

Going Global: Re-Framing Service-Learning in an Interconnected World

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Abstract

This essay argues for the importance of re-framing international service-learning as global service-learning. This includes recognizing the entire “ecology of education,” the interconnected web of relationships in which learning can occur at home and abroad. It draws upon the experiences of developing a new program in global studies at Providence College that focuses on civic engagement with global and local communities, along with interviews and a focus group with majors in the program. The essay concludes with a call for using service-learning as a vehicle to educate global citizens not merely as a one-time experience, but rather as part of an integrated curricular process.

Our systems of education have long given us far too little information about lives outside our borders, stunting our moral imaginations. (Nussbaum, 2002)

Literature Review: Internationalizing the Campus

The impact of globalization processes in societies worldwide has fostered a commitment among higher education institutions in the United States to internationalize their campuses. Faculty members and administrators, often in response to student demand, are recognizing the importance of bringing global perspectives into the undergraduate experience (Fischer, 2007; Stearns, 2009). In 2001, the Association of American Colleges and Universities launched the Shared Futures project to engage colleges and universities in conversations about envisioning and enacting global learning models (Hovland, McTighe Musil, Skilton-Sylvester, & Jamison, 2009). Similarly, the American Council on Education initiated Global Learning for All to provide good practices for setting internationalizing goals on campuses with large numbers of minority, adult, and part-time students (Olson, Evans, & Shoenberg, 2007). Concurrently, study abroad programs and international branch campuses throughout the world have experienced significant growth (Lewin, 2009; Stearns, 2009), supporting the efforts to bring global learning to courses across the curriculum among 2-year and 4-year institutions (Fischer, 2007, 2008). Yet, as Derek Bok (2006) contends, “It is a safe bet that a majority of undergraduates complete their four years with very little preparation either as

citizens or as professionals for the international challenges that are likely to confront them” (p. 233).

Thus, the focus on international service-learning comes at an important time for the future of higher education. Although the number of undergraduates participating in international education experiences is still small, it is expanding rapidly. A survey conducted by the American Council on Education (*Siaya, Porcelli, & Green, 2002*) found that at a time when 90% of the American public agreed that knowledge about international issues is important to careers of younger generations, slightly more than 270,000 U.S. college students studied abroad for credit in 2009–2010—just more than 1% of all students enrolled in U.S. higher education. Nevertheless, participation in study abroad has more than tripled over the past two decades, according to Open Doors, the Institute of International Education’s annual survey (2011) of student mobility, funded by the U.S. Department of State. Much of the increase over the past 10 years has come from short-term programs (8 weeks or less), which now represent 56% of total study abroad participation; semester-long programs have remained relatively flat at just under 40%, while participation in long-term programs of a year has fallen to less than 4% (*Institute of International Education, 2011*).

It is within this context that a pedagogy that connects study abroad, international education, and service-learning appears promising. International service-learning has been defined by Bringle and Hatcher (2011) as

A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally. (p. 19)

International service-learning is a growing field, as this thematic issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* illustrates, and it has the potential to meld the efforts to internationalize with the evolving movement to revitalize the civic mission of higher education. About three quarters of colleges and universities in the United States have an infrastructure in

place with centers of service-learning and civic engagement along with majors, minors, and career tracks for directors of community engagement. This apparatus can promote and support international service-learning and, more broadly, can internationalize campuses (Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011). However, a wide disconnect remains between civic engagement and internationalization. According to Hovey and Weinberg (2009), “the civic engagement literature is still almost entirely focused on the domestic U.S. communities of students or the university neighborhood” (p. 39). A leading rubric by which campuses can judge their own progress toward the institutionalization of service-learning (Furco, 2002) makes no mention of international service-learning or internationalizing efforts.

An increasing number of campuses, however, are bridging this divide in interesting ways, including (1) academic units, such as the Institute for Global Citizenship at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, which houses offices of civic engagement and international studies; (2) global programs such as the University of Massachusetts Medical School’s Pathway on Multiculturalism, which focuses on linkages between domestic immigrant communities and international experiences to prepare future doctors; (3) curricular programs such as Acting Locally at Miami University, which helps students understand the impact of globalization on Southwest Ohio through community engagement; and (4) academic majors such as global studies at Providence College (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2010; Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011). These initiatives help to integrate international and civic efforts by deliberately connecting the local with the international through service-learning, while framing the efforts as global.

Shifting to a Global Ecology of Education

As the interest and research generated by international service-learning will most certainly continue to grow in the coming years, this is an important time to examine—and challenge—the conceptual frameworks currently being offered for this area of study. It is recognized that some of the most powerful learning takes place while students are engaged in service internationally, but an exclusive focus on what learners experience “over there” is too limited in scope. The partnerships are international, but the service fosters learning that can be understood as global, if one is asking critical global questions in conversation with globally focused partners. Global inquiry should be linked to local engagement practices, as many of the goals for international service-learning can actually be met through community engagement at local levels. This essay

argues for the importance of “going global” in all aspects of the service and education, and for shifting to the concept of global service-learning, meaning that engaged learning and research would occur whether the service is taking place in neighborhoods right next to campus or across the world.

A focus on the global rather than on the international dimension of service is more holistic and less linear—moving from location to ways of thinking, from nation-states to networks of relationships, and from divisions (international versus local) to interconnections.

Table 1. International vs. Global

International	Global
Nation-state	Networks of relationships
Location-based	Ways of thinking
Divisions	Interconnections
Linear	Holistic

Peter Stearns (2009) presents the arguments for using the language of “global” in *Educating Global Citizens in Colleges and Universities*. He advocates for the global focus of education, noting that one of the primary criticisms of “global” is that it is the language used in K-12 efforts, while “international” is more common in higher education. He states that “international”—which he calls “slightly dated”—still tends to privilege the nation-state and has been the focus of area studies programs that do not direct much attention to larger transnational systems. Global education, on the other hand,

Must involve not only a sensitive study of different cultural traditions and institutional frameworks, with the analytical skills attached, but also an appreciation of the kinds of forces that bear on societies around the world—including the United States, and how these forces have emerged. (Stearns, 2009, p. 15)

Global training, he argues, requires attention to things like migration patterns, to cultural dissemination, to the role of transnational institutions—both formal agencies and nongovernmental organizations—and the technologies that tie the world together (Stearns, 2009, p. 15; see also Pomerantz, 2008).

The concept that perhaps best captures our understanding of this shift toward global service-learning is thinking about learning as part of an “ecology of education” (Cremin, 1976), which recognizes that education takes place in multiple, interconnected settings. A principle of ecology is that each living organism has an ongoing and continual relationship with every other element that makes up its environment (Ecology, 2012). Thus, in our educational ecosystem there is interdependence and interconnection between the different elements of the whole system. Applying the principles of ecology to education begins with the recognition that not only do many institutions support educative growth, but also that the different places, people, events, and institutions offering learning opportunities are related to one another in a potential learning web (Longo, 2007). Applying the concept of ecology of education to international service-learning requires learners and educators to “think globally,” regardless of whether the service is taking place in local or international settings, and to recognize the interconnectedness of these communities.

Hovey and Weinberg (2009) note that this way of thinking—using the ecology of education—“can be used as a guiding concept” for “educational activities beyond the borders of our local communities and nation” (p. 39). Citing a series of programs, including the School for International Training, a leading study abroad program that connects the international with the civic, they conclude that “much of the gain as global citizens may actually take place through the reentry process” (p. 43). They continue that this is where “students come back with the commitments and capacities to engage in public work across national and cultural differences in order to create a better world” (p. 46). Conceptualizing international service work as global makes the interconnected aspects of the ecology of education—from preparation for international service to re-entry—more apparent.

Overcoming the Views That Students are Unprepared and Actually Do Harm

The issues of preparation, international service, and re-entry, especially when taken in isolation, are among those most commonly criticized within the field of international service-learning and global education. For instance, in a reflection on her experiences as a study abroad participant, a student questions whether study abroad—and by extension, international service-learning—can educate students for global citizenship. She writes that American college students’ international experiences “may inadvertently be a

recipe for the perpetuation of global ignorance, misunderstanding, and prejudice.” She concludes, “There is a vast discrepancy between the rhetoric of international education and the reality of what many students like myself experience while abroad” (*Zemach-Bersin, 2008*).

Ivan Illich’s (1993) provocative speech, “To Hell With Good Intentions,” calls into question the very idea of international service-learning. Illich makes known his opposition to North American “do-gooders” in Latin America and challenges the value of the work conducted by international volunteers for the communities they hope to serve. He concludes that *international visitors* are welcome as travelers or students, but not as volunteers. Illich (1993) writes: “Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But do not come to help” (p. 460). He challenges international organizations to think not only about the training of their volunteers, but also about “spending money to educate poor Mexicans in order to prevent them from the culture shock” of meeting with Western students (p. 459).

Additionally, as with all international experiences, issues of re-entry can be a challenge for students returning from international service (*Kiely, 2004, 2011*). Kiely’s longitudinal research on students involved in an international service-learning course in Nicaragua documents the transformational aspects of community-based learning in international settings. These aspects include a “chameleon complex” upon re-entry: That is, students often have difficulty translating their transformations into action in the different settings to which they return. As a result, Kiely (2004) suggests a series of strategies for faculty “to help students turn their emerging global consciousness . . . into meaningful action” (p. 17). These include asking students to develop a contract specifying actions they hope to take when they come back home.

Although not a panacea, a focus on global service-learning provides a more solid conceptual foundation for overcoming these criticisms, as a global framing more readily supports establishing connections among learning on campus, service in the local community, and international service. These relationships also allow multiple points for reflection during pre- and post-service experiences on the limitations and potential harm done through international engagement. For instance, in this model of global service-learning, students spend time preparing for international service—often through service in local communities and through academic coursework that includes analyzing the essays mentioned above, among other relevant literature—and they critically reflect and build upon the international service experience when

they return. Of course, a simple shift to the more expansive language of “global” does not ensure that these issues are addressed in a thoughtful manner; yet, as argued above, the language of “global” seems a more appropriate conceptual lens to frame these efforts.

In short, the critiques of Zemach-Bersin (2008), Illich (1993), and Kiely (2004, 2011) present important—even existential—questions for international service-learning, but these are equally relevant issues for service-learning performed in local communities close to campus. Expanding the “ecology of education” and seeing all of our efforts as global can lead to actions that more forcefully address these issues: recognizing the interconnections among local and international service, preparation, and re-entry, and the global issues that emerge in our increasingly interconnected world.

Cosmopolitan Education in Local, Neighborly Communities

The foundation for service-learning draws upon the writing of John Dewey (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Giles & Eyster, 1994; Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997). Dewey is an equally important starting point in shifting toward global service-learning. At first glance, there seems to be a disconnect between John Dewey’s premise that educating for democracy must begin “at home” in a “neighborly community” and the declaration among proponents of global education for cosmopolitan education that provides information about “lives outside our borders” (Nussbaum, 2002; Stearns, 2009).

“The world around us is inescapably international,” Martha Nussbaum (1997) writes, arguing for the need to educate students to be “citizens of the world.” She continues, “issues from business to agriculture, from human rights to the relief of famine, call our imaginations to venture beyond narrow group loyalties and to consider the reality of distant lives” (p. 10). However, might educating “citizens of the world,” as Nussbaum suggests, mean simply preparing a group of detached, un-rooted globalists (Tarrow, 2006), unable to recognize the importance of local cultures and identities, with little experience solving tangible, real-world problems? As Esteva and Prakash (1998) argue, “To make ‘a difference,’ actions should not be grandiosely global, but humbly local” (p. 21). Nevertheless, is simply building local, democratic communities, at least partially, a failure to give students an introduction to the interdependent, *globalized* world of the 21st century?

These potential tensions, between the local and the international, can be an opportunity for educators using the pedagogy

of service-learning. By framing service-learning efforts globally—that is, as opportunities to learn about the interconnectedness of the world—local, community-based service-learning provides an ideal opportunity for cosmopolitan education. Likewise, service-learning in an international context is one of the most significant ways that students can learn about the importance of revitalizing “neighborly communities.”

These lessons become apparent in communities around the globe. The shrinking distinction between the local and international, for instance, can be seen in the work of a highly regarded campus-community partnership called the Jane Addams School for Democracy (*Kari & Skelton, 2007; Longo, 2007*). By working in reciprocal partnerships with immigrant communities such as that of the West Side of St. Paul, Minnesota—which has been dubbed “the Ellis Island of the Midwest”—college students at the Jane Addams School learn about the languages, cultures, and stories of other peoples, often taking them many miles away from their current neighborhoods.

At Jane Addams School, college students work with Hmong refugees on a series of community-identified projects ranging from preparation for the U.S. citizenship exam to school reform. Reciprocity in these collaborative projects requires students to gain a deep level of understanding of the unique history and culture of the Hmong people, learning about the United States’ secret war in Laos during the Vietnam War, and the horrific—and inspiring—journeys that brought these “freedom people” to the United States. Moreover, the everyday challenges facing the immigrant and refugee communities in this neighborhood—things like poverty, discrimination, a lack of jobs, limited access to healthy food, and inadequate public education—are global problems that cannot be addressed solely at the local level.

Likewise, the importance of local knowledge can be seen with service in international communities. In a project conducted by linguist Alonso García, students at Providence College worked with indigenous populations in Michoacán, Mexico, on the loss of language and identity. Students involved in this kind of project can witness the gradual disintegration of core community values, as tensions between modernity and tradition are starting to erupt among its members. Globalization has attracted followers from the younger generations, who now perceive traditional community customs as *démodé* and futile. The ideological disparity between older and younger generations is growing larger under

the unremitting power of globalization, inevitably resulting in the endangerment of native heritages.

International service helps students see that local, indigenous languages are particularly vulnerable since they are not considered prestigious or valuable enough for engaging in the global dialogue. In a global society, language embodies the intellectual wealth of the people who speak it, and it is used to construct meaning in ways that are natural and relevant to the needs dictated by the local society. In this sense, language and cultural identity are inseparable, and the loss of language represents the irretrievable loss of localized knowledge and intellectual diversity (*Hale, 1992, p. 36*). Students doing service in communities such as Michoacán learn about intergenerational struggles within indigenous communities to preserve their heritage as a result of the spread of a global culture well-known to American students, a culture that is threatening cultural and linguistic identities around the world.

In short, these stories illustrate that working with local communities in the United States (like the Hmong in St. Paul) can give students a cosmopolitan education, whereas working with indigenous communities (like those in Michoacán, Mexico) can teach students about local, neighborly communities.

Summary

Involving students in global service-learning projects in communities as diverse as St. Paul, Minnesota, Michoacán, Mexico, or any other community around the world can help to address the challenge of international education identified at the beginning of this essay. Any international education, however, should recognize the interconnections among local and international communities, utilizing the “ecology of education” within a global framework. Realizing the potential for such education is possible only through deep preparation for international service, reciprocal partnerships with communities, and opportunities for post-service reflection and action. When done well, global service-learning can be a tool for higher education programs to educate the next generation of engaged citizens, as is being attempted with the Global Studies Program at Providence College described in the next section.

The Global Studies Program at Providence College

The Global Studies Program is constantly using the city of Providence as a classroom. There have been so many opportunities

to see the community that surrounds the college as a microcosm of the world, and to make connections between global issues—like immigration, for example—and real people they affect (*Landry, Class of 2010, personal communication*).

Context and Rationale for the Program

Providence College institutionalized the lessons of the interdependence of our global communities with the development of a new program in global studies. Faculty members are now working side-by-side with students and community partners to create an academic major that bridges the local and the international through a sequential, developmental, integrated program that constantly asks students to bring a great sensitivity to the importance of local cultures and identities. Students in the program are being supported in developing the capacity to act as global problem-solvers and engaged citizens. The signature aspect of this approach is preparation for, and reflection upon, global service-learning.

Along with many other strategies for global education being pursued in higher education, undergraduate majors in global studies have been developing over the past decade at a diverse set of campuses, including University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, George Mason University, Hamline University, and University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (*Fischer, 2007, 2008; Redden 2008; Stearns, 2009*). University of California at Santa Barbara may have the oldest such program in the United States, with more than 700 majors (*Juergensmeyer, 2007; Stearns, 2009; Wank, 2008*).

Description of the Program

Beginning in 2005, Providence College initiated a new major focused on educating the next generation for the global world. The committee of faculty who created the major developed two tracks of study—one in the humanities and a second in the area of business—with a requirement that all majors study abroad, become fluent in a foreign language, and write a thesis in a year-long capstone course. Like many interdisciplinary academic programs, the major relied heavily on students' selecting from a range of internationally focused courses in a cross-section of disciplines.

The Global Studies Program has focused on learning about global issues through real-world experience in global communities. As a result, the pedagogy of service-learning in local and international settings has been integral to the program from

the beginning. This commitment has benefited from the strong ties in the local community and an interest in building international partnerships of the Feinstein Institute for Public Service at Providence College, the first academic public and community service study program in the United States, which is where the Global Studies Program is currently housed.

Along with real-world experience, faculty members in the program believe that student engagement is an essential aspect of global service-learning. Thus, courses include participatory, democratic education that respects the experiences and insights of all members of the learning community (*Freire, 1970; Horton, 1998*). This approach is seen in important and symbolic ways, like classrooms arranged in a circle, students addressing faculty by their first names, students negotiating assessment criteria and procedures, and genuine student representation in program advising matters, ePortfolio assessment, and curricular decisions.

Finally, the content of the major has emphasized the themes of systems thinking, cross-cultural competency, and, most important, the theory and practice of global citizenship. As examples of how these are integrated throughout the curriculum, the final paper written for GST 101 Introduction to Global Studies is “a philosophy of global citizenship,” an assignment that is revisited and revised in future courses, including the GST 480-481 Global Studies Capstone. It is also an essential component of the ePortfolio each student maintains.



Figure 1: Global Studies Curriculum

These aspects of the program resonated with students from the beginning, so that it grew quickly to close to 100 majors by 2008 (making it the 12th-largest major on campus). However, students also began to see flaws in the initial program design, and to ask for a more coherent experience. Students wanted more opportunities to learn with their peers, moving beyond the scattering of experiences that happen in many interdisciplinary programs. After community-wide conversations, the curriculum was revised beginning with the class of 2013, toward what Richard Battistoni has described as a “sustained, developmental, cohort” model (*Mitchell, Visconti, Keene, & Battistoni, 2011*) with the introduction of a new curriculum for the Global Studies Program (described below). The results of this new program have been recently recognized by the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA), which gave the Global Studies Program its 2012 Senator Paul Simon Spotlight Award for Campus Internationalization.

Years 1 and 2 of the 4-Year Program

In the introductory course of the major, GST 101 Introduction to Global Studies, students learn about globalization and begin to develop their own philosophy of global citizenship. For the past few years, they have formed a “learning community,” in which first-semester global studies majors simultaneously enroll in PSC 101 Introduction to Politics. Thus, freshmen majors have an in-depth first-year experience in two linked courses while also participating in service-learning projects that examine globalization and politics through the lens of local community engagement. Many students have volunteered at the International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI), for instance, a local not-for-profit organization that provides educational and other support services for refugees. The work at IIRI allows students to deepen their understanding of human rights and migration issues by giving them the “local wisdom” that comes from developing relationships with recently arrived immigrants and new citizens. Likewise, students mentor high school students at the Providence Academy of International Studies, an internationally focused inner-city high school where high school seniors complete advocacy projects on international issues, and at a diverse range of other local agencies focusing on global issues, such as Casey Farm, which practices community-supported agriculture; English for Action, which provides English instruction to Latin American immigrants; Inspiring Minds, which offers support to English language learners in Providence public schools; and the Catholic Diocese of Providence, where Providence College students and faculty developed and led citizenship classes.

These community relations are nurtured through a partnership with the Feinstein Institute for Public Service, which also supports upper-level global studies and public and community service majors acting as “community liaisons” with these community sites. Thus, upper-level global studies majors act as volunteer coordinators, lead reflection sessions, and handle logistics for the service-learning courses.

In the second course, GST 201 Case Studies in Globalization, students hone in on a specific theme related to global studies and learn research methods and skills. They develop a community research project, working in teams to implement community-based projects on topics such as cultural diversity, sustainability, migration, peace and justice, and a host of other potentially global themes. Because these research projects often build upon the service projects in GST 101, students are sometimes able to make a year-long commitment to one particular local community partner. The most recent sections of GST 201 have been taught as service-learning courses around the themes of education. Students analyze different global models and perspectives on schooling, learning, and education, and establish connections with the English as a Second Language classroom experiences.

Following the two foundational courses, students develop a learning plan, which includes selecting a four-course thematic concentration, two upper-level global studies courses, and political science and economics courses, as well as studying a foreign language—all of which are meant to better prepare them to study abroad in their junior year. The learning plan is revisited and revised each semester and used as a tool for faculty advising and course selection.

Years 3 and 4 of the 4-Year Program

During the junior year, each major studies abroad at a program that includes an international immersion in service. In collaboration with the Center for International Studies, students select from a list of approved education abroad programs in more than 40 countries that include either a service-learning, internship, or a community-based research project (see <http://www.providence.edu/global-studies/Pages/international-experience.aspx>). While abroad, students are expected to blog and maintain their ePortfolio as a way to reflect on their international experiences and maintain contact with their campus faculty advisor.

The international service requirement then directly links to the fourth-year Global Studies Capstone course, an interdisciplinary, two-semester course focused on synthesizing and deepening what students have learned about global studies over the past 3 years. The capstone course addresses issues of re-entry for students by providing opportunities for reflection on study abroad and specialized culminating assignments. For instance, students write a global studies educational autobiography at the beginning of the semester and conclude by re-writing the philosophy of global citizenship paper that they initially wrote in GST 101 during their freshman year.

As a culminating experience in the capstone course, students conduct an in-depth study of a global issue that has come to have special significance for them and develop their Globally-Engaged Thesis. As part of this process, students prepare a literature review, draw upon their global service experiences, and make connections with a local and/or global partner, activist, or non-governmental organization to deepen their understanding of the chosen topic. This results in a community-based, globally engaged, action-oriented project (see student profiles below). Based on the recommendations of a group of capstone students in the class of 2012, this assignment is now being performed collaboratively, with groups of students working together to research and address a topic of their collective choosing.

As part of the integration process, as mentioned above, students are required to take a four-course thematic sequence focused on either a region of study (e.g., Africa, the Middle East) or a social activism theme (e.g., human rights, social justice), and to take two upper-level global studies–designated courses. Over the past year, several innovative upper-level special topics have been developed, including GST 410 Crossing Borders, a course for students returning from studying abroad to reflect deeply on their international experiences, and GST 370 Global Activism, a course that has catalyzed campus-wide activism projects around topics such as fair trade coffee. Global studies majors are also required to take a course studying the church and the major world religions, along with a course on ethics, moral leadership, and the common good.

An annual Global Studies Student Symposium sponsored by the program provides a final unique opportunity for global studies students—and students from other majors—to showcase their research and study abroad experiences to the college community. Past presentations have included topics such as the causes and consequences of trash in Managua, the lives of child domestic workers

in India, local solutions to the global food crisis, and perspectives on immigration advocacy in Providence.

In sum, the conceptual pillars of the Providence College Global Studies Program (see Figure 2) illustrate how all aspects of the major are interconnected, mirroring the global “ecology of education” described earlier.



Figure 2. Conceptual Pillars of the Providence College Global Studies Program

Lessons Learned

Interested in conducting an initial program assessment that would recognize all stakeholders involved—students, faculty members, and community partners—the Global Studies Program started by gathering feedback from Global Studies majors during their sophomore and senior years through a series of interviews and a focus group organized in spring 2011 (the anonymous student quotes in this section of the essay are all drawn from these interviews and the focus group). This process of listening to the voices of students was crucial since it embodies the student-centered democratic approach to education inherent to the major. Students were asked to comment on their personal and academic experiences as global studies majors, the global studies teaching and learning approach, the importance of understanding local and global connections, the value of service-learning and community engagement initiatives in the major, the relevance of international service-learning to their global education, and their understanding of global citizenship (see Appendix 2: Interview Questions).

The findings from the interviews and focus group illustrate aspects of the global studies major at Providence College that will

be analyzed to improve the program and to develop new research questions, but the initial lessons from this program hold implications for the broader field of global service-learning. Specifically, the interviews illuminated the importance of language learning and cultural competency, a global framework, and service-learning in local and international contexts. These factors, as aspects of an integrated program, help alleviate concerns about students' serving abroad, such as those Tayla Zemach-Bersin (2008) expressed about whether college students can really be "global citizens."

Cross-cultural competency and language learning.

Students recognized the value of a developmental curriculum that emphasizes cross-cultural competency, preparing them to interact with individuals of a variety of backgrounds, and helping them develop a set of skills to appreciate cultural trends and to function in societal settings different from their own. As he was preparing for international immersion in Jordan, one student reflected, "I feel pretty confident in my ability to be culturally aware: [to] respect other people's cultures, respect the differences we have and appreciate their different way of life."

Likewise, students agree that being able to communicate in the target language while immersed abroad is crucial to their social integration, and their effective contribution to and engagement in the local dialogue. A global studies major, who became fluent in Spanish before studying in Peru and Ecuador, observed, "Foreign languages mean that you will be able to communicate with others and learn someone else's story, which you would have never learned before."

Preparing students to interact sensibly and respectfully when immersed in sociocultural and linguistic environments that differ from their own demonstrates the commitment of the Global Studies Program to an international experience that is meaningful and constructive. One student sums this up: "We are talking about reaching all the way down [to] issues that affect all of us because we're all interconnected."

Global framework.

Students also reflected on their perceptions regarding the framing of their efforts as global, as opposed to international. These students recognize "international" as focused in particular countries and lacking the cohesion that "global" exhibits.

Global service-learning, they note, implies applying a systems thinking model to the examination of local issues that are not necessarily exclusive of a particular area, but that affect communities around the world.

Global service-learning also operates on the principles of interconnectivity and reciprocal partnership. Thus, students identify a broader conception of “humanity” as the global unit of analysis, while “countries” are seen as the international unit of analysis. Along these lines, students stated that global is more “bottom-up,” while international is more “top-down.” These students agree that their responsibility as global citizens starts by interpreting concepts discussed in class within the framework of their often localized service-learning experiences, and then re-examining global affairs with the understanding of community matters—and vice versa. For instance, one of the majors was able to do this through her comparative research and action around youth violence in Nicaragua, Argentina, and the United States. She states:

[I was] able to see how two different countries—one that is the second poorest in the Western hemisphere [Nicaragua] and then Argentina which is a lot more developed—have kind of the same issues when it comes down to it. . . . Doing the research in two countries and [then] being able to apply it here has been really great for me and I’m just thankful for the whole process.

This integrating process allows students, like the one quoted above, who connected her efforts with a local organization focused on non-violence, to become more attuned to the impact of global trends in local communities. She concludes: “The program allows students to integrate themselves into local issues that are applicable at the global level.”

Local and international service-learning.

The interviews conducted in this study reinforced the importance of service-learning in local and international communities as a vehicle for a global education. Students realize the profound impact service-learning initiatives have on their intellectual and personal growth, and how the service work they are carrying out in the community enriches their learning and prepares them to serve abroad. Service-learning is perceived as an integral component of the major, which allows students in global studies to gain firsthand experience in aspects of globalization discussed in class and reflect

on and constantly redefine their role as global citizens. One student notes: “Service makes the problems of the world real. Experiences bring this learning to a ‘real’ level. You need to listen. Going and experiencing makes it more valuable.”

Finally, given the focus on local and international civic action, it is not surprising that global studies majors also expressed an urgency to take action and be agents of social change for whatever communities they may find themselves in, an aspiration that was also directly connected to future career paths. A global studies student who went on to become a Fulbright Scholar states:

We want to do something for the world that is moral but then go about it in the proper way so we have the right ethics behind [the action]; instead of just going off and helping someone that doesn’t want to, that doesn’t need to be helped. I think that Global Studies gives you the moral framework to do that, and it does so in a special way for everyone in the major.

Conclusions

The idea of a college major that provides a “moral framework” for civic action echoes the Nussbaum quotation that serves as this essay’s epigraph, with its implicit call for our systems of education to unleash our “moral imaginations” through global education. This essay describes the nascent efforts of one program attempting to do this at Providence College. The nature of the program inspires and supports students going beyond perceiving international service-learning as a short-term, isolated experience; rather, global service-learning can be seen as a layered action and reflection process of (1) pre-departure preparation, (2) international immersion, and (3) integration. Those who had already studied abroad described their international experiences as “transformational” and “life changing;” however, they also noted the value of embedding this international experience within the context of a broader academic program focused on understanding and acting in a global society.

Through the Global Studies Program, as the initial interviews and focus group with majors participating in this study confirm, it seems apparent that service-learning pedagogy is enhanced when it is framed within the context of global citizenship. Likewise, the sometimes nebulous project of “educating global citizens” can benefit from service-learning pedagogy in exploring the concrete

implications of theoretical concepts in local as well as transnational contexts. This is especially true when these efforts are framed within a “global” context as a part of a sustained, development, cohort curriculum that includes an emphasis on cross-cultural competency and language learning. Thus, service-learning can be a powerful vehicle for understanding and addressing issues of globalization, but it must go beyond one course or experience and be framed in such a way that students see themselves as global actors in an interconnected world.

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About the Authors

Nuria Alonso García is an associate professor in the Department of Foreign Language Studies and former director of the Global Studies Program at Providence College. Her current research is in the field of sociolinguistics, more specifically in second language acquisition, language and identity, and minority languages and cultural preservation. She is also involved in creative writing projects for children's and teachers that promote bilingualism and cultural awareness, and recently published the first in a series of bilingual children books that celebrates the value of diversity and the power of language. García has conducted workshops for educators and presented her studies at a number of academic conferences in Europe, Latin America, and the United States.

Nicholas V. Longo is director of Global Studies and associate professor of Public and Community Service Studies at Providence College. From 2006-2008, he served as the director of the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute, an endowed civic leadership center at Miami University in Ohio. He also served as a program officer at the Charles F. Kettering Foundation in the area of civic education, and from 2002-2004 he directed Campus Compact's national youth civic engagement initiative, Raise Your Voice. Longo earned his masters in Public Affairs from the Humphrey Institute and his Ph.D. in education from the University of Minnesota.

Appendix I. Spotlight on Global Studies Majors

Alexandra BetGeorge, 2011 global studies graduate with a minor in political science. Her interdisciplinary interests could not be confined within a traditional field of study, which led her to global studies. Alexandra spent her junior semester abroad in Tunisia, where she studied how multiple legal systems overlap to affect individuals' lives. Her global studies thesis then focused on the role of social media in the revolution in Tunisia. She believes that global studies fosters the development of a unique learning community where different perspectives and research trends emerge to coalesce in an intellectual landscape diverse in nature and devoted to social justice: "Looking around the discussion circle in your Global Studies Senior Capstone class, you see diverse intersections of academic disciplines and practical experiences in every fellow student, and the aggregate knowledge right there in that room is the result of this major." Alexandra describes her global studies peers as a community interested in thinking outside the Providence College walls and becoming involved in practices fostering global awareness and civic engagement. According to her, the program inspires majors to undertake challenges and take part in something for the world that is moral and infuses in them the confidence and determination to do so. Alexandra is the recipient of a Fulbright Teaching Assistantship, and she is currently teaching English in Bulgaria.

Neil Hytinen, global studies class of 2013 with a double major in political science. His experiences in high school nurtured his predisposition to understand globalization and its implications worldwide. Neil affirms that the highlight of the Global Studies Program is its participatory learning nature, and he finds the partnerships between faculty and students truly rewarding. His previous experiences with service-learning were somewhat limited, and he comments on the positive impact that global studies community engagement projects had in his academic and personal growth: "It was a big change actually doing community service through Global Studies; I think I grew a lot from it and I really

got a lot of confidence, teaching at the Dioceses, it really gave me a lot of confidence talking to people in the community.” Neil developed an interest in the Middle East before starting college, and he studied abroad in Jordan in fall 2011. He had never left the United States prior to studying abroad, and he expressed anxiety about the international immersion experience. He was also confident that the Global Studies Program prepared him well to deal with the unfamiliar. Neil elected to pursue the study of the Arabic language at Brown University in preparation for his experience in Jordan, realizing this would make his transition less challenging and contribute to his cross-cultural understanding. Neil hopes to pursue a career path involving global politics, serving internationally as a member of a nonprofit organization or being part of the Department of State and working on foreign policy.

Sonia Penso, 2011 global studies graduate with a double major in Spanish and a minor in Latin American studies. The interdisciplinary, social justice aspect of the major resonated well with her interest in applied politics and global issues. Sonia emphasizes the supportive environment that the Global Studies Program provides to majors: “It [the program] really has allowed me to find myself and be the person I want to be.” She grew bilingual and was the first generation in her family to attend college. She recognizes that coming from a non-American heritage helped her understand different perspectives and relate to individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Sonia studied abroad during her junior year in Argentina and Nicaragua, where she conducted a comparative study of the perceptions and misperceptions of gang-related youth. Sonia felt that her experiences working within the Providence community prepared her well to conduct research abroad: “In both countries I worked with mostly at-risk youth and, so having some of that background already and knowing how to work with a community partner, . . . definitely helped.” Her final globally-engaged thesis included data from her study abroad research in Nicaragua and Argentina, along with participatory observation

research with the Institute for the Study and Practice of Non-Violence in Providence. Sonia is currently working as a case manager with formerly gang-involved and recently incarcerated men and women at Homeboy Industries, an internationally recognized gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in Los Angeles.

Anne Ruelle, global studies class of 2013 with a double major in Spanish and a minor in Latin American studies. Her interest in global matters originated from the international program in which she was enrolled in high school. As a result of this program, she developed a deep appreciation for other cultures and a desire to further her language studies. The transition to the Global Studies Program at Providence College was impeccable, and Anne soon became extremely active in the community. She has collaborated with Amnesty International, spreading global awareness on campus, and engaged in service-learning projects at the International Institute of Rhode Island assisting the social integration of refugee families into North American society and most recently working on family reunification. She is the epitome of global awareness and community engagement at the local and international levels: "I am a Global Studies major living and breathing Global Studies." In summer 2011, Anne studied abroad in Ghana on a community-intensive summer internship, and she spent fall 2011 in Peru and spring 2012 in Ecuador. The international experiences had an extensive service-learning component and allowed her to deepen her understanding of human rights violations worldwide, and to conceive avenues of change. Anne will serve in the Peace Corps in El Salvador beginning in the summer of 2013.

Appendix 2. Interview Questions

1. What is it like to be a Global Studies major?
2. What attracted you to the Global Studies major?
3. What international experiences did you bring to the major?
4. Did you have previous experience with the style of education in Global Studies classes? How would you describe the experience of being in one of these classes? What impact did it have on you?
5. How does studying foreign languages shape your understanding of the world?
6. What do you think is the value of service-learning in a Global Studies major?
7. How prepared do you feel you are/were for international service-learning? How do/will you integrate your international service-learning into your education upon return to Providence?
8. What does it mean to you to be a global citizen? How do you see global events shaping your course of study?
9. How would you describe the dialogue between local community engagement and global citizenship?
10. How does majoring in Global Studies impact your future life and career?