits of service-learning¹, well documented for a host of extrinsic and intrinsic learning outcomes with the addition of the learning opportunities found in both international travel and cultural immersion in typically underserved areas. Sternberger, Ford, and Hale (2005), suggest that international service-learning builds:

"...on the success and principles of domestically-based approaches in order to help students encounter their own ethnocentric perspectives, while simultaneously providing a means to enlarge their knowledge base and apply components of their burgeoning discipline and/or

profession in another culture" (p. 78).

International service-learning can increase educational learning opportunities exponentially for the students, but it also can be a stretch for faculty as roles and boundaries are redefined. While the students are thrust into unfamiliar and often uncomfortable living circumstances away from family and friends, so too, are the faculty. Even as students struggle with the inevitable, and emotionally-charged, intra-group dynamics issues, faculty are often invited into the fray while being expected to remain above the conflict, even when the faculty may be the target. Additionally, close traveling and living circumstances typically force re-conceptualization of the relationship between learner, teacher, and community partners as evidenced by the plethora of new roles that all are expected to assume. Thus, values, personal qualities, developmental stages of the students, and even one's sense of self, come into the forefront when navigating the challenges with which all are inevitably confronted. All of this was strong fodder indeed, for a learning experience in which one could not wholly predict or control the direction of the exciting—if at times bumpy—path on which we all traveled.

Because of the complexity of an immersion service-learning course of study, many layers of challenges arise that provide an impetus for the learning process for students and faculty alike, often beyond the time frame of the actual course. However, faculty returning back to campus after such an experience may find few opportunities to "de-brief" or find validation for their adventures, or to share after-thoughts as they make sense of their own experiences. "Was it worth it?" is a common refrain as faculty arrive back to the office, often drained, and wondering what and who benefited, and in what way. The environments that returning faculty come home to often do not make a space for dialogue about "meaning-making," particularly when friends, family, and colleagues may view a returning faculty from an overseas course as having been on vacation. Typically the

questions will range from “Did you have a good time?” to a general, “How’d it go?” or even the jibe, “Must be nice...”

Purpose of this Narrative

The purpose of this narrative is to present our lived experience as faculty “up close and personally,” drawing primarily from our own journals and interspersed with our students’ voices as we experienced Tanzania side by side. Warner & Esposito (2009) comment, “In the immersion service-learning experience, the roles (for faculty) multiply to include...being a human being with emotions, flaws, and imperfections (p.511).” By reflecting on the personal challenges as well as the triumphs we encountered, we were able to revisit and make meaning of the emotional processes we experienced. Now, we more comfortably understand them to be an important, even necessary, part of the educational process.

Nancy, an associate professor of social work, and Sharon, a professor of family and consumer sciences, served multiple roles in the planning, implementation, and facilitation of the experience. On location, we were course instructors, faculty liaisons to a community group, mentors and advisors for students, participants in cultural activities, and facilitators of the focus groups that were part of our data collection process for our qualitative research project. This list doesn’t reflect the many other informal supportive services we also provided. A third colleague was the director and administrative leader of the program, as well as the primary liaison with our Tanzanian partners. In keeping with our plans to explore the student experience, the students were asked to keep a journal and participate in focus groups consistent with human subject protocols. We, too, agreed to keep a journal to document our experiences, impressions and feelings and all these data have provided us with an intensive lens to better understand our experiences. Though we collected data formally, it is not our intention to present a formal qualitative analysis of the students’ learning at this time given the subjective focus of this paper. We have drawn from the students’ journals to punctuate our own impressions. What we are addressing in

this paper is the multitude of reactions that we documented in our shared personal journals. After returning home and upon further reflection, we decided that our own experiences are a prominent part of the story. The fact that our living and working circumstances were so deeply intertwined with those of the students increased the intensity of the experience for both of us. These issues drew heavily upon our own levels of adaptability and resiliency, as well as personal philosophies as we were confronted with issues similar to those faced by our students.

About Nancy

When I was approached with the idea of accompanying a group of as yet unidentified students to travel to Tanzania to help facilitate a multi-disciplinary service-learning project, I jumped at the opportunity, though admittedly I was privately a bit intimidated. The focus of the trip (working with local groups on economic development, girls’ empowerment and agro-forestry) was out of my expertise as my experience is in micro-practice, specifically clinical work with individuals, couples and families. I certainly did not have specific knowledge in working with African populations, even though I had attended an African women’s conference in Kenya and had also spent a week in Tanzania, traveling with a non-profit development organization that specialized in girls’ education and community water projects. At that time, I felt a surprising level of kinship with the women I met, deeply moved by their strength, resiliency, and buoyancy. I was highly motivated to return for more.

I likely had been invited to participate in the Ukerewe project because of my leadership in promoting service-learning across campus in my role as Faculty Affiliate for the newly developed Office of Service-learning for the university. I also had a particular interest in and personal experience with international service-learning. However, my previous experience leading a service-learning group was in Northern Ireland, light years away from the culture of East Africa. This invitation filled me with excitement even as I wondered what I could bring to the experience. On a

professional level, I had been personally grappling for quite a while with the notion of faculty as “co-learner” rather than as “teacher/expert”—as is so prominent in higher education—in light of my keen involvement with service-learning and other forms of experiential learning. That question was particularly relevant as it pertained to my primary assignment in the School of Social Work: teaching social work master’s students clinical skills in a way that was meaningful to them and facilitated their learning. In my way of thinking, working with people always involves a journey into the unknown, to be entered with great humility and an appreciation for being in the role of learner. Thus, even though I was entering this trip with no real content to enhance the students’ learning, I had enough experience (and/or hubris), to feel confident that I had something useful to offer.

I was particularly excited that social work students were going to participate. Four very diverse students were involved: an African American BSW student; a Caucasian MSW student who had been raised in Africa; an MSW alumna and current Ph.D. student in family and consumer sciences (all female); and a male Tanzanian MSW student who served as a graduate assistant and skillful Kiswahili translator. As the director of global studies for the School of Social Work, I was thrilled that this interdisciplinary experience was available because service-learning pedagogy seems to have been more slowly integrated into social work curricula than other disciplines. I felt confident that the social work students would enrich the group as well as broaden their own horizons substantially, by participating on an interdisciplinary team.

About Sharon

During the fifteen years I served as Dean of the College of Family and Consumer Sciences, developing more study abroad programs for our students was one of my top priorities, and a goal in the College’s strategic plan. Having “stepped up to the faculty” two years previous to the beginning of this service-learning program, I had decided I should “walk the talk” as a faculty member in a study abroad program. Expanding opportunities for students

and undertaking research on their experience were the drivers that propelled me on this journey.

Like Nancy, I had fallen in love with places and people in Africa, beginning in the 1980s when I was privileged to be a Fulbright-sponsored faculty member in Malawi. Spending that academic year teaching and (mostly) learning from my students, observing rural women working on their farms and managing small-scale enterprises, and absorbing the rhythms of the natural environment and the culture was exhilarating. Visits to my graduate students’ research sites in Kenya and Swaziland in the late-1980s and early-1990s, respectively, and an international conference in Ghana in 2000, further fueled my desire to reconnect or explore another place on the African continent. When I was invited to join a team of three to assess the suitability of Ukerewe as the site of a new service-learning program in Tanzania prior to the course, I was happy to undertake the assignment.

While in Tanzania for the first time, I was inspired by the work of a dynamic Tanzanian woman leader who had served in prominent governmental leadership positions, including the representative of her district in the Republic of Tanzania Parliament. She also had received a prestigious prize in promoting global citizenship. “Mama” N², and our University had developed a Memorandum of Agreement with the goal of sustaining a relationship that would address priority development needs in her district and provide opportunities for student engagement. The local groups with which we visited expressed interest in the concept of students coming to participate in their community efforts focusing on agroforestry, women’s economic enterprises, and girls’ social and educational development. Despite the shortcomings of the lodging facilities, the isolation of the island, and the poor conditions for travel on the island, the desire to fulfill the University’s part of this commitment trumped any reservations the review team and I might have allowed to surface. My interest in helping to breathe life into the Memorandum of Agreement was based, in part, on my long-standing interest in

women's issues. In my thirty years of employment in higher education, I had become indignant that so many memoranda of agreements between universities abroad and in the U.S. had fallen by the wayside, never fully realized nor appropriately terminated. I didn't want this breach of ethics to happen with this initiative, especially when most of the intended benefits were for women and girls, the most neglected segment of the population in developing countries. I was confident of my skills as an administrator; I liked being associated with a project in a rural area because it connected me to my Kansas farm roots and I was eager to work with a small group of students who wanted to contribute to making life better for others.

About the Students

Nine students in all were recruited for this pilot program. In addition to the BSW and MSW social work students, there were four other graduate students: two from wildlife biology, one with a BS in child development who was a beginning doctoral student in Child and Family, and a Master's student in theater performance. Other students were undergraduates majoring in international studies and consumer economics, respectively, and a newly-minted BS graduate in ecology. Three of the group—two undergraduates and one graduate student—were African American, the rest Euro-Americans/Caucasian except for the MSW graduate assistant who was Tanzanian.

The social worker students along with Nancy and the MSW graduate assistant represented a sizeable portion of the group (38%). The entire group of students ranged in age from 19 to 38 years old. Many of the students had extensive travel experience, while only three of the group had no previous international travel experience. Five of the students had been to Africa before, four of them for long periods. One of the graduate students had served in the Peace Corps in Mali and the other lived and traveled professionally in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both of these women found the service-learning aspect of working with community groups an appealing part of our program. Three of the female graduate students had strong career

aspirations to return to Africa professionally after completing their degree, making the trip especially important to them. The diversity of subject area emphasis, the variety of experiences, and the assortment of skill sets (not to mention personalities) enhanced the group, but also posed challenges in intra-group dynamics on various occasions.

Preparation and (Maybe) Letting Go

Nancy's Journal (May 25, 2008):

"It feels a bit strange yet liberating not to be in charge, yet then again, I wonder what my place, my role is. Am I a participant/learner or am I an authority figure? What guidance/comfort leadership is expected of me? What expertise? I am so touched by the courage of these students—facing their fears and driven by a lust for adventure and idealism. Each of us wondering, what's ahead. I'm hoping to learn to let go, to not be in charge, to go with the flow, to have less investment in outcome, less ego."

For months prior to the trip itself, we met in both the large group as well as in subgroups. The large group meeting focused endlessly on logistics but not on interpersonal process and team-building as we might have done in social work. One of the students commented on this process in her journal:

"Though we spent an entire school year planning the program (yet some of the team members didn't come on board until much later), I did not get the chance to know everyone on a personal basis. The interaction we had was always very goal-based and usually rushed because of our busy school schedules."

Because I (Nancy) was not in charge and my input wasn't solicited, I sat quietly during the large planning meetings as my role was still unclear. An overriding goal, one that

miraculously was met, was to obtain funding for the ten students and three faculty; a significant investment and herculean effort. Much of the credit for this can be attributed to the efforts of our colleague, the director of the Tanzania program, and to Sharon, who took responsibility for seeking grants and gifts, especially to cover the program fees for the graduate students. She also assumed the role of reporting on the state of financial affairs to the anxious students. There was often confusion, as often happens in a large institution. Eventually, nearly everyone's expenses were covered. However, this issue turned out to be a source of dissatisfaction for the students at the end of the trip, and it created some level of disappointment in the faculty for the perceived lack of acknowledgement or appreciation for the fundraising efforts that allowed all of the students to go gratis.

My (Nancy's) assumed assignment was to provide direction for one of Mama N's goals for the trip, which was women's economic development. A subgroup was formed, comprised of two of the younger, undergraduate students and the MSW student who had strong aspirations to return to Africa and work in the area of women's empowerment and violence against women. Our Tanzanian graduate assistant also joined us to assist. Our group met on a monthly basis at least six times before the actual trip, and we struggled to figure out how to address the goals with minimal information about the people we were going to be serving. The social work students and I had more process-oriented expectations in that the relationships to be established were paramount. We were of the belief that we needed to hear the voices of the women and what they wanted in order to appropriately plan next steps. The students felt enormous pressure to produce a plan and I spent time attempting to provide direction while secretly sharing some of their trepidation. As our MSW student reflected:

"I'm excited and nervous and frankly am unsure of what to expect. Obviously I have an idea of what will be going on but as far as working with the women's group

goes – I feel anxious. The primary reason (I don't know if I should be admitting this) is that I feel unqualified to help a women's economics and leadership development group. The only thing I'm confident in is that I am going to learn an amazing amount from them – I'm just not sure it can be the other way around."

Preparations: Assumptions vs. Reality

Sharon's Journal (May 24, 2008):

"The main thing that sustained me through all the preparations, unclear procedures, and the need to fill gaps to help the students—primarily with their finances—yet be diplomatic, has been the eagerness of the students, especially X's academic trajectory and dedication to making her career matter to others, and getting to know Nancy as a colleague and friend."

During our planning meeting, I (Sharon) shared my very brief experience and observations as well as the opportunities and challenges our service-learning group would likely face. Much of the focus was on Mama N's expectations and goals for her district. We discussed health issues, travel details and students' goals. I wanted to make sure that the course-related aspects of service-learning were appropriate to the students' majors, career plans, and personal goals, as well as to secure adequate funding for everyone. Our program director communicated with Mama N's staff about accommodations, transportation and arrangements with the groups in Ukerewe, and reported on this in our meetings. Conveyed, with some level of urgency, was the expectation that the group develop a detailed plan and tangible goals early in the months before the trip itself.

The students and faculty were organized into three subgroups and each of the groups was loosely facilitated by one of the three faculty members. We had limited knowledge

of the community members from the brief initial investigative meetings in Ukerewe, and only a general idea of their level of organization. Yet with incomplete information about the level of the community's knowledge and sophistication of expectations during this preparatory phase, we made the assumption that the communities we would be working with were at a fairly elementary stage. Indeed, the women's group that the visitation team had met with in 2007 was not well organized and had very limited resources. However, as we were soon to discover, this initial group was not the group that was selected as our local partner. Conversely, Buré Gardens and the girls program were more familiar because our visitation team had actually met some of their leaders and members. We tried to prepare to be providers of knowledge—possibly “experts” even though we all knew better—at least theoretically. This assumption would create a good bit of individual and group distress upon arrival.

The reality was that we were charting new waters in this pilot project in a part of Tanzania and Africa that was unexplored by the university. The existing Study Abroad in Tanzania program, geared primarily to undergraduates, was well-established, thanks to the untiring efforts over many years of our colleague and director of our program. But the inclusion of graduate students and serious service project meant to be ultimately sustainable, the stakes felt high. The challenges inherent in planning across time zones and through interpreters made communication, at best, challenging and so, with the very best of intent we all found ourselves to a large degree “making it up as we went along.”

Welcome to Africa!

Sharon's Journal (May 31, 2008):

“Nearing Mwanza, the tread came off one of the tires on the jeep in which I was riding. Roy [our driver] unloaded the luggage, got out the spare tire, and changed it. Children walking home from school stopped to greet us as we waited by the side of the road. None of this

ruffled me—it's just part of the travel experience in an African country. It became clear we would not meet the ferry schedule.”

One of the most intriguing things about visiting Africa is the mythical invitation to slow down and succumb to the seductive sense of time-warp that comes with an infrastructure that is unreliable. The truth is that it is easy to romanticize for those who are not encumbered with a lifestyle of subsistence survival as is true for much of the population for whom those obstacles present ongoing unwieldy life challenges. However, for our group of 13, as we approached our final destination by way of a 3 ½ hour ferry ride through the waters of Lake Victoria, many of us still reeling from jet lag and days of safari, the delay that the flat tire created was a welcome reprieve. A student commented:

“I love the fact that there's only one ferry to Ukerewe per day and that we missed it. I love it because it's so different from being in the U.S. where everyone is so impatient all the time and to be delayed a full day is almost unheard of. I love it because it forces us to just take things as they come and adjust to them, rather than making everything around us adjust to us. I love it because it reminds me that I am not the center of the universe, nor is anyone else.”

It should be noted that being freed from the burdens of budget and schedules has a lot of advantages and it is rare, as a faculty member, that I have had that experience. My reaction to missing the boat was as follows:

Nancy's Journal (May 31, 2008):

“I am feeling peaceful this a.m. as we had the gift of a night in Mwanza—lush, lakeside city filled with the sounds of teeming life: laughter, industry and flowers. The hotel is overlooking Lake Victoria. How fortunate we were to “miss the

boat" and to find a better one. How often in life does that happen?"

Arriving at our Site

After spending a week traveling through Tanzania, driving from Arusha up through the Ngorongoro Crater, stopping at a Masaai bomba, and thrilling at the opportunity of a lifetime to travel through the Serengeti National Park, we finally arrived via a ferry trip on Lake Victoria to our island. We arrived to the sounds and sights of teeming life, bustling energy, and the brilliant colors wrapped around the graceful looking women as well as the inevitable stares of the children. White people, referred to as "Mzungu" was a frequent refrain, as one student described in her journal:

"Having everyone stare at us 'mzungus' is an educational experience in itself. To feel what it's like to be the minority, and even to be candidly stared at by throngs of people, gives one the sense of how the Masaai might feel to have some of us observe them as they conduct their daily business/lives."

In a similar vein, Sharon had the experience, when walking to the market with the program director, of having a small child giggle to her mother, "That lady is wearing a funny hat," pointing to Sharon's head of thick white hair. It is a thought-provoking experience to be "the other," and it takes some getting used to on the part of the visitor/interloper as one of the other students observed toward the end of the program:

"Awoke, went jogging by myself for the first time. It felt very good to know the roads and to have very few people staring anymore. The town must be getting used to us, as the cheers were all friendly, 'Habari za a subui!' 'Good morning!' I think only one kid yelled, 'Mzungu!' which is a huge improvement. 'Mzungu' is getting old and I am wearing thin on being

called 'white.' It does not fill me with good tidings."

We were met by Mama N's team, who thoughtfully had taxis waiting to whisk us to our hotel. Yes, in the midst of Lake Victoria, miles from land, in the main island village where electricity has just been available since 2006, there was a newly-built hotel with rooms reserved for us. We were all given private rooms that had showers, with most having squat toilets rather than the bowl type. The rooms, each equipped with a chair, desk and lamp, all had ceiling fans and mosquito nets covering the beds. We were quite surprised, but the reaction was not universally positively. Some of the students had been preparing for a more physically rigorous experience, where we would be living at the level of most of the community. One of our experienced students was concerned about our comfortable living arrangement as she commented in a focus group when the topic of survival skills came up:

"...one of the things I have been a little frustrated with is the amount of comfort we get here and the barrier we have between us and the community. And it is almost like in here, we could be in the United States, and it doesn't really feel like Africa...just feeling like I am being in luxury and not fully experiencing the community."

However, as the rigors of the busy schedule took its toll, our living situation proved to be a welcome retreat from the intensity of the program.

Our meals took place in an open pavilion covered by a tarp in the middle of the hotel complex. Mama N had arranged for a group of local women to cook all our meals. While we felt a bit uncomfortable with this privilege, we also were aware that they were being paid wages they might not have been able to earn otherwise. All of the cooking (for at least 20 people at a time) took place either in a small open air cooking hut with two small propane burners, or over an open fire contained by three

stones as is customary. The cooking group and the team of interpreters and program assistants and coordinators became precious resources and dear colleagues and friends: they were our closest Tanzanian community members with whom we could relate on a regular basis.

Speaking of Survival Skills... and Acclimation, Too

The topic of survival skills generated a wealth of opinions from the students, both the experienced, well-traveled ones as well as those with little experience. One of the students who had never traveled outside the U.S. shared in a focus group:

"I feel like I have exercised survival skills during this trip (already). I have learned how to say, OK, there is a spider in my room. I am just going to have to adjust in order to live with this. OK, I have to squat to pee; let me make adjustments. So there have been different subtle adjustments that have made me say this is a new way to live, a new way to survive and I'm going to try to be as adaptable and complain as little as possible about this because I'm in this position."

One of our older students in the same group commented:

"So, for me, survival is much more about coping and being 'on' all the time. Holy smokes! There are two different cultures, two different languages, trying to always show my best, you know, my best side and that I'm really trying to be a help and not a hindrance and hopefully my ideas are being offered in good faith and not taken as being presumptuous. Let's have a good conversation and learn from each other and always try and hope that doesn't get lost in translation. So I find myself just being incredibly wiped out after like only three

hours, and at home in the U.S., I can go for eight, nine, ten, eleven hours straight at hard work."

As for faculty "survival," my (Nancy) concerns were less externally focused on living conditions. I worried about things such as group dynamics and students having good experiences, and also managing to get myself "out of the way" as I was often unclear about my role—especially within the service project itself:

"Finding my bearings today after dealing with student anxiety, my own anxiety, and adjustments to the lifestyle here. Yesterday 'X' was sulking, refusing to share, and the night before 'P' was the same way. I am fairly convinced that in both cases shame was the culprit. Speaking of shame, I brought a bag of candy (to the women's group) and distributed it to mixed results. I struggled with my regret as it was obvious that it was clumsy and likely incredibly inappropriate. I was embarrassed in front of the students for my efforts and I feel ashamed that I needed to be the one to grab control."

My (Sharon's) experience as a traveler in India and other parts of Africa help me put the accommodations in Ukerewe in perspective. I was happy with our living situation, as I noted:

"I had experience with latrines and squat toilets during many previous travels, so the porcelain squat toilet was quite acceptable. Toilet design did not matter to me; what mattered was if the bathroom was clean, and it was! What I didn't expect was that some students complained that these accommodations were too comfortable—they wanted to live with families in a village. Whereas, other students complained about

specific features of the accommodations—shower water was always cold, sleeping under a mosquito net was 'weird,' there were 'monster roaches' in the room, and so forth. The call to prayer broadcast over a loud speaker from the mosque just a block away from my side of the hotel at five o'clock in the morning was typically the only thing that disturbed my sleep, but I grew to anticipate it and the crowing of a rooster as part of the morning routine."

On the Subject of Security

Risk management training is required of all faculty at our university who lead or participate in study abroad and international service-learning programs. Even without this training, the health and safety of our students is foremost among our concerns. It did not escape our notice that the life jackets on the ferry we took from the mainland to Ukerewe District were padlocked in a metal cage. Nor did it escape our notice that pedestrians and bicyclists were routinely run off the road by speeding cars and lorries. Nevertheless, there was the inevitable push from students to have more individual freedom and to venture out on their own. As adults and professionals (Nancy, a trained and experienced social worker, and Sharon, well aware of the vulnerabilities of youth) we felt a deep sense of responsibility to safeguard the welfare of our students in this location with virtually no modern medical services, limited transportation and communication services, and the lack of visible law enforcement officers. In retrospect, the students were cooperative, but in the crush of on-site daily activities even a fantasy discussion among the students about "checking out the local scene" can create some stress for program leaders. However, security considerations continued to be a prime motivator for decisions, much to the consternation of especially the younger students who were chomping at the bit for a night out. We were grateful to the program director for adhering to the policy of a night-time curfew. When facilitating a service-

learning program, we recognize that it is essential that safety considerations be discussed with students and policies be clear and consistent.

The Need for Personal Time

Sharon's Journal (June 4, 2008):

"Two older ladies came to show us how to weave reeds. I did that for a while, then returned to the (my) room to write in this Journal. Writing in the journal was a good opportunity for being out of the crowd. I need these times away from the students and other faculty."

As a more introverted personality, it was no wonder that I used the quietness of my room to refocus my energy. While most of the undergraduates seemed to be constantly in motion, going to the market, playing soccer, practicing dance moves, and were even animated when they huddled together to have a conversation, I needed that quiet personal time as I noted in my journal:

"I am so grateful for a chance to recover today. It (rest) seems necessary in order to keep up positive interactions. We are constantly "on" here as we interact with the local people. As thoroughly enjoyable as it is, I need this alone time to recharge my battery."

Food

Staples of the diet in the Lake Victoria area are *ugali* (prepared from cassava or maize flour) and fish: fried fish (with the head, bones, and skin), boiled fish, fish stew (also with bones). The local green, leafy vegetable resembled the collard greens that are prevalent in the Southern diet of the U.S., and it was served at nearly every meal. Other vegetables were carrots and potatoes, sometimes varieties of peas. Boiled eggs, bread and butter were the mainstay on the breakfast table. The ubiquitous banana found as different varieties throughout most of Africa was served every morning at breakfast; occasionally we had

fresh oranges or pineapple. Although a few of our students had dietary issues (one adhered to a vegan diet), most were hearty eaters. Admittedly, although provided in the necessary abundance, this diet did become monotonous.

On one of the Sunday mornings when the students and other faculty accompanied Mama N to church, I (Nancy) stayed at the hotel to prepare French toast. It was at a point when the group was dragging (I know I was) and I thought it would give everyone a bit of a familiar lift. Besides, it came at a time when I was feeling particularly helpless in my work with my group of students, and it seemed like a tangible way to provide some nurturing. Sharon put two jars of Skippy® peanut butter—a product she always carries when traveling internationally (which proved to be extremely well-received)—on the table. As Sharon noted after the breakfast, “A more welcome feast could not have been presented. As the students and Tanzanian cooks (with curiosity) devoured the French toast, the students’ joyous murmurings were a huge morale boost.” Later I (Nancy) wrote about it in my journal:

“I cooked French toast for the group. The women who are cooking for us, such as beautiful Angelina, and I are having our own cultural event. They are interested in what I am doing and I am entranced with their communal rhythms. It was very gratifying on many levels—nurturing the students, teaching the women, having that concrete activity of usefulness. Oh yes, back in my comfortable saddle once again. I helped clean up while the students went off to church. I must admit that I am more relaxed than I have been in a long time.”

Personal Growth and Self-Awareness

The “self” of the student, as well as the inter-relationships of all, are essential components in service-learning pedagogy. Personal development is often lauded as a benefit of service-learning, with participants expected to gain in compassion and sensitivity

to social issues (Bernacki & Jaeyer, 2008); increase in self-efficacy (Bernacki & Jaeyer, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Sedlak, Doheny, Panthofer, & Anayat, 2003; Simons & Cleary, 2006); demonstrate an increase in tolerance and appreciation for diversity (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000); deepen values development, particularly as it relates to social work values (Williams & Reeves, 2004; Williams & Lindsay, 2002), and leadership and problem-solving skills (Moely McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Johnson, Johnson, & Shaney, 2008). With the addition of the international travel and living component, Sternberger, Ford, and Hale (2005) suggest that:

“Unavoidably, students’ world-views are challenged as they confront a number of different and often conflicting beliefs and behaviors in settings that are typically outside their range of experience” (pg. 79).

These world-views are shaped by a host of variables such as age, race, gender, family, individual characteristics, and ethnicity—all of which students bring to the experience. Their learning is filtered through these lenses of being and seeing. As such, experiences quickly presented themselves as travel plans went awry, sleep deprivation kicked in and especially challenges to self-confidence surfaced. These same variables are true for faculty. However, faculty’s personal growth has been less of a focus in the literature. The role of the teacher as learner in the learning cycle for students in traditional education is subtle to non-existent, but a factor that can’t be ignored when the confines of the traditional classroom are left behind. Friere (1970) suggests that the roles of teacher and student are both intertwined and interchangeable, as he writes:

“The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is him/herself taught in dialogue with the students, who in

turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (p. 67).

Parker Palmer (1998) describes the learning process as relational at its base and refers to it as the "dialectic of knowing." He suggests that learning occurs when a person is in relationship with what it is they are learning about (the subject) and also with others who are also in relationship to that subject and each other.

One of the places in our busy schedules that created an opportunity for a thoughtful facilitated dialogue was during our focus groups, where we encouraged open expression. I (Nancy) felt this was an important addition to the program for the students and one where I could tangibly contribute as I reflected:

"I thought that we had an awesome group meeting last night. Finally feel like I have a role, some strengths to contribute. The students are an exceptional bunch, so insightful, bright, and the diversity of the group makes for opportunities galore. Can we move into that hardest of territories to talk about—the differences that lay between us? We approached it last night when 'X' opened her heart to share her experiences as a woman of color."

Putting the Service into the Learning

The hospitality of east African cultures is legendary. The community groups in our service-learning program had been selected by Mama N's staff, and they were aware that our group would be coming to work with them. On their first day, the girls' program team was welcomed at a school with a performance of songs by a chorus of girls. The women's development group was greeted at the roadside by the women with songs, ululating, and a rhythmic procession to the leader's yard and outdoor kitchen for their first meeting. The agro-forestry group received an official welcome statement from the project's leader

and a tour of the facilities which included a wood frame office, chicken house, goat corral, crops and tree-seedling plots, and the large trees under which much of the project's activities transpired. Each of us had a surge of excitement in response to our respective welcomes.

Quickly following the enthusiastic greeting, the challenges that all three groups faced began to emerge. One of the initial challenges was a disconnect between who we thought we'd be working with, the actual composition of some of the groups, and the community's expectations of us. As the faculty, we were experiencing some of the same "disconnects" as the students. Although we had similar feelings as the students, we were also expected—perhaps an expectation that we placed on ourselves—to avoid the anxiety, frustration, and fear that the students were experiencing. We felt it was incumbent on us to help them make the necessary adjustments.

The family and consumer sciences doctoral student assumed primary leadership for the girl's empowerment group³. We both felt great pride in her performance, relational abilities, and the leadership she provided in her group. This student embodied social work values and her commitment to the work, along with her ability to adapt to the program challenges, were significant. Over the months she and her team had carefully prepared activities for teen-aged girls focusing on different aspects of empowerment such as physical safety, sexuality, hygiene, communication skills and goal planning. They believed that they would be working with a small, stable group of girls. The reality was much different, as they were shocked by the large group of students who flooded the classroom, the community's expectations, the difficulties regarding scheduling and access to resources, and the rigid, sometimes punitive attitudes of the adults towards the girls. Below are some of her initial observations regarding her group's assignment:

"They (the community) had us go back into one of the stand-alone classrooms at the school and were

asking us to critique them – the skits, and tell them how to improve, etc. It definitely was not what we were expecting and we were all suddenly very anxious. It was overwhelming. They wanted us to tell them what our goals and objectives were and what we were planning to ‘deliver’ by the end...Something else that surprised us was that the women were expecting us to train them – not to directly work with the girls. They were expecting seminars and workshops on working with the girls – something we were completely unprepared for.”

In this and similar situations, part of our role as facilitators became helping our students “pick themselves up” after such experiences, regroup, develop a strategy for the following day(s), and help them figure out ways to communicate their strategies to the translators so the interest and commitment was maintained by the community group. But, who was there to “pick us up?” In many respects, we (fortunately) were able to do that for each other.

Nancy and Sharon faced very different issues in our two groups. Nancy’s community group was comprised of six women who had formed an economic cooperative of surprising sophistication and detail. Some of the women were related to each other and all of them were neighbors, tied to a grueling subsistence lifestyle with dreams of an economically easier life. The group ranged in age from late teens to early 60s and clearly wanted to “get down to business” and get their project implemented right away. The women had, in fact, been a group with what they called a “Constitution,” officially filed for at least six years. They had identified that they wanted to purchase a chalk-making machine (cost approximately \$750) to produce chalk for Ukerewe schools. They had accomplished the remarkable feat of having already saved the equivalent of \$250 over a six year period toward this goal. Their accomplishment, considered in perspective, is truly remarkable since each family’s entire

income for a year was approximately the equivalent of \$100. This income was generated, in large part, by growing and preparing cassava, a starchy root-like vegetable used in the area’s staple food, ugali. The root is hand-pounded into flour and spread out in the sun to dry. It is then packed into 50 pound bags which the women carry on their heads for approximately 10 miles to market early on Thursday mornings. This was just one of the women’s many tasks to survive a life of unthinkable toil and hardship. Not given any information whatsoever about our group prior to our arrival, we had prepared for the group’s needs at a much more basic level and discovered, after months of meeting, that our efforts were woefully inadequate.

One of the students who initially had the most difficulty was our MSW student who aspired to work with women’s empowerment issues in Africa upon graduation. She felt very inadequate for the task and remained stuck in this position for several days:

“I told (the group) that I’ve got nothing to offer them...I know the others in the group, especially ‘X’ feel that they have something to offer – but I really don’t. I feel like I’ll learn a lot by being a part of this discussion but I really feel like I can’t contribute anything of value. I kind of feel like me being here is a waste of money and space. I really want to feel like me being here brings some benefit to the women but I just don’t see it. I’m incredibly discouraged.”

Frankly, at first, I (Nancy) shared some of this student’s uneasiness as well, but felt certain that we as a group fundamentally had the resources to figure things out as I reflected in my journal:

“Women’s group has been a stretch for me, too, as I have no experience with business except common sense. My conviction that solutions are born out of relationship is not fully embraced

by the students in my little group, but because I don't bring credentials as an authority to the process they likely don't trust my input. Since I am also stumbling in the dark, I'm not convinced that my way is correct. My struggle is to be able to generate confidence in my position when I lack it myself. But it's all about learning—theirs and mine and so perhaps starting from specifics will work out. The women are a fascinating blend of unearthly and grounded wisdom, smile easily, sing like angels, gritty and determined, and grounded in communal cooperation. If they can do it, so can we!"

However, in spite of my personal conviction that we had the resources to figure things out, morale got substantially worse before things got better. For me, much of my personal challenge had to do with maintaining my objectivity and equanimity in the face of emotional upset, odd because when I'm in a professional setting with my clients, or even in a traditional classroom setting, my professional boundaries are far more secure:

"A difficult day...I am taking (way too) personally the struggle of the students assigned to the women's group. Three of the four students are depressed and low energy and everything I am doing to try and motivate them feels futile. They are definitely not receptive to my suggestions. I commented to them today that the way I am feeling with them—in the dark, frustrated, baffled, lost—is the way they may likely be feeling in their work with the women's group. The students are very uncomfortable with the process and, it would seem, that if I was honest with myself, I would have to acknowledge that I am equally uncomfortable with the students' learning process. Additionally, I am not feeling well today. Sour

stomach, feeling queasy, light-headed, not feeling rested."

Looking back, I am all too aware that everyone, and most of all me, needs the time and space to embrace an experience and settle into it. However, it was apparent that my anxiety got the better of me as I spent many efforts trying to "cheer students up," rather than tolerate their process. As I now look deeply within, I can see how stretched I really was as I tried too hard to carve out a meaningful role for myself, violating my own fundamental belief that we all need the room to stumble in order to find our own light. With patience and acceptance, growth has the room to occur, as of course, it did.

Sharon's group, agro-forestry, had still yet a different experience. This group, too, was a well-formed community co-operative that had been running successfully for a period of time. They had already received the attention and services of other universities and were quite clear regarding their expectations and presented themselves in a more business-like manner. It should be noted that it was likely that all three groups were possibly expecting money and resources from "the Americans," and certainly did not have an understanding of the concept of service-learning.

Although Ukerewe is a relatively remote area of Tanzania, development "experts" have been to the islands in the district at various times. In the minds of our service-learning partners at Buré Gardens (and likely the other sites as well), foreigners who come to see them must surely have answers to the problems they face. Thus, their expectations were that we would advise and instruct them. Explaining that we were there to learn from the members of the Ukerewe organizations and to work *with* them was indeed a challenge. As Sharon describes:

"The team at Buré Gardens, where I was the faculty team member, sorted this out fairly early in our relationship. Our group worked on building a chicken coop even though chickens were never mentioned as a priority in previous

communications. The students and I brainstormed some possible approaches and explained them to the Buré Gardens leaders. As the project unfolded, every suggestion we made was countered by a better approach on the part of the local residents. As we sawed and hammered and wove vines together, the students and I gained a profound appreciation for indigenous knowledge. Later, a very successful demonstration of how to construct a mud stove to conserve fuel and improve safety by one of our students who had been a Peace Corps volunteer in west Africa assured the Buré Gardens partners that we actually did have some useful skills to share."

My (Sharon's) strategy with the students in my group was to encourage them to take the initiative. However, I found the behavior of one of the students on my team vexing. While she possessed relevant expertise and ultimately demonstrated it, her kinetic energy, a perceived lack of attention to tasks, triangulating behaviors with the faculty and questionable influence over impressionable students were intolerable irritants to me. Conversely, I recognized her magnetism with the children and I admired her relational ability with them. Other experiences with individual students pushed me into the ambiguity of roles in a service-learning environment, where living conditions are so close. A conversation with the mother of our youngest student about her dietary limitations at the pre-travel orientation concluded with the mother saying to me, "Please take care of my daughter." So, was I to be a teacher, an administrator, or a surrogate mother? Perhaps the answer is a little bit of everything.

More Learning...

Sharon's Journal (June 10, 2008):

"While Nancy's primary issues centered on relationships and self-awareness, I (Sharon) also felt

some anxiety over my relationship with the students. While I enjoyed a satisfactory to even a close bond with some of the students, with the others, a close relationship simply didn't materialize. I would like to feel a closer bond with the students, but I don't have that warm, comforting personality. I'm great at organizing information and giving structure. My class is going pretty well, although we have to squeeze it in whenever it's convenient. The discussions are thoughtful and students express appreciation for the readings I selected. I can take satisfaction in that."

In our experience, it was not just the external elements of the location and the cultural differences that challenged the students (and us), but equally influential were the internal group dynamics. In some respects, I (Sharon) was blind-sided by the tensions that emerged among the students and the angst they had about their ability to meet their own and others' expectations. The students had met on a regular basis throughout the previous academic year and had discussed their previous travel experiences, their apprehensions and enthusiasm for an experience in Africa, and preliminary ideas for matching their academic areas and interests with the local communities. I assumed the students were prepared and I neglected to account for the relatively wide range of age and experience, as well as personalities among the group. Nancy, on the other hand, observed that the intra-group relationships, an important forum for learning, evolved in a somewhat predictable pattern of group process with conflict emerging about midway through the experience. The compelling impact of the group's dynamics were undoubtedly heightened by the stresses of living in an unfamiliar global setting, but provided grist for self-reflection and intra-personal growth.

Nancy's Reflections

While I have an understanding of group process, some of my objectivity blurred as I

became a part of it. Also, I did not have a designated leadership role impacting my ability to effectively facilitate it. I was not the group's therapist, nor was I even the group's leader. As the days wore on, frictions began to predictably mount within the group of students, some of which was not completely revealed to the faculty. Fissures appeared among subgroups and the younger students appeared to yield to peer pressure. Developmental issues emerged. For example, not being given freedom to roam after dark was taken as a sign of lack of trust on the part of the younger students and a reasonable security measure by the older ones. In-group issues, such as triangulation, power struggles toward perceived authority figures and ineptness in communication skills on all levels, fed the divisions.

I was well aware that this group dynamic was far from unusual. In fact, it is an expected result of stress and fatigue as well as being a normal evolutionary process in a group. But it also is made more difficult when there is no clear understanding and agreement among the group about dealing with group conflict. We ended up facilitating five focus groups over the course of the month. However, they were part of the data collection process for our qualitative research project and *not* meant to be anything other than an opportunity to learn about the students' perception of their learning experiences. As such, they were inherently inadequate for dealing with group process issues.

Resolution Happens

What did happen, though, was also a part of the bigger picture and important to note when faculty's morale is faltering and fatigue has taken root. The latter part of the program went by in a whirl of activity. Grants were written, chicken coops built, skits were presented, official documents frantically obtained and an unexpected trip was undertaken to attend a traditional party associated with an upcoming wedding. With everyone settling in and projects going more smoothly, the students relaxed and began to enjoy the groups they were serving and our days took on some of the rhythms of Africa itself. While intra group issues

continued to ferment among the students, so too the normal evolutionary working phase of the subgroups kicked in, evidencing more cooperation to join together to complete tasks. In the final days of service, projects were completed, relationships with community partners were deepened and a greater receptivity to the experience seemed to occur for the students. They also appeared to work more autonomously away from faculty and with more shared teamwork among themselves; just as any faculty would ultimately hope for in an experience such as this. I noted:

"The women's group. Such a difference! Such progress! After a difficult start, I felt that wall that so often deflates me with students, well, we have finally broken through. I feel especially fulfilled because 'my' students are working closely as a team but yet I feel that I, too, have a solid role. While my pesky ego still rears up all too often, perhaps it's not all bad. I do have skills both to teach through example as well as offer and I think that is ok. Students have worked hard on the grant writing and assembling important data, and I have been involved in editing and polishing."

And what about our MSW student? The one who struggled so mightily? She worked it through, stayed stuck for a while, and then mobilized her significant strengths and got to work as she richly describes:

"I had a moment when we were sitting with the women today – all of a sudden I thought to myself, 'this is it – this is what I'm going to be doing.' We were sitting in a circle talking about their cooperative. They're such a powerful, dynamic group of women. They always amaze me whenever we talk to them. And I knew sitting there that I could sit in a circle with them, or with another group, or with a hundred other groups, and discuss

empowerment in one form or another, forever. There are so many things [to talk] to these women about – there are so many things they could teach me and I feel like there are so many ideas I could bring to them for discussion. I belong more to Africa than anywhere else. This is where my heart and mind work out their issues. This is where I find my peace⁴.”

About a week before the end of our journey, all the students enthusiastically embraced the idea of shadowing the women in the women's group as they went about their typical morning chores. Many of the students noted in their journals that this one activity was the high point for them in the entire experience. Having a shared experience of the reality of an African woman's daily life proved to be profound for every student. One of our students poignantly described this experience that appeared to integrate a significant piece of learning for her:

“We worked for about 1½ hours and we were tired by the time we were finished. My back ached but I was actually surprised it didn't hurt more. I was getting several blisters and one blister burst, which made it harder to hoe. We found out that Modestar is only 52 – I thought she was in her 60's. She has six children and two are married, two are away fishing, and two are still in school. She reached Standard 7 in her schooling and married at the age of 16. She didn't have children for many years. She's probably been going to the shamba every day since she was five. Forty-seven years of walking every morning to fetch water, walking every morning to shamba to hoe for many hours, walking back with whatever you've harvested in your head. Day after day, year after year, until you die. That really depresses me. I really

wish I could have asked Modestar⁵ about it. I would have liked to ask her if she ever wishes her life was different, or what she wanted to do when she was a child. Or even what she hopes for her own children.”

What to learn from this? Maybe more action is needed and less process. Maybe expansion of direct cultural engagement, such as home stays, should be part of an international service learning experience. And then again, maybe nothing other than the time was right for this event. That is the always challenging yet exciting part of this work: one never really knows.

Implications

In this narrative, two very different faculty members from different disciplines, personality styles, and even learning and teaching perspectives, joined forces to tell the story of our experiences in a pilot international service-learning program in Tanzania. Drawing from our numerous conversations, student journals as well as our own personal reflections, we attempted to piece together perceptions of this experience that might be useful for others. Some of our conversations, as well as journal reflections, drifted into the area of teaching philosophies, and in this area we respectfully somewhat disagreed.

I (Sharon) was enthusiastic (and still am) about service-learning, especially its relevance for applied professional areas within family and consumer sciences (and of course social work). However, I was disappointed in the amount of time—thus the lack of depth—during this program in achieving synthesis between the scholarly body of knowledge related to women and development, and more broadly community development, which were the foci of the seminars in which some of the students were enrolled with me. Due to the crowded service schedule and cultural experiences that were a vital part of the program, students had virtually no time to read or become familiar with previous work that might have provided a conceptual framework for cognitive understanding of what they were

observing, and perhaps an understanding of their emotional responses.

I (Nancy) suspect that there are many faculty who would share Sharon's concerns. My perspective, perhaps forged in my strong practitioner background, is a strong, abiding belief in the powerful learning potential that comes from a lived experience of this sort and that the learning can become as much—if not more—integrated because it is experienced viscerally. Leaving the controlled environment of a classroom is a risk for faculty as we are challenged to trust that experiential learning can be equal to—or is as significant as—learning that is obtained through traditional forms of evidence-based scholarship. Can we trust that the process of experience can be enough of a formidable teacher?

Perhaps a more basic question, one that theorists and philosophers such as John Dewey, Paolo Friere and Parker Palmer have tackled, is what are the elemental processes that facilitate, activate and result in transformative learning? One point on which Sharon and I are in complete agreement is the absolute necessity to punctuate the experience with reflective learning activities that will facilitate integration of the student's learning. Timing it well, though, is a challenge.

In this narrative, we focused on our personal reflections to tell the story of our time in Tanzania and highlight insights and observations we gathered along this sometimes bumpy educational road. This experience brought up many emotions for both of us. It was also a bit uncomfortable to put the spotlight on our own reflections in public, as some of our struggles were not flattering or image enhancing. However, that is part and parcel of the process of being a learner. It is messy and imperfect by definition, and our hope is that by sharing our experiences it will open the door for other faculty-learners as well as validate the emotional ups and downs of our students. For example: our anxious MSW student struggled in frustration, tight and limited vision, angry with herself, uncommunicative, and unsure. But by the end of the month she emerged as a true leader with the women's group, and was able to affirm herself and her potential in the process. Isn't that the essence

of a good learning experience: to cultivate the fertile soil of learning and plant some seeds of mastery?

Service-learning is a fascinating, hard, challenging process for faculty, particularly for those who are accompanying students internationally. Is it for everyone? Probably not. Was it worth the hours of investment, the time spent away from family, friends and other work? For me (Nancy), I would now say (two years later) yes, a resounding yes, even though at the end of the experience I doubted whether I was physically or emotionally prepared to do it again. My last journal passage reflects my ambivalence:

"Feelings about leaving? A little scared. I guess I like feeling a part of a bustling community, feeling a sense of belonging and purpose. I really love it here on this island and will miss it. It has become a part of me. It was not an easy trip, lots of emotion, mine and others: discomfort, confusion, and role ambiguity. But, in the end, so much to process, so much grist for reflection. I feel confident that the students got a lot from this experience and I will be interested in hearing their stories when the time is right."

Authors' Note:

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Footnotes

¹ Bringle & Hatcher (1995) define service-learning as “a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service-activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of (their) discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.”

² Mama N is a pseudonym. “Mama” is a common term of respect for a woman of wisdom and stature in many parts of Africa.

³ This student has continued to demonstrate her passionate commitment to this project by returning to Ukerewe each summer since 2008, despite daunting budgetary obstacles, to continue her work with the girls group, bringing a sustainability to the project that we had only hoped for. She plans to return again in the summer of 2011.

⁴ This student is currently working as a project director focusing on women’s issues in Liberia for the Carter Center, a job she obtained after serving at the Carter Center in Atlanta for her internship. She is making plans to return to the U.S. to enter a joint Ph.D./J.D. program in international justice and the law.

⁵ Modestar Mnale was a favorite among all of us, warm and engaging, smart and so very wise. She provided strong leadership for the women’s group and demonstrated that language differences don’t have to be barriers. Sadly, she fell ill and died last year, a great loss. Our heartfelt condolences to her family and community.

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