



From *Community-Based Global Learning:*

*The Theory and Practice of Ethical Engagement at Home and Abroad*

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*The following is an excerpt from the unedited manuscript.*

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*Introduction:*

*The Challenge and the Journey*

In the Navajo Nation, a sociology professor visits from the East Coast with her students.

Her relationships in the community extend back many years. She is a long-time friend of the first person to receive tribal permission to write down the Diné (Navajo) creation story. As the program begins, two of her friends from the community lead classes.

Dorothy<sup>1</sup> instructs the students in Diné language learning. Karen shares her life story. It includes her personal experience of involuntary sterilization, a widespread experience for Native American women through the 1960s and 70s (Lawrence, 2000), as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms are used to protect anonymity throughout the book, unless otherwise noted.

participation in the American Indian Movement (AIM). The students are confused. They are rendered speechless by the landscape, a deeply troubling lens on recent and distant American history, and the attempt to understand the importance of extended family, nonlinear time, and the protection of the four mountains. They struggle; they grow. They see the Milky Way stretching across the Southwestern Desert Sky. When they return to their East Coast communities, they fulfill the request made of them by several community members and nonprofit partners as they make presentations about Diné History, The Long March, and the many kinds of beauty still present in the Navajo Nation today.

A public health program in rural Tanzania joins two Tanzanian students with two US students to investigate public health policy challenges. The teams present sustainable health policy options after a month of inquiry. During that time, faculty members guide them through systematic reflection on high-performing cross-cultural teams and the role of public health in resource limited communities. Following the policy presentations, the students engage in direct service with local public health education efforts. In another part of Tanzania, a similar program draws on faculty and student presence to support a women's rights organization through a program evaluation. The organization uses the resulting evaluation as part of a grant application with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), thereafter receiving USAID funding.

A group of adults signs up for a continuing education experience guided by a community-based organization. They help with historical preservation near the Holocaust death camp known as Auschwitz. Their volunteer service entails physical labor supporting

preservation, but the broader goal is to promote Remembrance and make real the cry: “Never Again.” A United States World War II Veteran and the grandson of a Survivor are both participants. This is the veteran’s first return to Europe. It is the grandson’s first experience of the historical sites of a death camp. This program is challenging for everyone. The physical service accompanies a learning experience that is profoundly unsettling and painful. The group facilitator leads structured dialogue about common human dignity and thoughtful approaches to consequential action. She pulls the group from a disposition of overwhelming horror to a consideration of their past and present roles in stopping Genocide. The veteran leaves the program saying he understands more about his military service now, early in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, than he ever had before. The grandson leaves with a renewed vigor to end contemporary crimes against humanity.

In Rhode Island, students in an introductory global studies course find a considerable portion of the course focuses on human migration as a global phenomenon. While studying migration holistically, they learn about local immigration through presentations from Welcoming Rhode Island, a nonprofit with a mission that includes “bridging the divide between foreign-born newcomers and US-born Rhode Islanders.” They learn they will conduct structured interviews with local migrants, asking about their lives before migration, during migration, and now in Rhode Island. An oral historian visits the class to provide an orientation to the process. At the end of the semester, Welcoming RI facilitates a celebration dinner. Local businesses donate food, local elected representatives visit the event – even including Governor Chafee – and the new Rhode Islanders are recognized through student presentations and certificates of welcome from

the state legislature. In anonymous feedback after the course is completed, participating students report strongly positive experiences, with several students explicitly admitting they moved from negative to positive views of migrants broadly understood. Students from families who have migrated in recent generations feel safer sharing their experiences and insights in class. The collected histories are gathered online and periodically appear around the state as part of public art installations (Welcoming Rhode Island, 2017).

A political scientist and an English professor agree to lead service-learning programs in Bolivia through a nonprofit partner organization. Neither instructor has actually been to Bolivia, but the political scientist's area of expertise is Latin American politics and the English professor specializes in indigenous literature. They work with a trusted organization with a strong track record facilitating programs for universities. The political scientist is thrilled as he and his students meet in person with the head of the Coca Growers' Union, Evo Morales, who several years later becomes President of Bolivia. The English professor finds many of her assumptions about indigenous communities, class, and Evo Morales challenged through conversation and dialogue with Bolivians. She and her students leave with a substantially more robust sense of the diversity and nuance in both indigenous and Bolivian life. Both of these courses support the construction of a rural elementary school through direct physical service and material donations during their time in Bolivia.

A rural Jamaican community implements a model of community-based tourism in partnership with multiple international volunteer and learning organizations based in the US and Europe. Soon they find themselves overrun with visiting high school and college students who set bad examples for the community youth and abuse the community's hospitality. They stop the program. Years later, they skeptically partner with a global service-learning effort. They begin hosting visitors again, but this time only those visitors engaged in community-driven service-learning and volunteer projects. As the partnership deepens, the council of host families dialogues with their US partners and decides that they will democratically determine compensation rates for homestays. Increasing numbers of visitors come, providing a sustainable revenue stream for host families while also offering a cross-cultural service-learning experience for community members and visitors. The initiatives lead to an improved annual summer camp, supplemental tutoring for many local children, an updated community center and community garden, and much more.

What do these examples have in common? Learning is community-based, applied, reflective, connected, visceral, integrative, and engaged; it is locally contextualized, historically informed, and theoretically grounded. Participants cross many borders: political, cultural, socio-economic, environmental, and national. They undergo disruptive experiences that often trigger a re-evaluation of closely held assumptions and understanding. They are guided through this disruption<sup>2</sup> through reflective learning experiences with skilled facilitators. Community organizations have a clear role, relationship, and voice in designing the learning and – if

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<sup>2</sup> There are many terms used to describe experiences that are incongruent with one's existing experience and frame of reference including culture shock, dissonance, disorienting dilemma, disjunction, and even simply the experience of being outside of one's comfort zone (see Kiely, 2005).

applicable – development or service initiatives participants undertake. Any such experiential or community-based initiatives are enabled and strengthened through processes that grow depth of relationships and mutual understanding, enabling participants to more clearly see one another's worldviews and experiences. All of the relationships are informed by a deep and abiding respect for individuals and communities, along with an imaginative orientation toward future possibilities. The negative example from Jamaica points to the care that must support the program design and evolving partnership. That care drives much of the rationale for this book.

We have gathered and developed theoretical insights and practical tools to support ethical global learning through community-campus partnerships like those described above. We draw on research and insights from several academic disciplines and community partner perspectives along with decades of applied, community-based development and education experience. We began this journey as university faculty and staff members engaged in what was then called global service-learning<sup>3</sup> (GSL). We write from local and more distant, immersive partnership insights in a variety of communities and with the lessons learned from extensive nonprofit and community organization work and service. Collectively, we have led courses and programs on six continents, scores of times, with a broad network of partners. Our strongest identities, however, are as people, humans, global citizens if you like, engaged in fallible yet important

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<sup>3</sup> As will be clear throughout the book, we have strong roots in experiential learning and democratic education. Our original entry point for this work was through community-campus partnerships advancing various approaches to community-engagement and service-learning. Yet we also have theoretical and applied roots in international and community development, and have come to see the ways in which many of these personal learning processes advance partnerships and outcomes from a development perspective (Chambers, 2012; Farmer, Gutiérrez, Griffin, & Weiss Block, 2013; Korten, 1989). Further, we have seen and appreciate many of the important critiques of a focus on "service" as opposed to learning, partnership, or community development. Terminology therefore shifts from global service-learning to **community-based global learning**, as well as Fair Trade Learning, which will be discussed later in this book. We are moving away from continuous reliance on the GSL term, yet we have developed with it and recognize its location within existing fields of practice. Where sensible based on antecedents and field development, we continue to use the GSL term, albeit with heightened attentiveness to the ways in which the term itself may reassert hierarchies and call attention to existing inequities in terms of deficits rather than shared strengths.

efforts to build more equitable and sustainable communities. While we have had rewarding experiences teaching globally-engaged courses, we also realize that students, families, college and university staff members, faith groups, and nonprofit organizations frequently act independently to advance service and learning programs across boundaries. We hope to contribute to their work as well.

International education, volunteerism, and community-based global learning programs are robust with potential (Bringle, Hatcher & Jones, 2014). They can positively impact communities (Irie, Daniel, Cheplick, & Philips, 2010), achieve broad community support for partnerships (Hartman, 2015b; Larsen, 2015; Toms, 2013), grow civil society networks and advance human rights norms (Lough & Matthews, 2014; Reynolds, 2014), and have transformative effects for students (Kiely, 2004, 2005, 2011; Monard-Weissman, 2004) who become more globally aware and more engaged in global civil society (Hartman, 2014). Yet they are also packed with peril.

Some efforts to engage in GSL – or at least international volunteering – have been reckless, harmful, and rightly criticized (Arends, 2014; Ausland, 2010a, 2010b; Illich, 1968; Holligurl, 2008; Larsen, 2015; Madsen-Camacho, 2004; Zemach-Bersin, 2008). Clear evidence indicates that these poor forms of programming have negative impacts on vulnerable persons, including medical patients (Evert, 2014; Lasker, 2015) and children (Punaks & Feit, 2014; Richter & Norman, 2010), while cementing stereotypes (Arends, 2014; Nelson, 2010; Hartman, 2017), and reinforcing patterns of privilege and exclusion (Andreotti, 2014; Crabtree, 2008). Important criticisms will be considered and discussed in the chapters that follow. These dangers can be mitigated, however, through collaborative planning, design, and evaluation that advances mutually beneficial community partnerships, critically reflective practice, thoughtful facilitation,

and creative use of resources (Chisholm, 2004; Hartman, Paris, & Blache-Cohen, 2014; Jacoby, 2003; Kiely & Nielsen, 2002; Sandmann, Kiely, & Grenier, 2011; Steocker & Tryon, 2009; Tonkin, 2004).

Our efforts reside at the intersection of theory and practice. We are conscious that the two are intertwined and profoundly dependent on one another. We represent the work of several different disciplines here, and we work to do so in a theoretically grounded and academically rigorous manner. Yet we do so – as you have already noticed from our language – while recognizing that we are embedded within a community of global service-learning practice. Our individual backgrounds – as community activists, nonprofit staff members, committed global service-learning practitioners, university administrators, scholars and educators – give us a reflective practitioner's sensibility. We are therefore working to apply an important set of ideals while retaining a critical disposition; our praxis takes place at the intersection of critical inquiry and consequential action. This book therefore includes ongoing theoretical discussion and attendant encouragement of dialogue and questioning. Yet it also offers numerous clear pieces of advice for readers who are interested in applying our best theoretically informed and empirically validated insights now.

Community-engaged learning and research embraces the de-centering of authority and the democratization of knowledge and power (Chambers, 1997; Deshler & Grudens-Schuck, 2000; Freire, 2000; Greenwood & Levin, 1997) in order to create spaces where multiple and diverse stakeholders are better able to participate in dialogue on what it means to be a healthy, prosperous community. Our commitment to community engaged-learning leads us to explicitly encourage everyone interested in carefully and conscientiously cooperating in engagement and learning (even if not accredited) across culture and difference. This work will advance faculty

members in their course design and leadership while also strengthening efforts that do not have an explicit academic connection. In this way we embrace the variety of promising co-curricular programs, such as Alternative Spring Breaks or extended summer service and learning programs that have emerged outside the domain of explicitly academic, course-based programming. A growing body of research and our collective experience suggest good programs have a common core of best practices (Bringle, Hatcher & Jones, 2011; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Sumka, Porter, & Piacitelli, 2015).

Recent research in the field of international education indicates that best practice facilitation by trained and experienced faculty is better at advancing student intercultural learning than those same facilitation practices when peer-led (Vande Berg, Paige, & Hemming Lou, 2012). Yet other research on alternative spring break programming (Niehaus, 2013; Sumka, Porter, & Piacitelli, 2015) suggests that best practices in peer-led and peer-facilitated programs can clearly support student and community development to a greater extent than is true for student-led programs that lack such attentiveness to best practice. It is also clear that programs run poorly can cement stereotypes and burden community organizations (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Nelson, 2010; Arends, 2014).

The opportunity for positive impact weighed against the perils of poor community-based programming presents a challenge for all educators and practitioners. We hope that you will learn from our experiences, successes, mistakes, amassed research, and time on the ground in diverse communities. We also hope that that you will contribute to this effort to build our collective resource base by sharing your ideas and program examples online with [globalsl](#), a website that amasses and mobilizes peer-reviewed research and best practice tools to support partnerships for global learning and community development. Ultimately, we hope to inspire you

to take up this challenge: to engage these highly nuanced and complex processes with conscientiousness and care, so that together we manage to do more collaborative good than unintended harm.

### *Real Risks: Cementing Stereotypes and Harming Vulnerable Populations*

We write this book in part because we have seen so many disturbing attempts related to community-based global learning. Particular categories of international volunteering have emerged as practices that should never be engaged, such as orphanage volunteering and pre-professional medical volunteering. A global movement of child rights professionals has organized to stop orphanage volunteering, which is harmful to vulnerable children in numerous ways, including heightened risk of abuse, increased likelihood of institutionalization until adulthood, and repeated experiences of abandonment (Punaks & Feit, 2014; Rotabi, Roby, & Bunkers; 2016; van Doore, 2016). Similarly, a coalition of global health and medical professionals has emerged to stop un-credentialed volunteering in clinical health environments, which puts patients at unnecessary, preventable risk (Lasker, 2016; Sullivan, 2016) (For a brief and accessible, online explanation of these two phenomena, see Hartman, 2016). Other community-based programming can be harmful in ways that are more nuanced.

We know, for instance, of a university program in which a faculty member offered a traditional classroom course on international economics then simply went along for the ride with students as they were later immersed in nominal service in a Ghanaian community. The faculty member joined students in exciting experiences in tourist markets and in other areas where the economy was highly dependent upon tourist activity, but the experience was not connected to explicit intellectual inquiry. Course members seemed to be merely tourists, and community

members had yet another experience of unprepared and curious students visiting to take away ideas, experiences, and trinkets with very little direction, supervision and/or mentorship.

With thoughtful planning, a similar course might be more rewarding for all participants. An economics professor involved in such a course could cooperate with community members and students to reflect on lived experience in that same region of Ghana. They might have, for example, talked together about how the popularity of microfinance, which was just beginning to impact the host community, affected rural farmers' position and opportunities in the global economy. Students, community members, and faculty members could have worked together to better understand the ways in which popular development concepts affect community members locally. They could have, through these investigations, more deeply recognized their interdependence – as major global corporations and development agencies were setting up various kinds of microfinance schemes while this idea became more popular in the Global North. And they could have cooperated to build opportunities for rural farmers to have stronger voices in relation to the global market forces and ideas that affect their lives. When well-prepared for teaching and learning in evolving and dynamic environments, faculty members and student leaders are in a strong position to facilitate powerful learning opportunities that surface such profound interconnections and may even move to serve community-articulated needs and goals.

Preparation and cooperative planning are essential across responsible service partnerships. We also know of a school of public health engaging in ultimately irresponsible “relief” service-learning in Haiti following the 2009 earthquake. As it began its effort, the school did not triage in a way that allowed for consistent record-keeping among patients. But beyond the initial poor beginning of this institution’s service work, it pulled out of Haiti months in advance of its initial commitment with the government and communities. Professors and

administrators sitting in some of the most reputable institutions of higher learning in the world must recognize: if they choose to expose their students to the learning opportunities that come with such efforts, their programs will also quickly become one of the primary relief agencies in particularly stricken or especially rural communities. We must be acutely conscious of how our students' learning opportunities affect the dignity and rights of all community members.

The two broad examples above illustrate real situations in which opportunities for mutually-beneficial partnership were squandered. In the Ghanaian example, these kinds of missteps can leave students in the location of potentially unreflective travelers. They may have a new experience yet allow themselves the luxury of skipping deep inquiry into our profound global interdependence, such as consideration of the roles that Global North ideological framing, market desires, and policies play in influencing Global South structures, opportunities, and limitations. In the Haitian example, the active steps to engage in "service" were performed ineffectively and abandoned early, clearly causing irreparable community harm. In both cases, better preparation and program management would ensure improved outcomes for student learning, intercultural connection, and community development. This book provides faculty members, staff members, administrators, and student leaders with the theoretical and practical resources necessary to engage in responsible and effective community-based global learning.

### *Organization of the Book*

The volume is arranged around the community-based global learning (CBGL) components articulated in Chapter 1. After reading it, you will be familiar with the central points, practical resources, literatures, and debates that animate CBGL theory and practice. By writing this book and engaging in these practices, we are testifying through our actions and

commitments that we believe the work can be done ethically and well. There are, however, numerous reasonable critiques of international volunteerism (if not necessarily global service-learning) and its position within development discourse. As we have mentioned above, we write at a moment when we see the discourse and related practice assumptions shifting from GSL to CBGL.

We do not sidestep these important critiques, but engage them throughout the book. After exploring the foundational component of global citizenship inquiry in Chapter 2, we illustrate the ways in which the reflection and critical reflection literatures structure our inquiry on all topics in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 reviews what the international education field has contributed to better understanding students' intercultural experiences during the past half-century of research. We share this context and how it intersects with power and critical reflection to suggest how your program may maximize your students' movement toward cultural humility.

Chapter 5 draws on planning, international development, public health, and service-learning literatures to explore best practices and common challenges in advancing community-driven development. We include insights applicable for direct service and labor (school or home building), professional services (developing a documentary, writing a strategic plan, tutoring, or supporting public health education initiatives), and community-based research (determining rates of disease, documenting local history, measuring pollution rates in streams). The chapter closes with discussion of Fair Trade Learning (FTL), and the ways in which it operates as a strategy for addressing the extraordinary inequity in which CBGL programs often take place. As the book proceeds, it builds on the theoretical foundations reviewed in the first five chapters to apply program and course planning insights throughout the following two.

We focus on program planning to maximize partnership strengths, student learning, and assessment in Chapters 6 and 7. Program models, institutional relationships, and program sustainability are considered in Chapter 6. That chapter includes discussion of the policy environment in which GSL programs are developed, sustained, and evaluated.

Chapter 7 addresses the reality of the GSL experience as unpredictable, unfamiliar, and especially dynamic. We advance a course structure that harnesses the typical flow of GSL experiences. The structure we identify provides faculty members and program leaders with a clear framework through which to integrate any discipline, service project, or destination community. The framework articulates a design process for advancing learning and assessment of outcomes typically desired by universities, including development of intercultural skills, discipline-specific academic learning, enhanced commitment to global citizenship, and development of skills necessary for global civic engagement.

We turn in Chapter 8 to a concern that will make or break CBGL with any institution: safety. Parents, spouses, children and friends are curious and concerned about their loved ones who are travelling to distant places for global learning experiences. The seriousness of that should be apparent long before a crisis in which you talk with one of these loved ones from halfway around the world. We share best practices gathered from trusted institutions while also providing several immediately applicable tips for keeping program participants happy, healthy, and safe. CBGL has unique strengths as opposed to tourism or other forms of travel. Participants often live in local communities and are integrated into daily life; like other community members, they spend time in hospitals, with children, on construction sites, attending religious services, and socializing in homes. But this very strength can also present unique

health and safety challenges as participants are exposed to the realities present in under-resourced hospitals, rural communities, and places where extreme poverty is often present.

In addition to the discrete chapters already mentioned, two strands are woven through the book. The first, assessment, demonstrates how we work to continue to evaluate the influence of specific program factors on participant and community member learning and outcomes. Second, the challenges of power and privilege are omnipresent and inescapable. As practitioners of CBGL, we must continuously and honestly engage positionality if we hope to ameliorate some of the gravest repercussions of unconsidered assumptions and embedded privileges. This surfaces in our critical approach to global citizenship, our embrace of cultural humility, our understanding of critically reflective practice, and our approach to community-driven development through FTL. While the chapters must of course stand alone and focus on specific content areas in a conventional sense, CBGL is complicated, nuanced, and interdependent. It is a profoundly interdisciplinary arena for integration of research and practice. Choosing chapter order therefore caused us considerable consternation. The whole of CBGL should become much clearer as each component part is added.

Chapter 9 weaves these components together in a discussion of the principles and practices that encourage healthy reflection and reconnection with friends, family, and community after CBGL experiences. This process is about both reconnecting and re-imagining. We therefore close with reflections on *what is* while imagining *what could be*. We consider how our institutions and assumptions constrain imagined possibilities for fostering collaboration, community development, and people-powered peace-building around the world. We share steps we can all take, within our institutions, professional and personal lives, to not merely shake up perceptions once a year but to be part of a growing transformative movement.

We insist we will not simply globalize but globalize ethically; we will not educate parts but engage whole people; we will not pass through communities as if they are simply dynamic laboratories but create partnerships that transcend traditional boundaries in order to build a better world together. We begin with an exploration of the community-campus contribution to engaged, embodied, cross-cultural, and community-driven learning in Chapter 1.

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