Unpacking Global Service-Learning in Developing Contexts: A Case Study from Rural Tanzania

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Abstract

This article examines intercultural aspects of global service-learning (GSL) focused on gender and sustainable development in rural Tanzania. The discussion draws from critical development and postcolonial feminist approaches to examine how GSL addresses globalization, social histories, and political economies of development. The empirical analysis is based on a program that is designed to develop global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical thinking among students and communities. The relationships, discourses, and actions of the participants are examined through written assignments, a focus group discussion, and observations of activities and the community. The findings of this study contribute to broader debates concerning experiential learning that address students' and other participants' global awareness and intercultural competency. This program also encourages the formation of responsible and ethical partnerships among institutions and communities where GSL is taking place. In sum, we argue that critical approaches to global service-learning ultimately advance inclusive and transformational pedagogies and development.

Keywords: global service-learning, gender and development, rural Tanzania, intercultural competence

Introduction

*I*n recent decades, experiential learning and volunteer-based study abroad programs have become increasingly popular in the field of global education. Programs based on transformational learning with hands-on experience for students are being developed in cooperation with community partners in areas such as sustainable agriculture, gender equality, primary education, and affordable housing. The outcomes and motives of these programs have been widely debated in the literature and among practitioners in this field *(Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011; Larsen, 2016)*. Critical perspectives are often employed in global service-learning (GSL) in order to confront social and economic inequality and power relations within and among educational institutions, students, and host communities *(Crabtree, 2008; Hartman & Kiely, 2014a)*. Although

discourses of power and privilege are acknowledged in analyses of global service-learning, full examination of the complex geographies, social histories, and development dynamics are often missing.

This article contributes to these debates by researching intercultural aspects of global education through a service-learning model that draws from critical development studies and postcolonial feminism. GSL programs that straddle and connect multiple voices from both academic institutions and local communities raise important questions that address our understanding of development, globalization, and social histories of communities. Likewise, feminist analyses of self-reflexivity and positionality examine how students, nonprofit organizations, universities, and communities are involved with and impacted by these programs. The empirical analysis in this article is based on a GSL organization that partners with communities in several developing countries in Africa, Europe, and the Americas. An important goal of this nonprofit organization is cultivating intercultural competence, global civic engagement, and critical thinking among students and communities who participate in these projects.

The organization highlighted here is part of a larger network, GlobalSL, dedicated to forming responsible and ethical partnerships among the institutions and communities where GSL is taking place. Specifically, this network includes researchers, practitioners, students, and community organizations who gather "evidence-based tools and peer-reviewed research to advance best practices in global learning, cooperative development, and community-university partnership" (Globalsl.org). Figure 1 outlines different components of GSL that include the nongovernmental organization (NGO), service provider, university, and community members. The critical development and feminist analyses in this article examine constructions and deconstructions of power and privilege in this service-learning project based on the themes of global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical thinking *(Bringle et al., 2011; Larsen, 2016).*

Figure 1. An Overview of Global Service-Learning in Tanzania Program
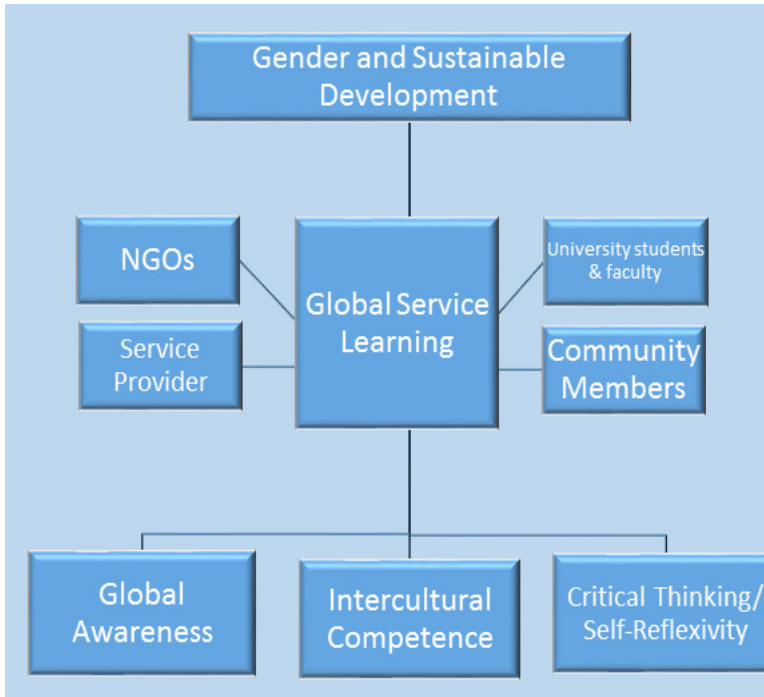
Note. Adopted from Kiely (2005), Crabtree (2013), and Hartman & Kiely (2014b)

First, global awareness among participants leads to a general understanding of global issues such as gender inequality and uneven development and how societies operate within the interconnectedness of local and global structures. Hartman and Kiely *(2014a)* highlight structural aspects of this type of learning that "open a special reflective space for discussing political, economic, social, cultural, and historical structures, and systematically illuminate the role of these structural components in everyday life" *(p. 57)*. This global understanding also incorporates an awareness of how Eurocentrism is central to complex historical processes and "ways in which colonialism affected people's lives and mindsets" *(Langdon, 2013, p. 388)*.

The second theme, intercultural competence, increases students' abilities to navigate cultural differences and characteristics of themselves and others. As stated by Crabtree *(2008)*, this theme involves "gradual adjustment and adaptation over time, questioning oneself and one's own culture, and resultant attitude and behavior changes" *(p. 21)*. Through a deliberate process of questioning, stu-

dents reflect on and learn to analyze their status and relationship with many forms of socioeconomic, political, and racial privilege. This process also involves an acute and sometimes uncomfortable awareness of social identity and self-reflexivity. Many scholars and practitioners emphasize the importance of cultural immersion through communication skills and living situations that bring them closer to the culture of the host community.

Finally, successful navigation of global awareness and intercultural competence requires critical thinking. Through the lenses of critical development and postcolonial feminism, students are expected to evaluate and analyze the approaches and context of this GSL program. Feminist thinking requires gathering information in a manner that questions standard assumptions and consequences surrounding gendered power dynamics and other social inequalities *(Mohanty, 2003; Williams & McKenna, 2002)*. Furthermore, critical thinking approaches globalization as it is situated in broader historical contexts that require efforts to decolonize the ways in which development is studied through multiple knowledges and viewpoints *(Langdon, 2013)*.

These themes are used to assess the overall effectiveness and impact of this GSL rural Tanzania program on gender and sustainable development. The empirical analysis of this article examines the relationships, discourses, and actions of the students and host communities through written assignments, a focus group discussion, and observations of activities and participants. Our research raises a number of questions. Does the program challenge or reinforce attitudes about inequality and social justice among the participants? What are the factors that work to challenge or confirm stereotypes about the Global South, White privilege, and social and economic divisions among participants? The curriculum and pedagogy that inform GSL are aligned with our research approach by developing reflexive spaces for dissonance and transformational learning before, during, and after the experience itself. (See *Hartman and Kiely, 2014b*, for a model of student involvement and activities in a related program.)

The GSL approach also encourages students to think about issues such as White privilege, inequality, and uneven development. The program in rural Tanzania embodied these practices by establishing partnerships with local community organizations and maintaining transparency in its logistical and financial operations. As stated in the mission of the organization, it aims to undertake "reciprocal relationships" with host communities as partners *(Hartman, 2016)*. This discussion examines student insights and

reactions to the program, as well as the experiences of the university, service provider, community members, and individual organizations that participate in this program.

The article is organized into six sections to address the conceptual, methodological, and analytical aspects of our approach to global service-learning. The following section gives an overview of the interdisciplinary nature and approaches to critical perspectives on global education, especially the rise of experiential and service-based learning. The third section examines background to the GSL program and the geographical context of Karagwe, Tanzania, introducing the participants and design of the program as they relate to the overall mission of transformational service and learning. The methodological approach to our research is highlighted in the fourth section. The analysis of our findings forms the basis for the fifth section, and the conclusion summarizes our findings and contributions to the field of global education and especially the rise of GSL. In sum, critical development and feminist analyses of privilege, power, and inequality are highly relevant to the growing field of experiential education and global service-learning. These frameworks are effective in creating informed and globally aware students who develop skills that are crucial in today's diverse and increasingly global society.

Background and Approaches to Global Service-Learning

Global service-learning has been linked to unique forms of student learning and community development in areas that include student civic awareness, intercultural competence, discipline-related and global knowledge, critical thinking, and community engagement *(Green & Johnson, 2014)*. Experiential and service-based learning has gained from interdisciplinary and critical approaches to global service-learning. There is no doubt that GSL supports transformational learning and global development, but achieving these goals is challenging. Inasmuch as GSL participants and host communities benefit, it is important to acknowledge privilege and power relations among and within student groups and host communities.

Gonzalez *(2009)* describes GSL as "hands-on work which is academically rigorous, collaborative, challenging, valuable, and transformative" *(p. 4)* and as a way to support the work of NGOs in local communities through study abroad programs. Generally, the definition of service-learning is framed around outcomes

for participants that include social change and charity *(Cuban & Anderson, 2007)*. Critical thinking, self-rated leadership skills, and commitment to activism are reported to be positive outcomes of service-learning *(Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000)*. Crabtree *(2013)*, however, argues that this framework is complicated because although service-learning practices such as education abroad and domestic service-learning in different cultural settings may appear to be comparable, they do not all advance similar outcomes. For instance, participatory development theories that inform service-learning, student learning, and attitude changes, as well as the dynamics of international and domestic communities, create different conditions for collaboration and service-learning outcomes. Some of these outcomes include an emphasis on professional trajectories, questioning identities and loyalties, and potential conflict among community members.

As an alternative approach to international service-learning (ISL), GSL is "a community-driven service experience that employs structured critically reflective practice to better understand common human dignity, self, culture, positionality; socioeconomic, political, and environmental issues; power relations; and social responsibility, all in global contexts" *(Hartman & Kiely, 2014a, p. 60)*. Despite the varied names this hands-on work may be given, the fundamental aim of this pedagogical strategy is to promote participants' skills and knowledge in local and global civic engagement *(Crabtree, 2008; Lewin, 2010)*. Larsen *(2016)* also differentiates between GSL and ISL in her claim that the former is an immersive pedagogy that focuses on concepts of power, privilege, and hegemony. Therefore, the responsibility of the GSL student is to engage the critical global civic and moral imagination. Furthermore, she notes the broader contexts within which GSL is played out, such as the global marketization of volunteerism. This differentiation and contextualization of GSL should promote the democratization of knowledge through collaboration between the community and student participants.

Previous research has documented the contributions of service-learning to community development, such as community-based partnerships for organizational visibility, legitimization, and access to resources, as well as community–university relations *(Crabtree, 2013; Miron & Moely, 2006; Sandy & Holland, 2006)*. Worrall *(2007)*, for example, found that community organizations engaged in service-learning projects to access new resources. More recently, scholars have drawn attention to a gap in the literature on the effects of study abroad on students who participate in such programs, as well as

the views and experiences of the host communities (e.g., *Erasmus, 2011; Kiely & Hartman, 2011; Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, & Koehn, 2009; Tonkin, 2011*). The effect of global service-learning on attitudes toward inequality and social justice among both local communities and GSL participants, particularly factors that dispel or emphasize stereotypes about the Global South, have not been fully examined in the GSL literature *(Lewin, 2010)*.

Political approaches to service-learning often focus on societal problems, with an attempt to correct power imbalances by using universities as agents to advocate on behalf of marginalized groups. This approach accounts for only 1% of all service-learning activities *(Boyle-Blaise et al., 2006)* and engages participants to collectively analyze social issues and be accountable for the structuring of society *(Wade, 2007)*. However, service-learning has come under scrutiny among states in the Global South due to such concerns as overlooking indigenous knowledge, legacies of colonial states, and structural adjustments within the global economy *(McMichael, 2004)*. For activists and critical scholars of the Global South, development has broadly come to mean sustainability and democratization, which are implicit in service-learning programming *(Crabtree, 2008)*.

In addition, service-learning is framed to focus on aligning behaviors and attitudes of students to an academic goal. As Bringle and Hatcher *(1995)* argue,

> service learning is a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. *(p. 112)*

Educational movements such as the philosophy of experiential learning, volunteerism, and activism have been associated with how students are positioned in service-learning.

Feminist analyses of this form of experiential learning highlight how this experience needs to be recognized as a social construction instead of an individual encounter *(Williams & McKenna, 2002)*. Without recognizing the position of the subject or engaging in a process of self-reflexivity, prejudices and stereotypes are bound to be reinforced *(Crabtree, 2008)*. Another feminist critique of experiential learning is related to its extensive focus on the volunteer as an

individual needing transformation rather than a concern for social transformation that is not necessarily ingrained in Western models of civility and democracy *(Williams & McKenna, 2002)*. This perspective also raises questions about service-learning as education for enterprise or society. For volunteers, their past volunteerism experience is the strongest determinant of their subsequent service involvement *(Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker, & Wells, 2008)*. In sum, there are dangers of volunteerism to all parties despite participants' good intentions.

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, Spivak *(1988)* argues that the Third World cannot be encountered without causing some sort of harm. This approach raises questions that relate to service-learning. Whose voice is silenced and/or represented during these acts of volunteerism? Which individuals become vulnerable to reimagining their identity and position in society amid preexisting and reinforced stereotypes and prejudices? Who is faced with socioeconomic barriers to participation? Furthermore, Devereux *(2008)* states that international volunteerism is synonymous with elitism because it is mainly the privileged White, highly qualified, middle-class Westerners who can afford to "sacrifice" their resources for poor people. Another danger of volunteerism and GSL reflects how the host community is represented as the *Other*. Representations of the *Other* have two related meanings. One meaning is political and focuses on the attempt made at speaking for the marginalized. The second meaning focuses on the attempt made at speaking *about* the marginalized *(Spivak, 1988)*. These representations are problematic in that the community is framed as something outside the university although, ironically, these institutions are integral parts of the broader global community *(Larsen, 2016)*.

Students participating in GSL programs have expectations for personal outcomes (e.g., skill development) that influence their subsequent involvement *(Tomkovick et al., 2008)*. Faculty and service-learning providers have an important role in ensuring that participants' expectations are met. For instance, the curriculum should provide opportunities for participants to think about service-learning in the context of their experiences. Many scholars and practitioners argue that the success of service-learning programs results in mutual benefits and strengthens community and organizational ties while improving the welfare of the community *(Crabtree, 2013; Green & Johnson, 2014)*.

The interdisciplinary literature and critical approaches to transformational learning outlined here provide a framework for experiential and service-based learning in international contexts.

Though we embrace GSL as a pedagogical approach, we note that assumptions about the intentions, impact, and relevance of participants' and community members' experiences can neither be overlooked nor examined without a critical lens. Drawing from the fields of critical development studies and feminism, we argue that global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical thinking are integral components of GSL. In order to tap the effectiveness of these components, however, GSL programs such as the one outlined below need to be critically evaluated.

Navigating Global Service-Learning in Tanzania

This section focuses on a program that practices GSL as a way of engaging students in gender and development in a rural region of sub-Saharan Africa. The program is part of a nonprofit organization involved in international education and volunteer projects in locations around the world through what it calls Fair Trade Learning (FTL). Fair Trade Learning has developed out of a strategy for international education that focuses on reciprocity and ethical community engagement. Hartman *(2016, p. 225)* outlines FTL principles that reflect a commitment to community-driven development that protects and encourages environmental and economic sustainability. Finally, this approach emphasizes intercultural learning among participants and community partners. The organization highlighted in this article follows these principles through ethical and community-engaged programs with students and volunteers, largely from the Global North, that involve study or work in developing regions of the Americas, Africa, and Europe. Since its inception in the early 1990s, this organization has grown to include over 8,000 volunteers, staff, and board members in approximately 15 locations around the world *(Hartman, 2016)*.

Similar to a growing number of groups that focus on international service-learning, the organization offers programs that are based on the philosophy of collaboration among participants from communities and institutions in ways that are mutually beneficial. Indeed, its website boasts of a network that "empowers individuals and communities through worldwide service and learning" *(Amizade.org)*. Its projects include collaboration with professionals on a health care delivery boat in the Brazilian Amazon, marketing greeting cards made by people with disabilities in Bolivia, and a community-based garden project in central Appalachia. The transformational learning or Fair Trade Learning principles are strongly evident in the projects and the people who participate in this organization *(Hartman & Kiely, 2014a)*. Overall, the organization

is designed to fuse GSL with local partners to enhance community development. The implementation of these themes in the practice of GSL is explored in the following discussion.

Practicing Global Service-Learning in Karagwe, Tanzania

For one month in 2015, 12 university students, one faculty member, and one graduate assistant traveled to Karagwe, Tanzania as part of a GSL program. Thirteen of the participants were from the United States, and one was Ghanaian. This discussion examines preparation for the on-site program as it relates to the themes of global civic engagement and intercultural competence within a critical development and postcolonial feminist framework. The program did not achieve all of its objectives for both structural and circumstantial reasons. Drawing from the conceptual approach outlined above, this analysis explores GSL objectives and provides a critical account of the challenges that frame the imbalance and inequities evident in the program.

Success of the program is largely linked to relationships developed among the participants (i.e., students, faculty, community members, NGOs, and leaders from the GSL organization) and the impact of the program on participants. As is often the case, the program is significantly shaped by the geographical and historical contexts where interaction takes place and the logistics necessary to fulfill the goals of the organization, the community, and the participants.

The GSL organization with which we worked has a history of engagement in Karagwe on several initiatives involving individual participants, community groups, and university partners (see *Hartman & Kiely, 2014b*, for a comprehensive analysis of previous programs in Tanzania with the same organization). For example, two of the organization's alumni founded an educational program on creative activities that fosters critical thinking skills through learning experiences for children during school breaks. This organization also works with several NGOs in the region and a local radio station to enhance community development. The organization's partner institution in this program is a Research I public university in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region where both authors were based when this research was conducted. For nearly 10 years, this university has worked with the organization to help students and faculty participate in its programs. These programs are generally beneficial for the organization as a way of maintaining a presence

in the community and for the university in providing an international experience for students. Scholars critically analyze issues such as reciprocity and how communities benefit from or are exploited by these types of relationships *(Larsen, 2016)*. Jones and Steinberg *(2011)*, for example, provide a useful schema to assess the range of ISL programs as they relate to level of interaction, length of stay, expectations in terms of competency or skills, and location of the programs.

Students who participated in this GSL program had backgrounds in the social and physical sciences and humanities, as well as varied academic experiences. Twelve students (10 women and two men) enrolled in the program for reasons that included meeting major requirements, experiencing a different culture, fulfilling graduation credits, and following their desire to travel to a country in Africa. The gender ratio of participants was highly skewed toward women for a number of reasons that include more flexibility in their schedules and overlap with their major fields of study in the social sciences and humanities. This gender imbalance reflects a national pattern in service-learning and study abroad more broadly *(Bringle et al., 2011; Tonkin, 2011)*. In addition, two of the participants were African American; 10 were White. Many of these students had previous experience living and traveling abroad, although a few had never traveled outside the United States. The pretrip journal and essay discussed in the next section revealed important aspects of students' expectations and perceptions about their experiences.

The itinerary and activities for this 4-week Tanzania program consisted of Swahili language and other development classes, visits to local organizations, volunteer work, excursions, cultural events, and exploration of the community. The group flew to Kigale, Rwanda and took a bus to the site in the Karagwe District, Tanzania. Participants stayed at a local guesthouse where meals were served and students shared rooms in hostel-type accommodations located in a residential neighborhood and guarded by a night watchman. The living standards included basic services such as indoor plumbing, electricity, and security, as well as open space with tables and chairs for relaxing and informal gatherings. The group traveled almost daily to community groups where they assisted with certain tasks such as planting and cultivating crops, weaving, and cleaning hospital rooms (see Table 1 for a detailed description of community groups). Because students were also required to focus on one organization for individual and group

Table 1. Selected Community Groups in Karagwe District, Tanzania

Name	Activity	Members	Location	Comments
FADECO	• Local radio station—broadcasts agricultural information and community events • Acts as correspondent from the community • Makes public health announcements	18 people	Kayanga	• Established 2007 • Initial support from Amizade for radio equipment • Coverage throughout the region • Several women-operated programs
Women's Emancipation and Development Association (WOMEDA)	Advocacy group and legal experts work on women's issues	Unknown	Kayanga	• Established 2003 in collaboration with local NGO • Focus on equitable access to land, family planning, and domestic violence
Coffee Growers	Grow seedlings for sale and harvest some coffee beans	Local farmers and community members	Karagwe District	Processing plant for local coffee no longer in operation due to Ugandan coffee competition
KVDPA–VIMAKA (Karagwe Vimaka Vocational Training Development & Poverty Alleviation)	• Microenterprise making textiles and crafts for local markets • Microfinance group	4 women, 2 men; 8 apprentices	Kayanga	• Small textile and sewing collective • Impacted by fire in Kayanga in 2016

**Table 1. Selected Community Groups in Karagwe District, Tanzania**

Name	Activity	Members	Location	Comments
Nyankangama Hospital	Regional hospital	Patients from Kagera region	Nyakahanga	• Originally a Lutheran Church hospital • Heavily dependent on foreign aid • Treatment of major and minor cases • Minimal infrastructure • Underfunded
OTA Initiative (Swahili for friendship)	Afterschool educational program to promote critical and creative thinking among students	• Students from Kayanga elementary school • Instructors from school and in community	Kayanga elementary school	• Established by former Amizade American participant • Outside funding for programs • Teacher training
Pineapple Farm/ Co-op	Cooperative farm with primary crop pineapple	28 men, 9 women	Rural area of Karagwe District	• Established in 2013 • Works closely with extension agent • Challenges with lack of basic farm equipment
Weaving Cooperative	Women's microenterprise— makes baskets and other crafts for local markets	11 women and 2 men	Rural area of Karagwe district	• Small group with fluctuating membership • Local markets in stores and among individuals
Herbal Medicine Farm	Farm and production of herbal medicine	Under 20 community members	Near Kayanga	• Provides alternatives to Western medicine and treatment of ailments and diseases • Focus on prevention and holistic medicine

projects, most participants returned to these groups for follow-up conversations and volunteer work.

Participants engaged in critical reflection during informal conversations while riding on the bus or sharing stories over dinner after a day in the field and through more formal discussions in class. Additionally, students had writing assignments based on academic articles and development themes, as well as personal reflections. In these assignments, students were encouraged to examine their positionality and perceptions about the geographical context and these activities. Finally, each student chose a topic to research, write about, and present during the program. Topics ranged from holistic medicine in Tanzania and the impact of HIV/AIDS on children to politics and governance in Tanzania.

A Brief Geography of Karagwe

The precolonial and colonial history, agricultural economy, and cultural diversity of Karagwe provide a dynamic setting for global service-learning. The Tanzania GSL program was based in the town of Kayanga, in the Karagwe District of Tanzania, along a main highway connecting the southern part of the Kagera Region to Bukoba City, the northern capital (see Figure 2). Kagera lies in the West Great Lakes region of East Africa along Lake Victoria. This part of the Great Lakes Kingdom once belonged to the Kitara Empire, engaging in trade with Arabs up to the mid-1800s and participating in the slave trade *(Cliffe & Saul, 1973)*. European colonial powers settled in this region in the 1800s, introducing coffee and other agricultural goods for local consumption, but mostly for export to the metropole. Germany was an early colonizer of this part of East Africa but lost control of the territory to the British following the First World War. This territory of Tanzania was originally governed as Tanganyika and Zanzibar until they merged in 1964 to form the United Republic of Tanzania.

Figure 2. Global Service-Learning Sites in Karagwe, Tanzania

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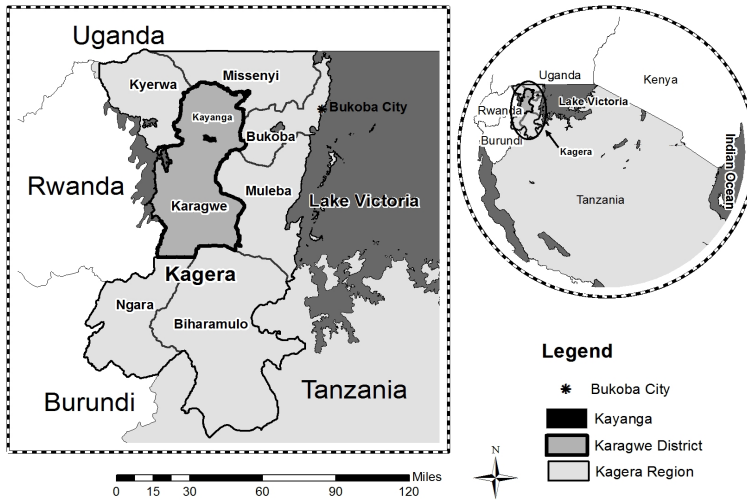
Note. Reproduced courtesy of Maritza Pierre.

The physical geography of Karagwe is a combination of tropical vegetation and grasslands. The area has fertile soil and sufficient rainfall to grow a variety of crops and raise livestock *(United Republic of Tanzania, 2016)*. Agriculture is a main economic activity for people in the Kagera Region. The indigenous crops of beans, maize, and other subsistence agriculture are matched by the main cash crops of banana and coffee. Pressure from too many people on the land and poor land use, however, have led to erosion and degradation of the soil. Another important social issue in the land tenure system of Tanzania as a whole, and Karagwe in particular, is the role of gender. Women are often marginalized from control of economic resources and have limited opportunities to own land in this area *(Newman, 2011)*. These issues became apparent in our visits to local agricultural sites and in working with women's advocacy groups in the region.

Finally, the population and demographics of this region have changed in the past decades with natural growth and an influx of people due to political unrest in neighboring countries. In general, Tanzania unites a diverse population with several ethnic groups, languages, and religions. Muslim Arabs are a majority population on the island of Zanzibar; the Sukuma and Nyamwezi are the largest groups on the Tanzania mainland. The population of Kagera Region was 2.5 million in 2012 with a majority from the Sukuma

ethnic group. In 2012, the District of Karagwe had a population of 332,000 *(United Republic of Tanzania, 2013)*. The region has an average annual growth rate of 3.2%, which is the third highest in the country. In the 1990s, the Kagera Region was affected by the genocide in Rwanda when over 165,000 refugees fled that country and settled in camps in Tanzania. Many have become permanent citizens of Tanzania and remain in this region.

This geographical and historical background of Karagwe situates the location of the GSL program within a broader cultural and political economy framework. As noted here, the country and region have been subject to colonial, patriarchal, and ethnic violence and oppression in multiple and diverse arenas. In turn, people within these communities experience these dynamic forces in ways that affect the role of gender in the development process and have implications for the practice of global service-learning.

Researching Global Service-Learning: Methodology and Methods

Feminist and critical methodologies were employed in this project to examine multiple power relations embedded within and framed by the Tanzania GSL program. A feminist approach examines how these dynamics are evident at diverse and interconnected scales, from the body to the global arena *(Mohanty, 2003)*. For example, individual and everyday experiences concerning agricultural practices and household divisions of labor shape and are influenced by gender relations, and global forces such as neoliberal structural adjustment impact the social services and economies of these communities in Tanzania.

The methodology in this research also reflects our own positionality in the projects and with the neocolonial landscape of rural sub-Saharan Africa. Through these positionalities, we were aware of our involvement in what some describe as the development project of global education. In a similar theme, Spivak *(1988)* warns of the business of development whereby representations of the Third World/subaltern are institutionally constricted. As Kapoor *(2004)* explains, "Our representations of the Third World/subaltern cannot escape our institutional positioning and are always mediated by a confluence of diverse institutional interests and pressures" *(p. 635)*. Following these themes, this approach examines the legitimization and even reproduction of hegemonic discourses in educational and development projects such as this *(Crabtree, 2008; Hartman & Kiely, 2014b; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004)*.

A multimethod research design was used to triangulate data in order to enhance the findings and scope of this project. Specifically, this study utilized photoanalysis of images from the fieldwork, document content analysis, participant observation, and site visits as research methods. Our human subjects application for this research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at our university prior to the program in Karagwe. Materials produced during the program consisted of reflective journals and assignments by the students that engaged gender and development literature with their experiences in the communities. These materials were obviously shaped by the students' positions as relatively privileged citizens of the United States and as students at a public university.

The assignments and activities, in combination with observations from field visits to various community projects, generated diverse responses that were the basis for our analysis of global civic engagement, intercultural competence, and critical thinking. Specifically, visits to local farms, travel experiences, and interactions with students, program leaders, and advocates yielded rich insights to our understanding of community and global engagement. These daily activities in the field were invaluable in examining the impact and process of service-learning in this cross-cultural postcolonial context. In addition, we conducted a focus group discussion with students as a means of reflecting on their experiences and sharing their perceptions of and reactions to privilege, community partners, and intercultural identities and competence.

Finally, the research utilized participant observation by the authors who led this program and were part of the everyday living and program activities. As a faculty member who does research on gender and microenterprise development in rural Africa, the first author was somewhat familiar with this rural context, as well as the social and economic opportunities and challenges faced by this community. Likewise, as a graduate student with research interests in intergroup communication with an emphasis on gender and culture, the second author understands the power dynamics, expectations, stereotypes, and prejudices often held by community members. In addition, the second author's background has exposed her to socioeconomic issues that are generalized to be characteristic of a sub-Saharan African country. In sum, the feminist methodological approaches and methods of research discussed here provide the basis for the following analysis of multiple and often contested outcomes of GSL in a postcolonial setting of rural Africa.

Unpacking Global Service-Learning—A Tanzanian Case Study

As noted in the introduction to this article, university students are increasingly looking for programs and opportunities that will enable them to engage with the communities where they travel instead of learning about places and people in traditional study abroad programs *(Crabtree 2013; Kiely, 2005)*. Although these efforts are meant to benefit communities, the outcomes and impact are sometimes incommensurate with the intended experience of international service-learning. This section examines the effectiveness of GSL in terms of global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical thinking among participants in this process. The focus of this discussion is the students enrolled in the program; however, members of the communities where students traveled and worked form an important backdrop to our discussion. The analysis addresses the following questions as a way to unpack our approach to global service-learning. Does the program challenge or reinforce attitudes about inequality and social justice among the participants (visitors and host community)? How and why do these attitudes vary among participants? What are the factors that work to challenge or build on stereotypes about the Global South, White privilege, and social and economic divisions among participants? Through these and other topics, this research examines the attitudes and actions that shape the perceptions of communities and the intersection of global and local forces in GSL. In addition, the analysis demonstrates how students process community development and other dynamics introduced in the academic and service aspects of the program.

One of the assigned readings prior to leaving the United States is Pico Iyer's *(2000)* article "Why We Travel." This assignment encourages students to think about their own background and motives for participating in GSL. The article focuses on how travel changes people by exposing them to other ways of living and thinking. Students were asked to choose passages from the Pico Iyer reading and relate the benefits and challenges of travel to their own feelings and anticipations about the program. This assignment offered opportunities for interesting pretrip reflections that positioned and somewhat prepared students for the GSL program on a personal level.

Students processed and interpreted this article in different ways, depending on their backgrounds and experience. A few students who had not had the opportunity to travel internationally

mentioned their excitement and nervousness about participating in this new experience. For example, one student wrote,

> I have never been to another continent or experienced anything outside of this American "bubble". I expect it to be a dramatic culture shock. It takes me a little while to adjust to new situations. . . . I assume that everyone will have a learning curve in the beginning of the trip, some longer than others. Hopefully, by the end of it, we all find whatever we were looking for, and at the very least, gain a new perspective.

Another student shared her feelings about going to Tanzania. "This is the first time I will travel outside the country. I do think that at first this will be a little overwhelming. . . . Tanzania, I imagine will have a very different way of thinking from the United States." This quote reflects the tendency of some students to overgeneralize about the region of Africa as a homogeneous entity instead of acknowledging the diversity and heterogeneous nature of the continent. Furthermore, going to a foreign country led some students to fall back on stereotypes and a sense of being in a totally different place. One female student expressed an interest in traveling to Tanzania with an "open mind and willingness to embrace the unknown," and other students wrote about their excitement at embarking on this opportunity to grow through the experience. In her pretrip journal, this student wrote, "Anytime I travel I spend a lot of time on personal reflection. I learn more about myself than I could at home, and I fall in love with that feeling. . . every new thing is exciting, and you grow from the experience." Another female student draws from Iyer *(2000)* in her travel reflections and sees this as an opportunity to come into contact with more essential parts of herself: an explanation for why she feels most alive when she is far away from home. As evidenced by these students' comments, this pretrip assignment produced important reflections about their personalities and ability to adapt to new situations.

For one participant, going to a foreign country as a U.S. citizen was an opportunity to create a positive image for her country. This perception raised a critical concern for another student, who stated that the main expectations for her travel to rural Tanzania are that the group will (a) be received by the people of Karagwe with excitement or (b) be resented for exploiting the host community through expectations that reflect what she describes as "encouraging White savior complex." Thus, the anticipation of traveling and the prede-

parture exercises give insight to the expectations and assumptions of the participants. Their positionality and self-reflexivity produced thoughtful, yet sometimes very differing reactions depending on the students' social identities and backgrounds. The following subsections discuss how participants engage with global awareness and intercultural competence through critical thinking.

Global Awareness

Through both academic and experiential activities during the program in Karagwe, students were exposed to structural and material forces that shape the economic and social fabric of this region. The focus of the coursework and the program was gender and sustainable development, so students tended to highlight issues relating to women and social power relations. Key readings in the course included excerpts from prominent scholars in the field, including Thomas-Slayter *(2003)*, Momsen *(2010)*, and Sen *(1999)*. Many students wrote about patriarchal forms of power in the District of Karagwe and how these were manifest among people with whom they interacted. As one female student wrote,

> Patriarchy is a structural phenomenon that voids gender minorities of their agency, the ability of individuals to influence and control their own lives and their freedom for decision making, either on a micro or macro scale. . . . (T)he ways in which patriarchy manifests is varied and distinctly cultural, thus necessitating that the ways by which feminists approach development must also be varied and distinctly cultural.

This quote depicts a general understanding of the role of patriarchy in this society with attention to the differential aspects of its manifestation in Karagwe. Other students observed and wrote about the structural elements of women's status in this society with attention to multiple axes of power relations. One male participant observed the disadvantages to women given societal norms and the overall oppression of women in this community.

> In many agricultural-based communities, women have little to no control over their family land or any other resources that may belong to the family. It is likely that the woman cannot travel or be paid for any type of work without her husband's written approval. . . In cultures, such as many that we've observed in Karagwe, women

feel threatened and unable to speak up due to the domi-
nant role a man plays.

The combination of readings, direct observation, and interaction
with women's groups in the community gave this student a better
sense of some of the challenges women face concerning access to
basic resources and divisions of labor. These statements, however,
reflected generalizations about the lower status of women, reducing
women to a homogeneous category instead of recognizing the dif-
ferences among women in this community. Mohanty's *(2003)* work
on postcolonial feminism and the failure of some development and
feminist scholars to see beyond what has been termed the homoge-
neous Third World woman are illustrative of this tendency.

The data indicate that GSL exposure helped students increase
their global awareness through experiences and interaction with
certain activities that were part of the program. For example, the
visit to the genocide museum in Kigale, Rwanda was a powerful
experience for the group on several levels. Learning about the his-
tory behind this region's ethnic genocide during the 1990s height-
ened their understanding of colonialism. As one student noted,

> the divisions between the Hutus and Tutsis and [*sic*]
> eventually led to a bloody and violent eruption that
> decimated all sections of the country. . .   The manip-
> ulation of indigenous politics and introduction of an
> elite and favored class of citizens, not to mention the
> external influences on economic systems, were all colo-
> nial actions that contributed to the genocide.

This student linked the regional conflict in Rwanda to broader
political, economic, and colonial forces, which in turn reinforced
topics the group had learned about in the development literature.

Additionally, students expounded on their understanding
of the impact of colonialism on Tanzanian society through dif-
ferent cultural institutions and practices in the region. Some stu-
dents focused on education and specifically the use of English as
a primary language in schools. Through their work in the local
elementary school, they were struck by this aspect of the legacy of
British colonization. According to one student, "the use of English
in secondary school and university, as well as in international
business among some African countries, is also a remnant of colo-
nialism, as well as globalization." Although the English language is
not systematically taught at the early stages of school, children are

expected to progress academically at the secondary level using the English language as a tool. Tanzania's language policy for education partly stems from the work of its first president, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, who attempted in the 1970s to empower Tanzanians with their own language while shielding them from the global world. These approaches to education led students to reflect on the impact of Western culture on life in Karagwe.

Finally, students were impacted by and commented on the physical infrastructure in Karagwe. For instance, Kayanga was experiencing road construction during our visit, which created many concerns among the community members (Figure 3). They were troubled by the dust and its health ramifications for the community, as well as the fact that many jobs were outsourced to people from other regions and countries. Locals told us that the majority of the construction companies were from China and hired Chinese people as managers instead of Tanzanians. One student noted,

> The roads are made for trade and transport of goods and resources, not for the needs of the locals such as being able to transport people to and from the hospitals or to schools. . . . there are not good conditions to be able to transport a sick or injured person to the hospital in an emergency situation, however, they are good enough for trading and importing goods from different areas of the world.

This student observed the importance of the road system to the local population and especially the perceived national priority of developing infrastructure to export and trade goods instead of providing proper access to health care and education.

Figure 3. Local Road Construction in Kayanga, Tanzania

The transformational learning that takes place in GSL through fieldwork, visits to cultural sites, and interactions with local people and institutions coincides with students' increased awareness and understanding of global issues and processes. Hartman and Kiely's *(2014b)* work on global citizenship resonates with the dilemma of students who engage in these experiences in ways that make universities "develop international structures that cater to U. S. students' wishes [and mimic] the earlier structures of colonialism" *(p. 216)*. Yet there are also accounts of students' obtaining a heightened sense of global social responsibility or global citizenship *(Hartman & Kiely, 2014a)*. These are invaluable lessons in tracking the effect of service-learning and experiential learning. By engaging with the communities and seeing gender relations and power dynamics firsthand, students are able to integrate the scholarly material and coursework with direct experiences in the community and region. They also understand the relationship between local and global issues, such as the impact of colonial rule on political, economic, and ethnic divisions in Rwanda, and investment by Chinese construction firms in rural Tanzanian infrastructure.

The focus on patriarchal power relations was also evident in student analyses of gender divisions of labor and access to resources such as land. Through visits to local farms, they understood gender inequality much more clearly in this international context. They also observed and were able to discern some of the disparities in this community that involve gender, age, economic status, and ethnic group. In this way, feminist perspectives were used to promote a nonessentializing approach that accounts for cross-cultural differences among various social identities.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence was a complicated and important aspect of students' learning process and experiences during the Tanzania program. Many scholars in the field of global education identify the stages and progression of cultural attitudes and feelings that take place during such experiences. Crabtree *(2013)*, for example, discusses the complicated and wide-ranging outcomes and impact of international service-learning for participants. Some include changes such as "increasingly sophisticated understandings of poverty and historical global relations for the students" *(p. 49)*. Outcomes and impacts of global service-learning also include various stages of feeling uncomfortable and awkward, leading to accepting and embracing a new culture. This discussion examines several aspects of intercultural competence that were evident in our data, including privilege, positionality as an outsider, material conditions, and inequities. The observations and comparisons among cultural backgrounds became evident in the essays and observations of participants in this program.

Some students identified and discussed White privilege, as well as American privilege, as a means of explaining their feelings about cultural differences between themselves and those in the Karagwe community. The focus on technology and conveniences were especially apparent in this excerpt from one student's paper. Her reflections partly stem from Illich's *(1968)* reading on how the good intentions of U. S. volunteers and travelers overseas are often misguided and even hypocritical.

> We as travelers (predominantly white, middle class travelers) . . . ride in buses, we drink bottled water. We can afford to travel half way around the world . . . and take our iMacs and iPhones everywhere we go, and have the luxury to complain when we don't have service or the WiFi isn't fast enough, without stopping to consider that

perhaps the locals didn't even consider the connection slow.

Another male White student was self-conscious of and uncomfortable with his racial minority status in Karagwe. This situation also gave him insight into the feelings minorities might have in places with a White majority population.

> As the obvious minority in Tanzania, I found myself feeling very out of place at times and definitely felt the eye-balls of many local citizens. It made me ponder what it must be like to live in a society where this occurs daily.

Several other students expressed concern about being accepted into the community where they stayed. "I fear that I won't be accepted into the community as an American. I also worry that as an African-American they will be hesitant or unwilling to connect with me." This student had certain expectations about her acceptance in the community based on her own identity as an African American. The issue of African Americans in "Africa" with expectations of being accepted is sometimes seen as an illusion because the identity of an African American is not perceived the same way by Africans in Africa *(Wynder Quainoo, 2015)*. To most people in Africa, African Americans are from America and are American. The hyphenated identity thus implies that they are Black persons born in America and highly influenced by American culture.

Privilege in other forms was a theme that several students addressed in their pretrip journals and on-site assignments. In reflections on their own socioeconomic position and privileges as Americans, students wrote about this confrontation with difference and privilege in Tanzania and the hope of understanding these differences. In response to a theme from Iyer *(2000)* about how travel reveals different parts of ourselves that might otherwise be ignored, one student noted,

> I know that I have grown up very privileged. I haven't suffered undue hardships or had to learn to live without many accommodations. Not everyone has this lifestyle. I think it is important that I understand how to look at other cultures [*sic*] beliefs and ways of dealing with their daily lives.

The students in this program also interacted with local residents or were simply present on the streets in local neighborhoods. In these contexts, some of them expressed feelings of "unease," of "invading these areas," or of being "misplaced." One student wrote in her journal that she felt like an outsider in the market area where they spent an afternoon shopping and exploring. She expressed discomfort about the fact that they had "no idea where we were going" and they were "very different from them."

In addition, students noted stereotypes about things they read and media images of poverty and how people lived in "Africa." A related topic concerning intercultural themes are feelings about and observations of material amenities. Students commented on the squat toilets, untarred roads, and other aspects of life in Karagwe that they were not used to from their own experience. However, as one student noted, "the squat toilets are fairly easy to get used to, at least when they flush, and the dirt roads were not as ubiquitous as you originally thought." She also observed stark differences in the community among houses that were "small or run-down" alongside "houses that were large and gated or smaller but with beautiful, well-kept gardens." The sharply contrasting standards of living demonstrated to her how the media portrayal of a continent as diverse as Africa is often misrepresentative and biased. These conditions also depict the overarching inequalities observed both within these communities and among regions of Tanzania. Thus intercultural competency proved to be a powerful lens through which students gained insight into their positionality and biases in the context of a different culture. These lessons helped them to process the often misguided and unintentional consequences that results from efforts to embrace cross-cultural differences.

Critical Thinking

Finally, critical thinking has a significant role throughout the learning process. Global service-learning teaches students and community members to carefully analyze and evaluate the material and situation at hand in order to improve their understanding of global engagement and experiential education. Critical feminist thinking adds to this approach by requiring us to gather information in a manner that questions standard assumptions about power dynamics and gender and social inequalities. The activities, readings, written assignments, and field experiences provided many opportunities to employ this approach within the GSL program.

Students were encouraged to question their own role and motives for participating in this program. One student wrote about her conflicted views of participating in the program. She wanted this experience to lead her forward in future opportunities to work for causes in social justice. Instead,

> It turned out to be less of a jumpstart to travel and exploration, and more of a jumpstart to analyzing my own place in the world of service. Halfway in the trip I began questioning my motives for even wanting to do the work I was in. Sure, I was interested in justice, but the fact that I had such an urge to "help" people in the developing world was something that I needed to analyze critically and deduce some type of conclusion from. . . . Here we were, bright-eyed American kids entering into their home community and asking that they help us help them.

This critique of service-learning is based on both the type of work involved and the premise of being *helpful* to the community. Many students did not feel they had the skills to assist with the building, farming, or education that was asked of them. Thus, the situation reinforced the imbalance and inequities they faced in the insider–outsider dichotomy.

The focus group discussion also reflected students' insights about the impact of this experience on their ability to make change. As a female student observed, "talking to people on this trip has also made us realize that maybe . . . as foreigners we can't do as much as we want or we shouldn't do as much as we want without causing more problems." Another student encouraged people in these situations to be aware of their actions and realize how they have consequences abroad. She also reflected on how her aspirations to join the Peace Corps have changed, stating, "I think I could have a bigger impact in my own community. Because I'm passionate about a lot of things so . . . on the local level I would make more of a difference."

These critical reflections resonate with broader debates concerning experiential learning and pedagogy that attempt to unsettle and critique student and participant perspectives on the project of GSL. Mohanty *(2003)* and Spivak *(1988)* have taken feminist perspectives in discussing the dangers of representing and silencing the *Other* in these and similar types of postcolonial encounters. Scholars, students, and practitioners need to challenge assumptions

about the intentions, impact, and relevance of GSL experiences in light of these critiques.

Conclusion

Global service-learning presents an important model of experiential education that offers critical perspectives on community engagement within the context of efforts to internationalize higher education. Themes of global awareness and intercultural competence that are embedded in critical thinking often frame this experience for diverse constituents. This article uses these themes to construct an analysis of a GSL program focusing on gender and sustainable development in Tanzania. The approach in this program challenges students to rethink and question assumptions about complex geographies and social histories of East Africa in general.

The analysis exemplifies the contested and dynamic nature of global service-learning as it is applied in a postcolonial context. The specific focus on gender and sustainable development gives students the material and ideological context to address privilege and power dynamics at various scales within gendered and other power relations. Our analysis draws from feminist and critical development approaches to examine the partnerships and effect of this experiential learning process on students and communities in Kayanga, Tanzania. The contextual issues concerning globalization, social histories, and political economies of development are addressed in this discussion through analyses of student reflections, assignments, observations, and a focus group. These writings and field experiences express how students and other participants navigate foreign travel, cross-cultural themes such as gender, language, and religion, and the material realities of rural development.

The study has several limitations, however, that include the scope and length of the program in Tanzania. The analysis is based on one specific program and could be enriched with the addition of longitudinal studies from other similar programs. Also, input and feedback from community members would expand the analysis to include local voices and insights into the GSL program. Other studies have engaged more with community groups, thus providing different perspectives on global service-learning *(Larsen, 2016)*. Nonetheless, our in-depth and focused study contributes to broader literature that addresses the role of global awareness and cultural competency in these cross-cultural experiential learning programs. In particular, critical development and postcolonial

feminist frameworks can be applied in this context to better understand the complicated nature of GSL programs and transformational learning as a whole.

In conclusion, Nussbaum *(2002)*, as quoted in Hartman and Kiely *(2014b)*, describes a global citizen as "someone who recognizes common human dignity, develops his or her narrative imagination (or empathy) for other humans, and who cultivates critical distance from one's culture and traditions" *(p. 234)*. Furthermore, international service-learning challenges one's epistemology or deeply embedded beliefs and knowledge about the world around us *(Larkin et al., 2016)*. These themes draw from the interdisciplinary fields of critical development studies and postcolonial feminism in ways that expand our understanding of global service-learning as a means of advancing inclusive and transformational pedagogy.

Acknowledgements

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