

A Study Abroad Program in Tanzania: The Evolution of Social Justice Action Work

Elizabeth M. Cannon and Carmen Heider

Abstract

This article focuses on the evolution of our study abroad program to Tanzania, including the integration of three liberal arts disciplines and the foundational core that links together the three areas: social justice activism. More specifically, we explore the overall challenge of dismantling “us versus them” thinking and the interactive learning moments that allow this process to transpire. We narrate how what we learned on our 2008 and our 2010 trips led to our model of social justice action work, which we enacted on our 2012 trip. Our approach to social justice action work integrates experiential learning with Dan Butin’s concept of “justice learning,” or education that interrupts and complicates binary thinking. Our three-fold model encompasses teaching moments where instructors create the academic framework to facilitate change in our students, where students observe grass-roots organizations performing “traditional” social justice action work, and where on-site activities generate interactive experiential moments in which perceptions can be changed.

It was my first time abroad and my outlook on life changed just by being in Tanzania for 2 1/2 weeks. It's hard to put into words but I would probably say it's been the greatest experience of my life so far. I enjoyed my time so much there and became a better person because of it, I could've stayed much longer—Student Quote

The above testimonial from a university student who participated in our January 2010 Short-Term Study Abroad trip to the Kilimanjaro region of northern Tanzania makes clear why we enthusiastically planned our third trip for January 2012: student perspectives can change when they actively engage with people from a different culture. Engaging students in this process of change has been a driving force be-

hind the trip since we first offered it in 2008. We, the Director of our university’s Social Justice Program and LGBTQ Resource Center, and an Associate Professor, have also jointly led and taught the two subsequent trips in 2010 and 2012. Our academic backgrounds in English, Communication, Women’s Studies, and Social Justice have played an integral role in the evolution of this program, and we have continued to shape and develop it since we began planning the first trip in 2007. This paper focuses on the evolution of our program since its inception, including the integration of three liberal arts disciplines (Communication, Women’s Studies, and Social Justice) and the foundational core that links together the three areas: social justice activism. More specifically, we explore the overall challenge of dismantling

“us versus them” thinking and the interactive learning moments that allow this process to transpire.

Each Tanzania trip has run for two-and-one-half weeks during our January interim and has been preceded by one week of class preparation on campus. All trips have offered students the opportunity to learn about women’s grassroots activist organizations in and near Moshi, one of the larger cities in Tanzania. In addition, the program includes visits to schools, hospitals, and dispensaries in local villages, along with visits to Maasai communities. Overall program goals for the three trips have been: to experience a culture different from one’s own, to interact with local people in area communities, to reflect on different ways of living and viewing the world, to learn about grassroots activism, and to develop and practice intercultural communication skills. The trip has consistently included undergraduate students from the Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Education and Human Services.

When we first envisioned this program in 2007, we were not explicitly thinking about social justice action work. While our home departments differ, one in English and the other in Communication, we both primarily teach core and cross-listed courses in Women’s Studies, Social Justice, and African American Studies. Thus, we knew that for any study abroad program we planned, questions of gender, social justice, privilege, and activism would drive the academic portion of the course and the on-site activities in which our students would participate. But we quickly learned that much more goes into crafting a study abroad trip: working with the international education office on trip logistics and the budget, designing the curriculum, and connecting with an agency to orchestrate the onsite itinerary. When we began planning our first trip for January 2008, we had yet to think through the theoretical underpinning of what we now see as

central to what this experience is all about: a study abroad program that fosters social justice action work on site and through the integration of three areas of study: Communication, Women’s Studies, and Social Justice.

Our approach to social justice action work integrates experiential learning with Dan Butin’s concept of “justice learning.” First, the idea that experiential learning, “education rooted in and transformed by experience” (Lutternam-Aguilar and Gingerich 2002:43), is key in study abroad programs is not new (Wagenknecht 2011, Pagano and Roselle 2009, Savicki 2008, and Kolb 1984). As Thomas Wagenknecht (2011:137) states, “Experiential learning [. . .] is at the center of what leads the study abroad sojourn to become a positive and powerful learning process.” Second, we link experiential learning in a study abroad context to Butin’s concept of “justice learning,” or education that interrupts the “either/or binary thinking that closes off (rather than opens up) a space for discussion, debate, and action” (2007:3). We have found that our students are often inclined to interpret the world through hierarchical binaries; they typically approach the trip through the dualistic framework of developed/undeveloped and privileged/impoverished, which then limits the positive potential of experiential learning. Our primary challenge on this trip, then, has been to facilitate the process of student development beyond simplistic “us versus them” thinking.

This essay explores the transformation of our study abroad trip from a more traditional format that included one distinct service-learning project into an experience that integrates social justice action work throughout (and potentially beyond) the program. Our redesigned 2012 study abroad program reflected a model of social justice activism that emerged through the development of the 2008 and 2010 trips. This evolution also led to the development of our

three-fold approach to social justice action work: first, where students visit grass-roots organizations that perform “traditional” social justice action work; second, where instructors create the academic framework to facilitate change in students; and third, where on-site activities generate interactive experiential moments in which perceptions can be changed. In this essay, we demonstrate how the concept of justice learning has transformed our study abroad program from an experience that, on some levels, reinforced dualistic or binary thinking, to a program that reflects interactive, experiential learning opportunities that focus on social justice. Through directed preparation, trip activities, and guidance, we have tried to create an environment in which social justice action work can transpire. We explore the development of the program by first discussing the 2008 and 2010 trips, including the challenges we faced and the changes we made. We then explain the redesign of our 2012 program, which reflected the three-fold framework that is delineated above.

Tanzania 2008: Poverty and Privilege

In 2008, we brought 22 undergraduate students to Tanzania for our first study abroad trip. We identified poverty as a major social justice issue in Tanzanian life and, by working with a local Tanzanian vendor, sought out women’s organizations that worked to alleviate the conditions of poverty. Our 2008 program title, “Poverty and Privilege in Tanzania,” encapsulates this emphasis, yet it also reflects the major challenge that we faced throughout this first trip: the prevalence of binary “Us/ Them” thinking. We chose the title with some hesitancy, hoping that through the study of poverty-related issues and completion of a service-learning project, students would examine their own positions of privilege and advantage in the United States. In addition, students would then be able to more fully

comprehend the impact of their own choices and actions in a global context. Furthermore, we hoped that trip experiences would invite students to think more critically about the ways in which they were potentially impoverished within our own society in the United States. We were apprehensive about the title because we realized it could potentially reinforce stereotypes and dualistic thinking, but we hoped that the course framework and trip experience would complicate and dislodge those ideas and assumptions. Unfortunately, our expectations were not realized because we did not anticipate the extent to which students’ views were shaped by dominant, dualistic discourses. This section explores the initial design of our 2008 study abroad program and focuses on how the prevalence of binary thinking, encapsulated in the title, is reflected and reinforced through three challenges that emerged prior to and during the trip: the desire to help, ethical questions related to “bricks and mortar” service-learning projects, and student frustrations.

Prior to our departure, we taught four discussion-based class sessions in which we introduced central course concepts, complicated the notion of service-learning, and introduced Tanzanian culture. We chose a number of readings that we hoped would help students question their privileged positions and the ways in which they were guided by dominant perceptions (Appendix A). To this end, we assigned Peggy McIntosh’s “White Privilege,” Terrence Crowley’s “Lie of Entitlement,” and Joel Charon’s “The Nature of Perspective.” We also required two articles that explore poverty in Tanzania: Ruth Evans’ “Poverty, HIV, and Barriers to Education” and Mama Anna Mkapa’s “Opening Address by the First Lady of Tanzania.” To introduce a more critical perspective on service-learning, we assigned Ivan Illich’s 1968 speech, “To Hell With Good Intentions.” Finally, students read

Joseph Mbele's *Africans and Americans* to provide a Tanzanian perspective on cultural differences, which we hoped would prepare them for the study abroad experience and address issues related to culture shock.

The first challenge, the desire to "help" and "do for," emerged during these pre-travel classes and continued throughout the trip. We realized during these sessions that some students perceived the trip as an opportunity to help the poor, primarily through giving to children and women in need. In anticipation of this perspective, we assigned Illich's speech, which concludes with the following recommendation: "Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But do not come to help." Following the advice of others who had been to Tanzania, we suggested that students could bring a few things to give to school children, including soccer balls, paper, and pencils. In addition to soccer balls, some students also brought used toys that they hoped to give to an orphanage.

The desire to help through giving was the first context in which the prevalence of binary thinking in our students' perceptions became clear, as our students hoped to assist Tanzanians through their unsolicited donations. We now recognize that this seemingly admirable desire to "help" and "do for" is shaped by what David Jefferess identifies as the Western discourses of marketing and colonialism. In other words, this worldview "reproduce[s] an 'Us/Them' relationship in which those in the beneficent 'donor countries' aid the desperate people of the 'project countries'" (Jefferess 2002:2). This type of discourse, by focusing on donor gratification, deflects attention away from the causes of poverty, the ways in which those advantaged by Western privilege can perpetuate poverty, and the potential solutions to poverty (Jefferess 2002: 4). To complicate the desire to help would entail dismantling the

stereotypes and binary thinking embedded in dominant perspectives.

The second challenge, ethical questions related to "bricks and mortar" service-learning, emerged in relation to the one-day service project we had planned. We were supposed to help construct a school building in a small village on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, but the project was cancelled because a village elder had died and his funeral was scheduled that day. Some students were very disappointed; because they were so invested in wanting to help, they did not see how constructing a school could reinforce an Us/Them binary. As the day unfolded, however, they started to question the ethics of this kind of project. Students began to understand that constructing a school building could physically and emotionally separate them from those they wanted to help. We were relieved the project fell through because, in the weeks and months prior to the trip, we had also begun to question its validity. One of our colleagues, who had traveled to Tanzania numerous times, advised us to rethink this part of the program, as it might result in a scenario where a group of white people complete a task while local Tanzanians watch them work. Some of these locals might even be put out of work simply to accommodate tourists who want to "help" the "less fortunate" and then go home feeling good about themselves. As Butin (2003:1678) argues,

[S]ervice learning has promoted much good will among those doing the actual service learning, but there is considerably less evidence that service learning has provided much benefit for the recipients.

These ethical concerns led us to question the trip's overall emphasis on service projects and we began to wonder how, if at all, we might ethically maintain the focus on

service without perpetuating what we hoped to challenge.

The cancellation of the service-learning project actually offered an opportunity that then became the basis for the reorganization of the 2010 trip. Because we were not constructing a building, we instead visited with students and teachers, and we learned much about their school, their needs, and their desires. Our host, a village elder, also talked with us about the number of children, many of whom were AIDS orphans, who could not afford to attend school because of poverty-related circumstances. He explained that the Tanzanian government mandated that every village must have a secondary school, but it did not provide funds for tuition and the construction of buildings. Tuition for one year of schooling, we discovered, was approximately \$170 per student. Our students learned a valuable lesson that day and consequently, without our guidance, gathered nearly \$300 out of their souvenir money to donate to this school.

This spontaneous act, unlike the pre-planned service-learning project, was inspired by our time at the local school and interactions with our village host, the students, and the teachers. It comprised one of the most moving moments from the trip because it grew out of an emerging friendship with local Tanzanians and prompted us to think more critically about the importance of “being with” rather than “doing for”. Our interactions allowed us to learn far more about the village school than we would have through the service-learning construction project, including the cost of putting a child through school, the challenges people faced, and what locals identified as their most pressing needs. We learned, after talking with our host, that the most useful act of service is the donation of money, which could then pay for a child’s tuition or cover building construction costs. This type of donation would not necessarily provide us with

the emotional gratification of doing “hands on” work, but our efforts would be put to better use.

The third challenge is best characterized as simmering student frustration throughout the trip in relation to assignments and activities. First, our assignments generated frustration among several students because of their complexity (Appendix B). Additionally, for several students, conflicting notions about the nature and purpose of the trip manifested in frustrations over on-site activities. Frustrations arose not so much because of binary thinking but because preconceived notions about the trip were at odds with its reality. Some students seemed to want a fun graduation vacation and became annoyed by the lack of free time for recreational activities such as sunbathing, socializing, and experiencing the local nightlife. Those who perceived the program as a way to help the less fortunate were very excited about our service-learning project and gravitated toward activities that involved interactions with children; they seemed less excited to visit sites that offered opportunities to learn more about Tanzanian women, poverty-related issues, and the local economy. We soon learned that our pre-trip classes had not adequately prepared these students for homesickness, culture shock, and the types of programs we hoped to highlight, which then hindered them from engaging fully in on-site activities.

Some students also found on-site activities frustrating because their involvement was often passive rather than active, and yet students found it much easier to embrace this binary rather than confront it. Long days packed with activities were often challenging for students, which contributed to the passive nature of the group. Moreover, the practice of Tanzania administrators presenting formal lectures resulted in the unfortunate reinforcement of a different type of division between the students and our Tan-

zanian hosts: Us (the passive audience) and Them (the active lecturers). While students always had the opportunity to ask questions after presentations, their already passive disposition precluded them from actively participating. We understood that formality was a part of Tanzanian tradition, but we struggled to balance that format with our desire for more informal, active interaction. Thus, our students were frustrated both by their lack of energy, which inclined them toward passivity, and then by the format of the activities, which reinforced passivity and dualistic thinking.

What became clear from these frustrations is that if students are overwhelmed by what they perceive as an overly complicated journal assignment, by an itinerary that entails long days, and by an inability to comprehend course concepts, their frame of mind impacts their capacity to learn (Hall 2004:268-270). These constraints are especially relevant when the subject matter requires inner reflection about one's values and beliefs and a willingness to move out of one's comfort zone. Thus, reducing these frustrations became a major component of our 2010 trip.

We had organized the 2008 trip with high hopes that the experience would provide a productive and enjoyable learning experience for all who participated. Yet the challenges of leading a study abroad program to a country in East Africa emerged prior to our departure and became more pronounced throughout the trip. Upon our return, students overwhelmingly indicated that they had learned a great deal from the adventure, but as leaders, we felt that we had not adequately prepared them for what we wanted them to gain from the experience. The prevalence of binary thinking, which is reflected in the desire to help, our own decision to include the service-learning project, and general student frustrations, reveals that student expectations and assumptions did

not always align with the nature and purpose of the trip.

Tanzania 2010: Cultural Immersion

In 2010, we brought 19 students to Tanzania. As we planned this trip, we realized that the limited space of two-and-a-half weeks offers interactive moments where perceptions can be changed and justice learning can take place. This trip addressed the challenge of binary thinking by including more of these interactive opportunities, but our 2010 efforts to move students away from dualistic thinking resulted in a framework that still lacked a specific focus. We now realize that most 2010 program changes were reactive rather than proactive: we addressed the major challenges that arose in 2008 and included more interactive activities. We initiated these changes by revising the course title to "Cultural Immersion in Tanzania," which we hoped would avoid the reinforcement of Us/Them binaries. Still central to the course were issues related to perception, unearned privilege, and poverty as a determining factor in Tanzanian life, but we wanted a title that reflected what we were seeing as the key component of the trip—understanding Tanzanian culture from a Tanzanian perspective and placing emphasis on interactive experiences. After retitling the trip, we continued to re-evaluate much of what we had done in 2008, addressing the challenges that arose: the well-meaning desire to help, our bricks and mortar service-learning project, and student frustrations. In addition to these types of reactive changes, we did make one proactive change: we began to introduce a social justice framework.

One of the first challenges raised in 2008 was how to address students' well-meaning desire to help Tanzanians, and this challenge also arose with our 2010 students. Before we departed, students once again asked whether they could bring gifts. We told

them of our 2008 experience and highlighted how it is best to bring what is asked for by Tanzanians, shifting the emphasis from donor gratification to recipient request in an attempt to break down the Us/Them binary. Prior to this trip, our Tanzanian host told us that the village schools we would visit actually needed soccer balls and pumps. We were able to channel our students' desire to help—they enthusiastically brought six soccer balls and two pumps—but we continued to emphasize through readings and discussions the problematic nature of this desire.

The second challenge raised in 2008 entailed ethical questions related to our bricks and mortar service-learning project. In 2010, we still wanted students to experience a taste of hands-on activism, but now questioned the validity of the traditional service-learning approach. The cancellation of our 2008 construction project and the students' spontaneous donation made us realize that if students are going to do this type of "work," it must be something Tanzanians request and actually need. Because we had learned that the school was most in need of money, we decided to offer a different type of service-learning project: a pre-trip fundraising opportunity for students, who would then give the majority of money to village schools in Tanzania while using the remainder to off-set their trip costs. The students' activist work consisted primarily of letter-writing campaigns and resulted in the donation of \$3,000 to a village school. Even though we were still "giving" money to Tanzanians, they were the ones who inspired the process. Our hope was that this fundraising project would be sustainable and that we could continue to work with village schools in northern Tanzania.

Our visit to Kiwakkuki (Kikundi cha Wanawake Kilimanjaro Kupambana na UKIMW), an HIV/AIDS awareness organization in Moshi, reflects a second example of how students were able to make a differ-

ence because they were asked to do so. In 2008, we noticed that the organization welcomed volunteers from other countries, so we asked whether having our students volunteer for a day would be beneficial. They enthusiastically said yes. When we visited in 2010, the organization had moved to a new location, and they were still in the process of renovating and settling into their new building. Many small tasks needed to be done, but they lacked the people power to complete them. So some students cleaned storage rooms, some entered data in labs, some went on home visits to those living with HIV, and some worked on the roof and mixed cement. At the end of the day, students excitedly talked about how their experiences taught them that activist work often includes the mundane tasks that keep an organization operating.

The third challenge from 2008 focused on student frustrations. We hoped in 2010 to create a more enjoyable and productive learning environment that would be conducive to student development in the area of social justice work. To address the frustration caused by the 2008 students' conflicting perceptions of what this study abroad experience entailed, we tackled the problem on several fronts. We included an interview as part of the application process to make sure students understood the parameters of the trip. In pre-trip classes, we added discussions about culture shock and exercises that facilitated understanding of cultural assumptions. These discussions and exercises reduced frustrations in two ways: one by minimizing culture shock and the other by building group cohesion. Both are especially important to a study abroad program that asks students to do such intense internal work as changing their perceptions. We also used R. Garry Shirts' simulation exercise, BaFa BaFa, which creates two imaginary cultures with very different values and rules of behavior. Members of each culture visit the

other and return to their own to determine how the other culture operates so they can successfully participate. Additionally, we included an exercise where students wrote down all their trip expectations and then tore them up, discussing how expectations can cause them to miss or misread potential interactive moments. These approaches reduced conflicting perceptions of the trip, minimized culture shock, and created group cohesion; although group drama cannot be entirely eliminated, the 2010 students were significantly less frustrated than the 2008 students.

To decrease student frustration over course assignments, we needed to determine how to make the written assignments more meaningful and less complicated. For example, we replaced our long list of journal questions with the following queries on the day's experiences: What did you learn and/or think about? What are you learning about yourself? What are you learning about Tanzanians and Tanzania? What are you learning about the United States (by being in Tanzania)? Why is this significant? We also provided examples of entries that were simply descriptive and those that processed what students experienced in relation to larger cultural assumptions and norms. Moreover, we acted more as mentors by collecting journals mid-trip and giving ungraded feedback, which re-directed those going astray and increased student confidence in writing and learning. We encountered little resistance, and students appreciated our efforts. While both the 2008 and 2010 final paper assignments required students to write a thesis-driven essay in which they were to process and analyze the trip experience through course concepts and readings, the 2008 assignment caused frustration because it lacked focus. In the 2010 paper, we specifically asked students to discuss what they had learned about Tanzanian and United States culture in relation to gender, commu-

nication, and/or a major issue raised in the readings. These papers were more successful, and, again, students expressed less frustration.

We also thought carefully about how to design our on-site class sessions to reflect our commitment to active, student-centered learning, and provide general guidance to our students. We decided to focus these classes on Mbele's *Africans and Americans: Embracing Cultural Differences*, one of our readings from 2008, because this Tanzanian author challenges stereotypes through the presentation of his cultural experiences. Before we left the United States, we divided students into four groups and assigned each a section of this text on which they would lead one of four on-site class sessions. On-site discussions focused on comparisons between Mbele's views of Tanzanian life and students' interactions with the people they met and the places they visited. Frustration was replaced with excited conversations. These classes shifted from tense obligations where learning was stifled to an exciting component of the trip where insights flourished.

In addressing student frustrations during on-site activities, we knew we had to respect the Tanzanian tradition of formal presentations while breaking down the active/passive binary through increased interaction. On one hand, our 2010 students made this endeavor easier because they were not inclined to be passive. More of our 2010 students had backgrounds in the areas of Women's Studies, Social Justice, and African American Studies, which fostered a shared perspective of why they were in Tanzania, so they approached the academic portion of the course with more excitement than frustration. We also changed the format of some activities to promote interaction and dismantle the Us/Them binary. As indicated previously, our 2008 school visits were very formal and offered few opportunities to build

relationships with students. We visited the same concrete classrooms in 2010, but this time, we actively participated in the lessons. Through these interactive experiences, students' assumptions about education in Tanzania and the United States were challenged. For example, they met Tanzanian elementary school students who were learning to speak a third language and who could answer geography questions that stumped our students. In addition, the soccer ball donations leveled the playing field. Students from opposite sides of the world who had been unable to communicate now encouraged each other as they raced around on the grass. These interactive experiences had more of an impact on deconstructing the Us/Them binary than any article they could have read.

As well as addressing the challenges raised in 2008, we also began to rethink our study abroad program in terms of social justice. Up to this point, we had structured our trip as a Women's Studies and Communication course, focusing on gender issues, women's activism, and cross-cultural communication. But in 2010, we decided to cross-list this course with our Social Justice Program and count it as a capstone experience for Social Justice minors. We began to think of how this program already incorporated social justice activities beyond gender and how we could continue to do so more intentionally. We, thus, added three major on-site activities: two days at the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC) and visits to a fair trade coffee plantation and the Miichi Women's Group, a fair trade artists' organization and shop that provides a source of income to struggling local women. Students came home thinking seriously about where their morning coffee comes from and whether they should seek out fair trade products.

Pete and Charlotte O'Neal's UAACC also added more interactive experiences to

our program and several dimensions to our social justice framework. Both former Black Panthers from the United States, Pete lives in exile in Tanzania, and both have dedicated their lives to giving back to the community in which they live. Students were able to hear Pete's story of fighting for civil rights and see how the O'Neals have created a community center based on social justice principles. The UAACC provides work and educational opportunities for local youth, helps in community projects, and recently added an orphanage on the grounds. Students also participated in a Youth Forum, an interactive experience that especially made them think about current events in terms of social justice. In this forum, "youth" (mostly in their twenties) working at the Center and from the local community joined with our students to talk with and to learn from each other.

While we returned to the United States knowing we were closer to our vision of what we hoped two-and-a-half weeks in Tanzania could mean for students, we immediately started thinking about how to improve the next trip in 2012. In reflecting on the 2010 program, we identified two major challenges. First, we realized that a cultural immersion model is too broadly based; the new title in no way reflects the complex political stance of this course. We, therefore, purposely considered how our emerging focus on social justice shaped what we did while maintaining our commitment to gender and communication. Second, we continued to question the implications of fundraising as service-learning and whether this type of giving did indeed successfully dismantle the Us/Them binary. After reflecting on the reactive changes we made in 2010, we also concluded that we needed to more proactively develop the theoretical framework that guides our trip. As we will demonstrate in the next section, this theoretical framework helped clarify the types of activ-

ism and experiential learning that we now actively try to foster in our Tanzania study abroad program.

Tanzania 2012: Activism, Gender, and Social Justice

In 2012, we brought 12 students to Tanzania. The revisions we implemented for this trip centered on readings, assignments, and on-site interactive experiences that enhanced social justice action moments of insight and addressed our newly created Student Learning Outcomes. Moreover, we found a way to retain our focus on gender and communication while simultaneously integrating best critical practices that merged service-learning and social justice work in a study abroad context.

Our thinking for the 2012 trip stemmed from our concern that the 2010 trip structure was too general: we had made positive changes by including more interactive activities, but overall, the program still lacked focus in relation to what we specifically hoped to accomplish. We, thus, changed the title to “Activism, Gender, and Social Justice in Tanzania,” which more accurately demonstrated what drives this study abroad experience. We chose “activism” to signal the active participation central to this learning experience and to encompass our emerging three-fold model of social justice action work: first, where students visit grass-roots organizations performing “traditional” social justice action work; second, where instructors create the academic framework to facilitate change; and third, where on-site activities generate interactive experiential moments in which our perceptions can be changed. We chose “gender” not only to signal that this concept will always be a major lens through which we view Tanzanian culture but also to stay true to the central form of traditional social action work that remains part of our trip: Tanzanian women organizing to address social justice issues.

Finally, we chose “social justice” to shed light on what has been a major emphasis from the trip’s inception and a major concept that we hope students will more fully understand after the experience. All three topics clarified the focus and purpose of our 2012 trip; in addition, we began to think more systematically and theoretically about our program.

The 2012 trip design reflected the confluence of research and reflection in the areas of service-learning, experiential learning in a study abroad context, and best practices in higher education. First, we refined our thinking about the integration of social justice work and service-learning through Butin’s concept of “justice learning.” As Butin (2007:1) states,

Deep and sustained service-learning [. . .] offers genuine venues within which social justice education can be experienced and experimented. Such service-learning, moreover, fosters a justice-oriented framework [. . .] that makes possible the questioning and disruption of unexamined and all-too oppressive binaries of how we view the struggle toward equity in education. This ‘justice learning,’ for me, is the goal that lies at the intersection of service-learning and social justice education.

Butin (2007:4) goes on to explain that justice learning also “disrupt[s] the unacknowledged binaries that guide much of our day-to-day thinking and acting.” The evolution in our understanding of service-learning reflects and is shaped by Butin’s work. The ethical issues that arose in relation to our traditional bricks and mortar service-learning project prompted us to question whether we should still include this type of emphasis in the trip. Butin helped us clarify how service-learning and social justice work can be productively integrated, as

justice learning “open[s] up the possibility that how we originally viewed the world and ourselves may be too simplistic and stereotypical” (Butin 2007:4). The key, we recognized, is based on creating an environment where students can “meaningfully engag[e] with issues of social justice” (Butin 2007:4). We hoped, in 2012, to continue to create the interactive experiential moments that dismantle dichotomies, thus helping students develop the mindset necessary to enact change. In this way, we tried to foster the concept of justice learning.

Our perspectives were also significantly shaped by the work of Doug Reilly and Stefan Senders (2009: 242), who present a new “critical” lens “for understanding the work of study abroad.” Their work challenges existing frameworks and seeks to position the study abroad experience as “an activist force in the service of global survival” by focusing on “an ethos of global responsibility and citizenship” (Reilly and Senders, 2009: 262, 247). They explore nine approaches to global crisis, some of which we detail in subsequent sections. This emphasis on global responsibility and citizenship entails, as Butin’s work does, the analysis of power structures, one’s own position of privilege, and the dismantling of stereotypes and simplistic thinking.

We also realized that we needed to begin this restructuring process through the delineation of concrete student learning objectives. As Ken Bain (2004:50) emphasizes, “[T]he best teachers plan backward; they begin with the results they hope to foster.”

While Bain suggests that courses should be designed after determining one’s learning outcomes, it has taken us four years of rethinking and two trips to Tanzania to determine what it is we actually want our students to learn through this study abroad experience. Study abroad research (Kachuyevski and Jones, 2011, Ritz, 2011, Long, Akande, Purdy, and Nakano, 2010,

and Donnelly-Smith, 2009) shows that students have much to gain from even a short-term experience. We, thus, created the following student learning outcomes for the 2012 program:

- *To embrace being out of their comfort zone as an opportunity for learning.*

Rather than seeing social discomfort as a warning sign to retreat, we hope that students will realize that cultural or social discomfort can be a sign that their preconceptions of what they think is normal are being challenged.

- *To understand how language and symbols function to shape their perspectives.*

In addition to viewing language and symbols as vehicles to communicate with one another, we want students to understand the ways in which language and symbols provide the foundation for our worldviews and direct our thinking about people, issues, and cultural practices.

- *To demonstrate the ability to think in more complicated ways.*

We hope students will be able to recognize dualisms in public discourse, popular culture, and their own thinking. In addition, we hope they can explain the limitations of such thinking and demonstrate more nuanced understandings of the world.

- *To understand the origin and function of stereotypes.*

Stereotypes of Africa abound in Western media: Africa is dominated by large animals to be hunted, the entire continent suffers from guerilla warfare, the Maasai represent the quintessential African, and all Africans are suffering. We want students to under-

stand how these types of images shape and direct their thinking, the origins of these stereotypes, and the dangerous misperceptions that stereotypes can invite.

- *To understand that their cultural positioning comes with assumptions and biases that can lead to stereotypes about those in a different cultural position.*

It is important for students to understand that in addition to being influenced by stereotypes of “Africa,” their views of “America” have also been shaped by various institutions, including the media, government, and education. Furthermore, we want students to understand that these views can also lead to assumptions and biases that foster stereotypes about those living in other parts of the world.

- *To understand that for social justice activism to be effective, they must dismantle the Us/Them binary.*

We hope to teach students, first, that the desire to help or “do for” reinforces systems of privilege and hierarchy; second, that to create effective change, they must “start[] with the notion that given the proper tools, the people most affected by a problem are not only capable of better understanding their realities, but are also the best equipped to address their struggles” (Koirala-Azad and Fuentes 2009-2010:1).

- *To recognize their potential to enact social change.*

We hope that our program offers opportunities for students to realize that their choices have consequences and that they can make a difference in the world through their daily lives. We also hope that they realize their capacity to create change through a va-

riety of means, such as educating others about their experiences in Tanzania.

We saw our classes as the primary place where we laid the ground-work for our student learning outcomes and began to enact our second vision of social justice action work: creating the framework to facilitate change in our students. We were pleased with the 2010 change in format of our on-site classes. It was to our pre-trip classes that we made substantial changes. We introduced the major course concepts on three separate days: the first two addressing Language, Symbols, Stereotypes, and Perception and the third addressing Gender, Social Justice Activism, and Privilege. Each day included discussions of readings, most of which we used in 2010, followed by an interactive exercise that planted the seeds for change by allowing students to actively experience the central course concepts. For example, prior to our departure, we asked students to create a snapshot “postcard” of Africa that embodied what they thought of when they heard the word. Students designed their postcards using language and images from magazines, books, and websites. We also used the BaFa BaFa exercise, which worked well in 2010, to build group cohesion and explore cultural preconceptions, and we also added Brenda J. Allen’s Privilege Exercise, which asks students to create a paper clip chain that reflects their positions of privilege. To continue our work on dismantling stereotypes, we added two new readings to the course: chapters from Curt Keim’s *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities And Inventions of The American Mind* (2009) and Karen Rothmyer’s “Hiding the Real Africa: Why NGOs Prefer Bad News” (2011). We designed these classes to set the stage for students to be receptive to the third component of our model for social justice action work: the interactive experiential moments in Tanzania in which perceptions can be changed.

While on-site activities for the 2012 program were nearly identical to the 2010 program, we hoped to create a social justice framework that would enhance experiential learning moments. Seeking to generate more of these moments, we included a few more interactive activities. While at the UAACC, we added a new interactive session with Mama Charlotte O'Neal: she discussed her role in the Black Panther Party and her social justice work in Tanzania, and she presented a captivating poetry reading on women, aging, and body hair. We also expanded our day with the Maasai to include gathering firewood, and we added an interactive basket-weaving demonstration with local women in a small village. It is through such shared experiences that we saw the potential for justice learning, and while our Maasai tasks did not turn out as planned (due to our local guide that day), the basket-weaving demonstration went beyond our expectations and students ranked it as one of the top experiences from which they learned the most. The village women did not speak English, but they still taught us how to weave the baskets that they sell in the local community. Through the process of showing us how to complete the task, along with the eventual help of a translator, we shared an afternoon of laughter and productive conversation.

We also redesigned the final paper assignment and added a new post trip event, both of which addressed four of our new student learning outcomes: understanding how language functions to shape our perspectives, demonstrating the ability to think in more complicated ways, understanding the nature and function of stereotypes, and recognizing the potential to enact social change. The final course assignment was shaped by Reilly and Senders' call to analyze often simplistic and stereotypical "representations (and misrepresentations)" in an effort to "build a theoretical framework [. . .] of cultural complexity" and in-

vite students to think critically about their own participation in these representations (2009:254-255). The revised paper assignment followed this framework. Upon their return from Tanzania, students were asked to critically reflect on their experiences, especially those activities focused on gender and social justice grassroots activism, such as visits to KIWAKUKKI and the Miichi Women's Group. They then explored how these experiences "complicated the postcard" that they created prior to the trip. While we've ultimately concluded that writing a final paper in a limited time-frame after such an intense on-site experience is not always going to produce high quality work, we were very pleased to see that our students had learned what we hoped they would about dismantling binaries and stereotypes. In that sense, their final papers were the most successful to date.

The new assignment for 2012 was an ungraded "public event," which we scheduled on campus two months after our return from Tanzania. This event was inspired by Reilly and Senders' (2009: 261) call to facilitate active teaching and learning experiences for students, which, we hoped, would also foster their idea of learning as a "responsibility." We reserved a table in our student union where students could "teach" university students, faculty, and staff about what they learned in Tanzania. Using their final papers as a guide, students brought in souvenirs and created posters that were used as a backdrop for the tables. These materials visually displayed the language, images, and experiences that have "complicated the postcard" for them. In addition, one of the women's organizations that we visited gave us fabric to sell, so we had the added opportunity to fundraise on behalf of Tanzanian women. We hoped that through this event, students would further understand that by sharing their experiences, they can play a role in creating social change, but we were

disappointed that only a few could participate.

Finally, we continued our implementation of the student fundraising project, even though we still struggled with issues related to the donation of money. Does this project continue to reinforce “doing for” rather than “doing with” and/or does the Tanzanian-based impetus for the project shift its emphasis because the need was shown to us and we present the money with no strings attached? We still continue to think about this dilemma, and an email from one of our Maasai hosts has guided our thinking. His school is in need of money for scholarships as they hope to provide education for girls who live under harsh conditions. These scholarships may prevent these girls from being forced to marry at a young age and potentially undergo female genital circumcision, which is still practiced by some Maasai even though it is illegal in Tanzania. We believe that these donations are worthwhile and provide an important contribution to a country that is often without the resources needed to carry out its work. Our 2012 students did not raise as much money to donate to schools as on the previous trip, but their donation still reflected commitment and hard work and was warmly received.

As we reflect on the 2012 trip, we continue to think about two overall challenges. First, the most significant challenge emerged when the trip host and organizer that we worked with in 2008 and 2010 resigned and we began working with his replacement, who lacked the experience and understanding that our former host/organizer brought to the implementation of our program. Working with the new host and trip organizer generated a series of frustrations and illuminated how important it is to find a contact who understands how to shape a trip that reflects the Tanzania experience but also meets the needs of the visiting group. Despite these challenges, we retained the same itinerary,

and from an academic standpoint, our three-fold approach to justice learning proved successful and our student learning outcomes helped us create a better structure for justice learning.

A second challenge focuses on the unplanned interactive learning moments that can become a significant part of the program. At one point in the trip, our Maasai host wanted us to join in their celebration of their young men becoming warriors through circumcision and took us to a home where a young boy had recently undergone the procedure. Our students were horrified and at that time, suggested that we never return to this village. But many of the same students later identified this experience as the one from which they learned the most because it forced them to question their own horror, cultural differences, what their host had intended, and the conclusions they finally drew from this interaction. This type of experience is noteworthy in two ways: first, as trip leaders, it reminded us that we must always be open to unplanned events and interactions, and second, it reminded us sometimes the most uncomfortable circumstances can generate the most productive learning experiences. As we plan our next program in 2014, we hope to once again work with our original trip host and organizer, who has since started his own tourism business, and we will continue to think about the multifaceted interactive moments from which our students have learned so much.

Conclusion

This essay has explored the ongoing development of our Tanzania study abroad program, which reflects the integration of experiential learning and justice learning in an effort to challenge and dismantle binary thinking. Through this process of reflection and revision, a three-fold approach to social justice action work emerged: first, where students visit grass-roots organizations performing “traditional”

social justice action work; second, where instructors create the academic framework to facilitate change in students; and third, where on-site activities generate interactive experiential moments in which perceptions can be changed. In the 2012 program, we also emphasized our own sense of responsibility in planning the trip. To this end, we talked with students about the evolution of the trip, which entails our commitment to working with Tanzanians for social justice, the privilege of studying (and teaching) abroad, our own experiences and struggles in trying to “live lives of consequence,” and the importance of giving back in a way that does not reinforce dichotomies of dominance and submission (Reilly and Senders 2009:257). In this sense, the restructuring process has offered the added benefit of forcing both of us to more carefully re-examine our own assumptions and perceptions and, thus, has deepened our commitment to social justice action work. We will undoubtedly continue to struggle and refine our program, but we hope that we can now offer a framework to others who have confronted similar challenges when trying to facilitate social justice work in a study abroad context.

Endnote

- 1 By “bricks and mortar” service-learning, we refer to hands-on, physical work that occurs on site. We compare this type of service-learning to an alternative perspective on service-learning that occurs through mutual and reciprocal interaction, dialogue, and discussion. See, for example, Lori Pompa’s Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, which serves as a model for the type of service-learning project aimed at dismantling hierarchies, stereotypes, and dualistic us/them thinking.

Appendix A
Assigned Readings*

January 2008	January 2010	January 2012
Joseph Mbele <i>Africans and Americans: Embracing Cultural Differences</i>	Joseph Mbele <i>Africans and Americans: Embracing Cultural Differences</i>	Joseph Mbele <i>Africans and Americans: Embracing Cultural Differences</i>
Rebecca Haffajee, “The Women of KIWAKKUKI: Leaders in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania”	Iris Strauch and Anne Béatrice Eickhoff, “KIWAKUKKI: Women Fight Against AIDS/HIV”	Iris Strauch and Anne Béatrice Eickhoff, “KIWAKUKKI: Women Fight Against AIDS/HIV”
Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack”	Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack”	Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack”
Joel Charon, “Nature of Perspective”	Joel Charon, “Nature of Perspective”	
Ivan Illich, “To Hell With Good Intentions”	Ivan Illich, “To Hell With Good Intentions”	
“An Introduction to Women and Globalization”	“An Introduction to Women and Globalization”	
Mama Anna Mkapa, “Opening Address by the First Lady of Tanzania”	Mama Anna Mkapa, “Opening Address by the First Lady of Tanzania”	
	Jessi Ristau “Interview with Mama Charlotte for Women of Africa Forum”	Jessi Ristau “Interview with Mama Charlotte for Women of Africa Forum”
	“Culture Shock”	“Culture Shock”
	“MU International Center: Study Abroad - Reverse Culture Shock”	“MU International Center: Study Abroad - Reverse Culture Shock”
Terrence Crowley, “Lie of Entitlement”		
Ruth Evans, “Poverty, HIV, and Barriers to Education: Street Children’s		

Experiences in Tanzania”		
	Rebecca Gearhart “Taking American Race Relations on the Road...to Africa”	
		Curtis Keim <i>Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind</i>
		Karen Rothmyer “Hiding the Real Africa: Why NGOs prefer bad news”
		“About Us” and “What is Fair Trade”

*See Works Cited for complete citations

Appendix B Assignments

JOURNALS January 2008

You will write a total of 12 journal entries. As a whole, these 12 journal entries must address a variety of questions under the Personal and Civic categories. On certain days, we may direct you to a specific question or a specific course concept; otherwise, you can choose which question(s) and concept(s) you want to address. In addition, you must include one course reading connection in each journal entry. Crucial to writing an effective journal entry is the ability to connect theory and practice. This means that when describing what you are learning from your study abroad experience, you will need to use the readings and course materials. Not doing this will seriously affect your grade. As a starting point, you might identify a particular experience or set of events that took place during the day and reflect upon as well as analyze this experience in relation to a specific course reading or a course concept, such as “lens” or perspective, privilege, poverty, lie of entitlement, or gender.

A. Personal Perspective

1. How is this study abroad experience revealing your own attitudes or biases?
2. How is this study abroad experience challenging your personal identity, i.e. how you define and think of yourself in terms of gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, ethnicity/race, and/or nationality?
3. What kinds of stereotypes are being challenged through this study abroad experience?
4. How is this experience shifting your thinking about social inequality? Please explain your response.

5. What important differences and similarities are you finding in relation to yourself and Tanzanians?
6. What changes do you want to make in your life based on this study abroad experience? In the lives of others?

B. Academic Perspective

1. How do the course readings/course concepts illuminate your study abroad experience?
2. Based on this study abroad experience, what have you learned about some of the most immediate or severe problems/issues facing Tanzanians? From whom have you learned about these problems/issues?
3. How is your study abroad experience helping you to learn about structural inequality, poverty, and gender?

C. Civic Perspective

1. In what ways are power differentials emerging in this experience? What are the sources of power in the experiences you are observing or in which you are participating? What systems underlie the power dynamics and who benefits and who is harmed by these systems being in place?
2. What ethical dimensions (rights, duties/obligations/justice/integrity, personal responsibility, equality, freedom) are emerging from this experience? What change is needed for the groups of people with we are interacting? How can this change be accomplished? With individual action or collective action? Within the system or challenging the system?
3. What privilege did you bring to the situation? What privilege did others bring? What systems are the sources of such privilege? How are you or others disempowered by your/their lack of such privilege? How might you empower yourself or others?
4. How does this experience highlight the relationship between individual choices/actions and the operation/constraints of institutions/society as a whole?
5. What are some of the important policies, laws, and political debates related to the primary issues facing the Tanzanians with whom we spoke?
6. Drawing from your study abroad experience, what do you think needs to be done, from a policy perspective, to better serve Tanzanians?
7. Drawing from your study abroad experience, how can we “not forget” the Tanzanians? What can we do, upon our return?

JOURNALS January 2010

You will be keeping a handwritten, legible journal during our trip to Tanzania. You will need 10 entries for this journal. You will write the first entry on the plane trip over to Tanzania and will show it to us at breakfast the first morning we are there. Eight additional entries will be written while you are in Tanzania. The final entry will be written on the plane home.

First Entry Pre-Travel Reflection:

In this entry, write about what you are feeling and thinking at this moment about the trip.

Journal Ideas for Next Eight Entries:

You can briefly summarize our itinerary for each day (if it's easier to remember that way), but a description of what we did each day is not adequate for a journal entry. Instead, *try to process what you experienced each day; in other words, explore your reactions to what we did each day*: What did you learn and/or think about? What are you learning about yourself? What are you learning about Tanzanians and Tanzania? What are you learning about the United States (by being in Tanzania)? Why is this significant? In short, try to weave together your learning experiences with larger cultural assumptions and norms.

Additional ideas to think about:

- Note observations—what do you observe around you (in terms of people, events etc.) and why is this significant to you?
- What do you observe about gender and/or race and why is this significant to you?
- What do you observe about communication and why is this significant to you? Think about your own reactions to the day—for example, if you were annoyed that we didn't stay on schedule, why did this bother you so much? What does it say about *our* conception of time and *our* culture?
- What do you *feel* each day and what makes you feel that way? What do your feelings call into question about yourself, your culture, etc.?
- What do you *feel* each day and what makes you feel that way? What do your feelings call into question about yourself, your culture, etc.?

Final Entry—Post-Travel Reflection:

1. In this entry, write about what you are feeling and thinking at this moment about the trip.
2. How does your initial reflection (first journal entry) compare with your final reflections?

JOURNALS January 2012

Ten journal entries are required; one written on the plane going over, eight while in Tanzania, and one on the trip home. The entries must demonstrate that you are processing your study abroad experience. Entries should be at least 500 words.

Journal Entry 1 should address what you are feeling as we fly to Tanzania.

Journal Entry 10 (your final entry) should 1) identify the two experiences that had the most significant impact on you, and 2) explain why and in what ways these two experiences had the most significant impact on you.

Journal Ideas for the 8 Entries to be Completed While We are in Tanzania

You can briefly summarize our itinerary for each day (if it's easier to remember that way), but a description of what we did each day is not adequate for a journal entry. Instead, *try to process and explore your reactions to what we did each day*: What did you learn? What are you learning about yourself? What are you learning about Tanzanians and Tanzania? What are you

learning about the United States (by being in Tanzania)? Why is this significant? In short, try to weave together your learning experiences with larger cultural assumptions and norms.

Additional ideas to think about:

- Note observations—what do you observe around you (in terms of people, events etc.) and why is this significant to you?
- What do you observe about gender and/or race and why is this significant to you?
- What do you observe about communication and why is this significant to you?
- Think about your own reactions to the day—for example, if you were annoyed that we didn't stay on schedule, why did this bother you so much? What does it say about *our* conception of time and *our* culture?

What do you *feel* each day and what makes you feel that way? What do your feelings call into question about yourself, your culture, etc.?

FINAL PAPER January 2008

This paper asks you to critically analyze your study abroad experience in relation to course readings and key concepts. Address the following:

Do your study abroad learning experiences support and/or challenge the main ideas from the course readings and their interpretation (analysis?) of the key concepts of this course? Advance a thesis and support your thesis in two ways: 1) with examples from your Tanzania study abroad experience and 2) with quotes from the texts. Be sure to explain quotes when necessary to demonstrate your understanding of the readings.

Interdisciplinary 102 students

This assignment is a formal post-trip paper (typed, double-spaced, 4-5 pages). All required readings must be included (except the two upper-level articles by Evans and Haffajee,). Make sure you have an introduction and conclusion.

Communication 400 and Interdisciplinary 366 students

This assignment is a formal, thesis-driven, post-trip paper (typed, double-spaced, 8-10 pages). All required readings must be included. Make sure you have an introduction and conclusion.

FINAL PAPER January 2010

The final paper asks you to write a thesis-driven paper that combines what you learned while in Tanzania with what you learned from our reading assignments, relating your study abroad experiences to the readings.

Analyze what you learned about Tanzania culture and U.S. culture in terms of communication, gender, and/or a major issue raised in the readings. Explain with examples from the trip and the readings. Remember, if this course counts for either your major (Communication or Women's Studies) or minor programs (Communication, Women's Studies, Social Justice, African American Studies), you should choose a category/categories of analysis that fits your program(s).

Checklist:

- Include examples from the trip to support and develop your analysis.
- Include Mbele's *Africans and Americans* and at least 7 of the 10 required articles, and use quotes from the readings to demonstrate your points.
- Make sure you have an introduction, thesis statement, topic sentences for each paragraph, and a conclusion.

Page Length: 6-8 pages (typed, double spaced, stapled)

FINAL PAPER January 2012

The final assignment is a thesis-driven paper that asks you to 1) revisit and complicate the postcard you created in our pre-class session, 2) explore and analyze your experiences on the study abroad trip, and 3) compare and contrast the stereotypes and realities of Tanzanian culture. Your thesis should address the ways in which your experiences challenge the postcard stereotypes and why the stereotypes circulate so freely in the U.S. To this end, you should think carefully about the following:

Part I

1. What is present and absent in your postcard? (1-2 pages)
2. Think critically about and reflect on your experiences in Tanzania, including and especially those activities focused on gender and social justice grassroots activism, such as KIWAKKUKI, Miichi Women's Group, and Nronga Cooperative Dairy.
3. Explore how the experiences in #2 "complicate the postcard" that you created prior to the trip. (#2 and #3 combined 4-6 pages)
4. Make sure you include examples from the trip to develop your analysis and support your thesis.

Part II: Think about and address the following questions:

Which images get back to the United States and which do not? Why might this be the case?
(1 page)

Checklist

- Include examples from the trip to support and develop your analysis.
- Make sure you have an introduction, thesis statement, topic sentences for each paragraph, and a conclusion. Your entire paper should be an argument that supports your thesis.
- Reference three readings from class to develop your argument. The Keim chapters count as one reading.

Page Length

- 6-8 pages (typed, double spaced, stapled)
- 8-10 pages (typed, double spaced, stapled) if this is for your Social Justice capstone.

Elizabeth M. Cannon earned her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is a senior lecturer in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She directs both the Social Justice Program and the LGBTQ Resource Center, teaches courses in the areas of Women's and African American Literature and Women's Studies, and leads a study abroad trip to Tanzania. She has previously published in *African American Review* and *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*.

Carmen Heider earned her Ph.D. at Penn State University and is an associate professor in the Communication Department at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She teaches courses in the areas of Rhetoric and Women's Studies and leads study abroad trips to Greece and Tanzania. She has previously published in *Great Plains Quarterly* and *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*.

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