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Essential Participants: Centering the Experiences of Southern Hosts in Global Service-Learning Pedagogy and Practice

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Abstract

In this paper we are concerned with the ways in which hosts are often excluded from scholarship and programming of global service learning. By global service learning (GSL), we mean a multiplicity of programs that occur facilitating service work for people across borders, generally with volunteers moving from the North to the South. We present findings from a research project conducted in 2014 with 37 host families. We circulated a survey to better understand host experiences of, expectations of, and hopes for GSL. Drawing on these survey results we provide some prompting questions for GSL participants (both students and program designers) to shift focus from student experience to relationship and mutuality. Using global service learning literature, critical disability theory and critical pedagogy through an intersectional lens, we center questions of uneven labor, accessibility, and structures of inequity. Three main themes emerged from our data: mutuality, gendered labor, and preparation. We present several infographic images capturing themes from the study to facilitate discussions with students who are preparing for GSL experiences and for those who are leading and designing programming. Our intention is to provide tools for educators to center the voices, desires, and motivations of Southern hosts in all of their GSL preparations.

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The thought that this village should carry the youths' transformation.

Another colonial myth. . .

*The youth make one last orgy of consumption in the local market,
Then strap themselves safely in the seats of an Air Canada wide-body jet.*

Content that nothing has been disturbed (Shultz, 2012, p. 172).

Introduction

In this paper we are concerned with the ways in which hosts are often excluded from the scholarship and programming of global service learning. By global service learning (GSL), we mean the multiplicity of programs that occur facilitating service work for people across borders, generally with volunteers moving from the North to the South. In this paper we present findings from a research project conducted in 2014 with 37 host families. We conducted a survey with the intention to understand host experiences of expectations of and hopes for GSL. Drawing on these survey results we provide some prompting questions for GSL participants (both students and program designers) to shift focus from student experience to a focus on relationship and mutuality. We argue that hosts should be considered as essential to the shaping of GSL programming, and therefore considered as active participants.

The term “participants” in the context of GSL evokes images of students from the North. They are the participants who are engaging in a learning experience, while those they work and may live with (hosts) remain in the background. As Simpson (2004) has demonstrated, volunteer programs rely on pedagogical goals rather than those of community development as the outcomes and purpose of programming. The centrality of learning over community development obscures the experiences and desires of local communities. We opened with the jarring poem by Shultz as it highlights our deepest concerns and discomforts with the field of GSL; that the significant labor Southern hosts perform is shaped by power inequity and colonial processes in that the GSL experience is centered on the student and not on those who inhabit the spaces and places where GSL is lived out. The myriad and complexity of knowledges from the lived experience of Southern host families is essential to bring into conversations about GSL. There has been a turn in the research to privilege this knowledge (Balusubramaniam et al., 2017; Collins, 2019; Ficarra, 2019; Grain et

al., 2019; Heron, 2011, 2015; Larsen, 2015; MacDonald, 2016; MacDonald & Vorstermans, 2015; Mogford & Lyons, 2019; Mostafanezhad, 2014; O'Sullivan et al., 2019; Reynolds, 2014; Toms, 2013). Hosts are essential participants in GSL; those who are living with, working with, caring for, and teaching GSL students, and we argue that they need to be centered. Their perspectives and desires must be included in pedagogical considerations, programming, and the practice of GSL.

This article, through and with the voices of Southern¹ hosts², moves beyond and against a neoliberal model of GSL as centered on Northern student learning as working towards employability (Vrasti, 2012). This article includes infographics to represent the data gathered from host families on their desires, expectations, and ideas for GSL and the impacts in their lives. We provide infographics reporting on our findings as accessible educational tools to support GSL students and educators in imagining hosts as active participants. We take up the data in the infographics to ask questions meant to move educators and students to dive deep into the complexities of mutuality, relationality, and solidarity in GSL experiences. Our theoretical framing uses critical pedagogy, critical disability studies and takes up an intersectional lens.

While this research took place in 2014, the impact that COVID-19 has had on limiting mobility provides an opportunity to reimagine GSL. Experiences throughout the pandemic demonstrated the importance of mutuality for our common survival - both in the context of public health, as well as other competing crises like climate change, late-stage capitalism, and conflict. We present these findings as a guide to building more equitable programs that center flourishing for both students and hosts.

¹ In this article we use “Southern” in reference to the Global South indicating countries which are low- or middle-income countries. This term is imperfect as it is not only geography that marks these countries. Other terms used in the literature include developing countries, underdeveloped countries, and majority world. We use Northern in reference to the Global North. We understand these terms are not binary and the North exists in the South and vice-versa.

² We use the word “host” here to capture both the families, community members and staff that work and live with global service learning participants. We purposefully use the word host both to signal the movement of students into the space as others as well as to mark the significant labor that this requires on the part of those welcoming students.

Literature Review

We draw on critical scholars who ask us to turn our attention to the experiences of those who are marginalized by structural forces, and who center a call for equity. There is an increased attention to promoting ethical engagement for practitioners and the state of the field of internationalization (Puntaney, 2019), in centering social justice in pedagogy and programming (LaNitra, 2019) and in possibilities for GSL in diverse contexts (MacDonald & Tiessen, 2018). Specifically, we attend to how hosts themselves are calling for more equitable structures and practices through an analysis of host motivations, experiences, and expectations. Hosts are invested in doing hosting labor for a diversity of reasons; in a study in Costa Rica, Toms (2013) found financial compensation was prominent, in Nicaragua, MacDonald (2022) found that there was a political orientation to hosts involvement, shaped through Nicaragua's history of international solidarity, echoed in work by O'Sullivan et al. (2019) and Reynolds (2014) in Nicaragua.

Many GSL programs have been celebrated for their pedagogical possibilities for student transformative learning (McGehee, 2005; Wearing et al., 2008). Programs are often tied to imaginaries of global citizens (see Tiessen & Huish, 2014). While researchers have been celebrating its transformative potential, others have demonstrated the challenges of GSL programming including the inequities in its practice and formation (Heron, 2007; Mathers, 2010; Vraști, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2013). While much of GSL operates on racial logics of who can and should volunteer and where their labor is needed, it remains unarticulated in programming. Scholars recently have demonstrated how service learning is a white enterprise—what Butin (2006) suggests could be the “Whitest of the White” (p. 482). While there are students of color who may participate, this does not mean that the pedagogical logics or frameworks are designed for them (Hickmon, 2015). Indeed, a growing body of scholarship suggests that the whiteness of service learning makes it an uneasy fit for many participants of color (Razack, 2001; Angod, 2014; Mitchell & Donahue, 2000).

Drawing on global service learning literature, critical disability theory and critical pedagogy through an intersectional lens, we center questions of uneven labor, accessibility, and structures of inequity. This approach allows us to attend to the nuances of identity, difference, inequity, and social structures in the context of programming intended to foster learning. This approach guided

the development of the survey, which asked about labor, as well as our analysis which attends to the larger structural processes that give shape to GSL experiences.

Global Service Learning

A critique of, and commitment to, equity in GSL literature is not new. Hartman and Kiely (2014) outline global service learning as a specific practice of service learning distinct from other forms of service learning in five key ways:

- (a) GSL is committed to student intercultural competence development;
- (b) GSL has a focus on structural analysis tied to consideration of power, privilege, and hegemonic assumptions. (c) GSL takes place within a global marketization of volunteerism; (d) GSL is typically immersive; and
- (e) GSL engages the critical global civic and moral imagination (56).

Important to this work is a recognition of the context in which GSL is operating. In 2018, Hartman, Kiely, Boettcher, and Friedrichs (2018, p. 21) re-visit their definition and invite us to think about GSL as:

a community-driven learning and/or service experience that employs structured, critically reflective practice to better understand global citizenship, positionality, power, structure and social responsibility in global context. It is a learning methodology and community-driven development philosophy that cultivates a critically reflective disposition among all participants.

The conversation around GSL now grows to capture the community-driven nature of the practice and ways it prompts reflection from participants. MacDonald and Tiessen (2018) ask us to think about the framing of GSL as transnational, drawing on transnational feminist scholars to highlight the relationality in encounters between hosts and volunteers (p. 8). A transnational feminist lens centers an understanding of inequity as complex and relational - for example, seeing the ways each participants lives (those in North and South) as shaped by structural forces and highlighting the connections between oppression and privilege rather than just an accounting of difference. Transnational (in distinction from global) is used to

... neither to reify the nation-state, nor to stop at simply an articulation of difference, but rather to attend to the “asymmetries of globalization” (Nagar & Swarr, 2010, p.3). In the adoption of the word “transnational”

to describe the approaches to programming, [the transnational attends to] the unequal effects of globalization, the assumptions embedded in service learning as a practice and the necessity of reflection in service learning that takes serious positionality, inequality and how all participants are imbricated in these processes (MacDonald & Tiessen, 2018, p. 8).

What these perspectives have in common is a focus on a critical interrogation of both power and relationality. In this paper, we extend this critical orientation with critical disability and critical pedagogy.

Critical Disability

Critical disability theory provides a space to illuminate the ways in which oppression is lived, but also a space where we can think through hope and desires for resistance (Goodley, 2013). With more and different voices in these conversations, our collective responsibilities to build more just, inclusive, and sustainable communities and partnerships can be re-imagined and re-charted to move forward together. The subversiveness of critical disability theory, and its roots in critical theory and dialectical thinking, make it a well-suited framework to look at the issues of value, power and ‘helping’ or ‘curing’ inherent in many GSL programs. Interrogating narratives of helping and curing is essential as, for a long time, injustices were seen, and are still seen, as legitimate social processes to protect or care for people with disability labels. Critical disability theory is a way to “not just change the lives of a significant minority of people who are categorized as dis/abled, but to disrupt the whole nature of the relationship between differently embodied subjects” (Shildrick, 2009, p. 173).

How can using critical disability theory work to disrupt relationships, work towards building relationships otherwise with Southern hosts? Critical disability theory helps us understand the need to move away from labeling or imagining certain groups of people as vulnerable. The construction of disabled people as uniquely vulnerable and therefore needing care, help, rehabilitation, and protection is a dangerous and erroneous ideology that has been challenged by disabled people and allies. It is systems that disable people, make people vulnerable to oppression and disablement; the focus of analysis needs to remain on the systems and structures and not on a constructed vulnerability of certain groups of people. The shift to think about relationships between differently

embodied people begins in critical disability theory, and we will extend this framework to the space of GSL to think through relationships between Southern hosts and Northern students. Critical disability theory draws our attention to the tension of vulnerability; that as humans we are all simultaneously vulnerable and need care and community from one another, and that the systems and structures within which we exist work to make some lives more vulnerable than others. We might think of the synergies, for example, between the ways in which critical disability theory demonstrates that systems disable people and Butler's (2004) work on how some lives are more vulnerable because of the conditions under which we live. As we bring this analysis to GSL, questions about the perceived vulnerability of those in the Global South in need of help or rescue arise, while we might question uneven mobility regimes as they intersect with late-stage capitalism. For example, hosts in the Dominican Republic called attention to the harmful mining practices of Canadian mining companies on their lands. These practices produce vulnerabilities through the destruction of the environment and the disablement of community members through unsafe work.

Critical Pedagogy

Much of the justification for practices of GSL rely on the pedagogical aspect. As Simpson points out (2004), development language is dropped from programming because of an awareness of the tensions in this practice, while pedagogical outcomes move to the forefront. Thus, we see the receding of developmental goals in GSL, which were the original benefit to host communities, in favor of pedagogical outcomes for students. This move to rescue the practice of GSL from development critiques relies on a simplistic pedagogical assumption of transformation.

Critical pedagogy, however, asks more of learning and brings an awareness to the complexities of learning as a process that is influenced by our identities, social location, and relationships. We understand critical pedagogical approaches as embodied learning experiences, as non-prescriptive, a space for engaging GSL students to “develop a social awareness of freedom” (Coles, 2014, para. 10). This study takes its larger ethos from the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and his imagining of the role of the oppressed or marginalized other. Central to Freire's thinking is that the oppressed must be foremost in their own emancipation, “no pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their

emulation models from among the oppressors” (p. 54). A critical pedagogical approach suggests that more than proximity is needed for transformation, and indeed, as researchers have shown some experiences of GSL serve to reinforce problematic understandings of the self and others (Mathers, 2010). Critical pedagogy draws our attention to the work of learning. It is a space where educators must meet GSL students where they are at, with their lived experiences, history, resources, and positionality, and engage them to think about power and its manifestations, and how it is integral in the oppression of certain bodies. Educators must work with GSL students to develop an interdependent understanding of freedom in ways that do not work towards the marginalization or oppression of others. Centering hosts in GSL pedagogy and programming furthers the aims of critical pedagogy, placing those experiencing oppression at the center of their own story, and placing the students who go to live and work alongside them as learners who require an education and transformation.

Intersectionality

Finally, an intersectional lens allows us to see the complexity that was missing from much of Freire’s work. Crenshaw’s (1988) vital work to name intersectionality – the ways in which our identities are informed by and inform one another and are not extricable – highlights the operation of power. Intersectionality draws our attention to how we can be both oppressor or oppressed and that our identities are entwined. Heron’s (2007) work in this context demonstrates the ways in which white women’s bourgeois identity is linked to a specific kind of desire for development linked to colonial helping mentalities.

Our methodology and analysis attends to the complexities of class, race, disability, and other identities. For example, we ask about who in families performs the most care labor, to understand the gendered dynamics of hosts. The centering of hosts draws on insights from feminists and especially feminists of color who argue that those experiencing oppression are the most able to identify the ways in which power works and should be afforded epistemic privilege (Fricker, 1989). This work moved us to center hosts in our methodology as an epistemic privilege.

The Study

This study was developed with Intercordia Canada. We both worked with Intercordia Canada for about 10 years.³ As such, we were invested in its model of GSL, but also in the vision of Intercordia Canada that valued and centered Southern hosts in pedagogy, programming and in the collaborative organizational structure which allowed for growth and change within the organization. The three principles of the organization's work were "being with" is more important than "doing for" others; encountering our weakness and vulnerability can be the sources of significant growth and connection; and the journey of learning is best made together (organization website). In 2014, we conducted a multifaceted research project in Ecuador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Ghana, and Rwanda. We used surveys to ask host families and community organizations who welcomed students from Canadian universities about their experiences during the founding decade of Intercordia Canada (2003-2013). These surveys were open-ended forms that were either provided for families to respond to on their own, or more often, were conducted by the research assistant with answers recorded. The survey method was chosen for a few reasons. The first is that it is less time-intensive on the part of the respondent, a concern with people who are already taking on a significant amount of labor (paid and unpaid) in their lives. Secondly, our initial intention was to conduct a pilot project to inform further research projects in the future. While the researchers later conducted a photovoice project, the findings also informed both of their doctoral research which included in-depth interviews (MacDonald, 2020; Vorstermans, 2018). Lastly, the surveys included open ended questions that asked hosts to tell stories about their experiences hosting. We asked about who did the labor of hosting, what changes they made in their lives

³ Both authors were PhD Candidates at the time of data collection, Vorstermans at York University and MacDonald at the University of Alberta. Ethics were completed at both institutions. We have also worked with Intercordia Canada in various capacities; as mentor coordinator, mentor in placement and eventually co-Directors after completion of data collection. Intercordia Canada closed in 2018. We want to name that the organization was founded and guided by the philosophy of Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche International, communities of people with and without intellectual disabilities sharing life together. In 2020, after Vanier's death, L'Arche International uncovered and revealed that Vanier had sexually violated women throughout the history of L'Arche (L'Arche International, 2020). Intercordia Canada closed before the truth of Vanier's legacy was revealed, so there was no institutional reckoning in the organization. Alumni and former staff have been impacted and have had to grapple with this horrific knowledge, holding the seemingly incompatible truths that Vanier caused harm and also the deep transformational learning that Intercordia Canada facilitated in our lives

to prepare to host students and during the students' stay, and things they would like students to do to prepare to live and work with them. We asked them about moments that went well for them in hosting students and moments that were difficult. We asked for stories. While the theoretical frameworks above often rely on in-depth qualitative interviews, we chose surveys to provide space for hosts to respond without being onerous on their time, and to capture initial themes. This balancing of methodological choice with the time and interest of respondents is well documented in community-based research literature (Alvarez & Guitierrez, 2008; Minkler, 2005).

We worked with four research assistants who completed questionnaires with host families and organizations.⁴ All research assistants worked with the students as in-placement mentors in their 3-month overseas placement. The role of the mentor in Intercordia Canada was an integral piece of the in-placement programming. The mentors lived and worked in communities near program participants. Their primary work was to support students and to check in with hosts about their experiences throughout. They also facilitated ongoing reflective exercises with students. This strategy was based on the philosophy that effective mentors often walk the same path with those they mentor (organizational website). Through their contact with hosts, mentors shared surveys and advised in person (as was also stated in the information provided about the study) that responses were anonymous and would have no impact on their participation with Intercordia Canada. The selection of host families and volunteer work placements for students was undertaken by the local host partner, and the research did not have any impact on this selection process.

It is also important to note that the organization had worked with each of the local host partners for many years and had developed lasting relationships with the two lead researchers as well as one of the mentors who had been working with them closely for many years. This allowed for relationships built on trust that responses would be kept anonymous and that there would not be consequences to the programming, a concern for research that involves complicated power dynamics (MacDonald & Vorstermans, 2016).

Each research assistant, with guidance from the principal investigators, identified research participants in the local host organization, host work placements and host families and asked them to complete a survey. Surveys

⁴ We will include the names of the assistants here.

were either completed individually by the participants or with assistance from research assistants. Some of the hosts had an Indigenous first language, or were not able to read or write, or read and write minimally; we offered both oral consent options as well as for the research assistants to complete the survey with them and take notes. Surveys were completed in Spanish, French, and English.

In total, 37 surveys were completed by host families and people who work at placement partners with Intercordia Canada. Surveys were completed by host mothers, fathers, siblings, grand-parents, people who worked in community organizations where students volunteered and the local partners of Intercordia Canada in each host country. Their experience hosting students ranged from 1 to 10 years. Family sizes ranged from having two people living in the home to 12. Some host families had hosted a student each summer for an extended period, others had hosted on and off, and still others were new to hosting students. We, the two PIs on the study, collaboratively conducted a thematic analysis. We reported back to the host organizations who are in relationship with the host families who completed questionnaires.

Findings

Broadly, our findings are centered on three themes that came out of the data with hosts: mutuality, gendered labor, and preparation. Firstly, mutuality was central. Hosts told us that they wanted to host because of a desire for mutual relationships, and for reciprocal benefits, some of which was social capital. Hosts wanted to build mutual relationships and where their desires were also considered, recognizing the experience as for both students and hosts.

Secondly, hosts told us that the burden of care work falls predominantly on women in the home. They named challenges of this labor not being valued or recognized by students, especially around food. Hosts were clear in saying that they wanted students to learn from them, they strongly identified as teachers and central to student learning for those who were guests in their homes and communities. This is an interesting finding as it pushes up against dominant charity-model GSL discourse that centers students as benevolent helpers and those who hold knowledge and expertise (Jefferess, 2011, 2012). Lastly, hosts named the need for preparatory labor for students before they come to live and work with them as important to ensuring a positive relational experience. Hosts said that when students were well prepared, for example had

taken some language classes, that this lessened the labor on them as hosts. We will now dig into these findings in depth, alongside infographics representing the findings.

Analysis: Accessible Educational Tools to Facilitate Learning that Centers Hosts

“An accountable bourgeois subject can be called to account, which means she (or he) seriously, if painfully, engages with critiques offered by the Other” (Heron, 2007, p. 155).

Essential to this research was the asking of Southern hosts how they experience GSL and asking questions about how they can be centered in meaningful and culturally-relevant ways. We see this research as enabling educators (such as ourselves) to use this to work with students to engage meaningfully with the ways hosts are asking them to enter their communities, homes, and community organizations. Asking students to reflect on how they will respond to the desires and demands of hosts, how they will hear them, how they will remain accountable to these demands and how they can continue to center these demands is essential and critical work. These are ways to center relationality in the embodied, lived experience of GSL. Nora Reynolds’ (2014) work on re-conceptualizing what counts as an ‘outcome’ in GSL shows us that GSL partnerships need to be partnerships, and university stakeholders need to ask communities what their desired outcomes are, beyond the tangible GSL project, and then also use these outcomes in assessment and measuring of success.

We created several infographic documents to facilitate discussions with students who are preparing for GSL experiences and for those who are planning and creating programming. We hope these will aid educators in the teaching of GSL encounters as existing in larger oppressive and disabling systems, opening spaces to destabilize knowledge, ideas of and who can hold knowledge, and the co-creation of new narratives for hope in GSL. We present these infographics here, with discussion, meant to be used by educators alongside critical tools like HEADS UP (Andreotti, 2012) with students and program directors in their discussion of and preparation for GSL. Each infographic representing the data from hosts is presented, discussed and then a number of questions to facilitate critical discussion with students and program directors are provided.

Mutuality



FIGURE (1): MOTIVATIONS FOR HOSTING STUDENTS FROM THE GLOBAL NORTH

Here we have responses from hosts on why they want to welcome students into their homes and communities. We have gathered their responses under the theme of mutuality both in experience and in learning. Hosts shared with us that they welcome students and to undertake the extensive labor it takes to host with a desire for mutuality. A similar desire for mutuality is found in other scholarship as well (for example as *convivencia* in MacDonald, 2022, as shared austerity in Bergdall, 2003, and as accompaniment in Griffin & Block, 2013). For hosts responding to our survey, participating in GSL meant both student and host are in the experience together, each receiving benefit and social capital. Hosts told us that they engaged in the program because it allowed for, or made space for encounters of mutuality, a period of time to learn from one another, to share more about each other's world and build relationships.

Questions for discussion for GSL participants:

1. Have you thought about why those from the Global South might want to welcome you to their communities, homes and to work alongside them for

change? If you have not, can you do some reflecting on some reasons why you might not have?

2. Were any of the motivations in this infographic surprising to you? What is missing that you might have thought might be a motivation? Any dissonance between your thoughts and the responses of hosts?

3. How might these motivations ask you to prepare in different ways? Ask you to think about ways you want to engage with those who will welcome you to their communities?

4. How might programming respond to these motivations? What are ways that opportunities for hosts to build social capital can be created? Students gain significant social capital through GSL experiences- how can this be more equitable for all GSL participants?

Questions for programming:

1. Who designed your program? What assumptions are embedded in who is positioned as program developers or directors?

2. While in our research, we found that hosts were interested in mutuality, this may not be the case with the community that you are working with. What are some of the reasons people are participating? How can you incorporate those desires into programming?



FIGURE (2): EXPECTATIONS THAT HOSTS HAVE OF THE STUDENTS COMING TO LIVE WITH THEM

Here we draw on the expectations that hosts have of students coming to live and work with them. Again, we see the theme of mutual learning: that this is not an experience solely to be consumed or enjoyed by students, but an expectation that the experience will be mutual. Of particular interest is the focus on learning. GSL literature emphasizes the benefit of cross-cultural learning for students (Crabtree, 2008; Hayward et al., 2012), we see in our research that hosts also want this experience, and many of them are unable to leave their country of origin to seek it out.

Here we have an invitation to students to engage in relationships with Southern hosts in more just ways. When one enters the encounter already devaluing the other, it is impossible to engage in a mutual way. The work of centering expectations that hosts have, finding creative and meaningful ways to figure out what their expectations are like before students depart for their experience is necessary.

Hosts were clear in their desire to have students come and learn from them; that they do so in ways that respect culture, that honor hosts as teachers who hold valuable knowledge, and in relational ways that center their humanity. This was found in other research with hosts where they shared the desire to

teach others (MacDonald, 2022; Smaller & O'Sullivan, 2018). Centering hosts as meaningful participants in the pedagogical projects enacted in GSL programs, as teachers with tools and strategies in the learning journeys of the students they host is an important part of preparing students for their experience (MacDonald, 2016).

Questions for discussion:

1. What might be a way that you can determine the expectations hosts have of you before you depart? Think about ways that are respectful of their labor, time, and culture. How might your positionality affect or change expectations?
2. A student who arrived to live with a host family in Honduras wrote a letter introducing herself and asking them how they wanted her to integrate into their home and family. She used Google Translate to get around language barriers. What do you think about this idea and how might you do something similar?
3. Work with a small group and come up with some expectations that you would have of someone staying in your home, workplace, community. Reflect together on ways you want to enter the community you will be arriving to; how can you remain accountable to these?
4. Do some reflective work of your own expectations of hosts. Then work in a small group to think them through critically: why do you hold these expectations? How will you react when reality doesn't meet your expectations? How are these expectations shaped by your positionality and culture? What are ways you can remain vigilant of your own expectations and how they are shaping your experience in ways that might be damaging to hosts?

Questions for programming:

1. What are hosts expectations for students to live well there? How have you built this understanding into the preparatory experience?
2. How is the expertise of hosts centered in your programming? Is there a way to have a workshop that hosts lead (compensated financially)?

Labor

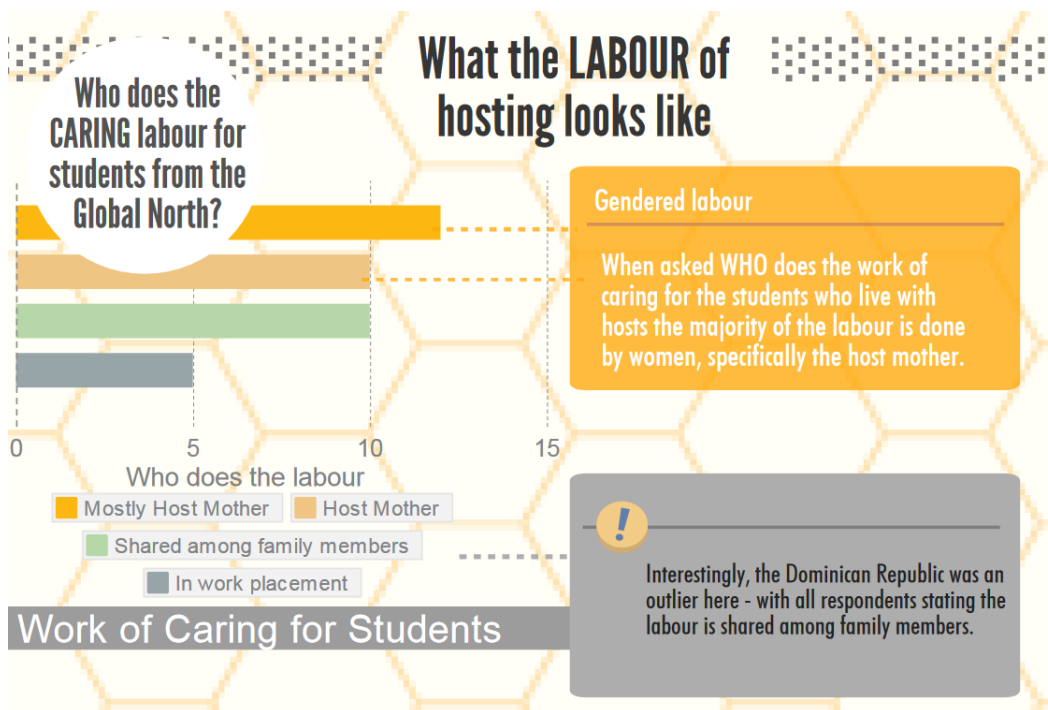


FIGURE (3): THE LABOR OF HOSTING

We were interested in understanding who does the labor in hosting students. Unsurprisingly, as it is care work, it is overwhelmingly performed by women in the home. This is found in other research (e.g., see Hernandez & Rerrie, 2018). Of the 37 respondents, 22 of them responded that the care was done by the host mother or mostly the host mother. The emphasis on the labor of hosting is important for students to think through critically as they prepare to go to ‘serve’ and learn in the South. A significant amount of gendered labor is performed for them to have this experience. Hosts specifically mentioned sites of significant labor such as food as not often appreciated or considered by students (AUTHORS 2016). When students think about labor in the context of their experience, they often think about the labor they will do (the serving in service learning), but not about the labor that is performed to orient them, care for them, keep them safe, feed them, teach them the language, any work training they need in their volunteer placement and much more. This labor is not central in their imagining of their experience, nor in the frameworks of GSL programs. Bringing this labor into conversations when preparing students for their experiences is essential in centering hosts as participants in GSL experiences. As Barbara Heron (2007) found, the labor required to support the learning of the

Northern student can take away from the work of the Southern NGO's own work and "limit Southern people's opportunities to claim or retain some epistemological space in which to analyze issues on their own terms" (2006, para. 20). GSL experiences are often oriented on the learning of the Northern student without a consideration for the gendered labor enabling this learning.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are places where you might imagine how you will be a significant source of labor for women with you being in their home, workplace, or community?
2. What are ways that you imagine gender playing out in your experience? How does this look different based on your own intersecting identity? Can you think of ways you might keep gender as central in ways you are thinking about the experience?
3. Have you performed care labor before? What are things that were hard, tiring, or fruitful? How might these experiences be the same and different for those welcoming you in the South?
4. What are ways you might acknowledge the labor others are doing for you when you are living in the South? How can this be built into GSL programming so it is not an individual undertaking but an institutional one?

Questions for programming:

1. How much are you compensating people hosting students (whether at home or at work) for their labor? Is this a fair wage? Does it account for planning and preparing before arrival?
2. If a student leaves placement early, are hosts still paid? Why or why not? What impact does this have?
3. Who do you talk to in community? Do you notice that there are certain people in charge, while others do not get to talk about why they are participating or the work that they do? How much do you bring them into planning?

Preparation



FIGURE (4): STORIES FROM HOSTS

We asked hosts for stories of times when a student integrated well and stories of times when a student did not integrate well. The inability of students to speak the language of the host country and community was a major barrier to a successful experience of mutuality. Two practices that hosts named as contributing to a good experience were when students asked for help and when they ate the local food. Both were major themes across each country. Firstly, the desire to help, the desire to do for, to cure, fix, help, rehabilitate, impart knowledge, and intervene in the lives of those in the South is something that hosts are asking to be disrupted. Hosts are the holders of essential knowledge in their own communities, and they are inviting students to honor and respect this. Secondly, there were a significant number of responses across each country that spoke about food as a source of either positive or negative experiences. We understand food as tied to gendered labor, and to cultural expectations and therefore as an important theme to discuss in depth with students. We want to think about these two calls from hosts in tension: remaining vigilant of ways that asking for help can create labor (which is gendered and raced) at the same time as recognizing hosts as experts and as people students can and should ask for help.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are ways you might do work at learning the host community language before you embark on your experience? How is learning the community language a way of centering hosts and not yourself?
2. When people travel to your own country/community, how do you think they are received when they don't speak the language?
3. Reflect on your own relationship with asking for help. Is this hard for you? Are there times you can think of when you wanted to ask for help but were unable to because of ways society sets us up to think asking for help is a negative thing.
4. Work together in a small group to think through the tension of asking for help (not knowing) alongside where and how you might ask for this help - for example, are there things you might ask a leader of your program rather than your family? What are ways you might respond to and live this tension well?

Questions for programming:

1. Are students encouraged to learn the community language before they depart? In what ways? Is there a way to create a learning group or build in an incentive for students to commit to language learning?
2. Compensation of labor is essential in the creation of GSL programming. What are ways that budgeting can be collaborative between organizations in the North and South? Remembering that power is shared differently and this impacts the ways hosts will be able to ask for just compensation. Think about labor performed before students arrive: setting up placements, time in correspondence and setting up programming; labor while students are in placement: translation, transportation, time in supervision and training of students; and afterwards in any follow up you ask of hosts.
3. Are hosts compensated differently if that student they are hosting has specific dietary requirements? Is this communicated in advance?

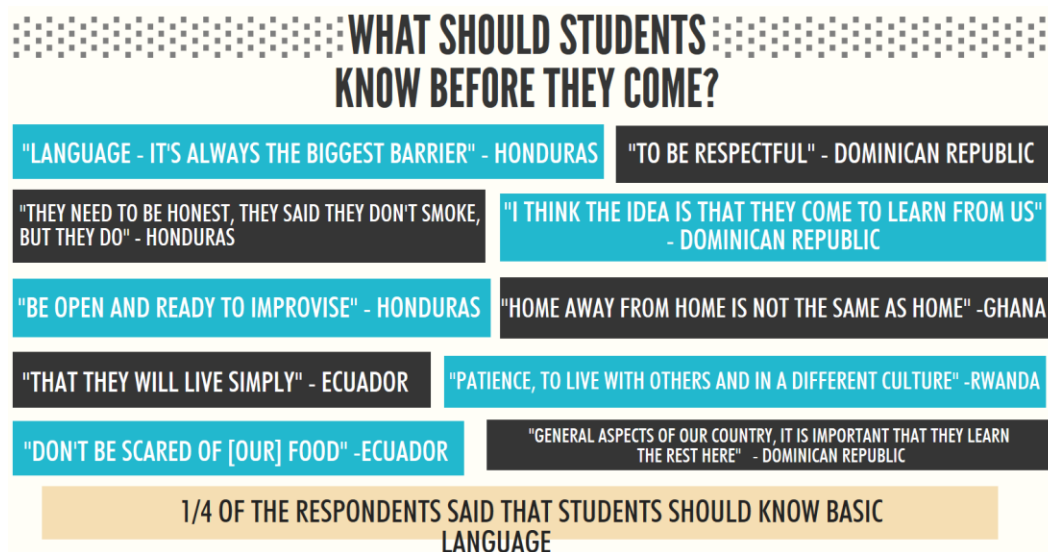


FIGURE (5): WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS KNOW BEFORE THEY COME?

"Home away from home is not the same as home" - Research Participant

When we asked hosts what they think students should know before they enter their communities, we heard several responses that require students to engage in preparatory labor in order to enter in respectful ways. The desire for students to know the language of the country and community they are going to was very important. As Heron (2015) reveals in her work with hosts, there is often a significant cost in labor; resources, time, emotional labor, that hosts perform to host a student and when the student does not know the language, this labor intensifies. Hosts told us that students should be respectful, patient, and open when entering their homes, community organizations and communities. While these might all be things that students list as positive characteristics of themselves, living them out while in a new and unfamiliar culture and community is fraught with difficulty. Hosts were clear that while students were being welcomed by hosts to their homes, they are not the same as homes in the North. For example, snacking in one's room is not a common practice in many countries as it may be in homes in the Global North. Smaller O'Sullivan's 2018 research with hosts in Nicaragua found this same tension. This ties in with expectations that students carry to their GSL experiences and ways this can be harmful to hosts, even without realizing it. Unpacking students' expectations before an GSL experience and being open to this as an ongoing

process while in placement is necessary labor to work against the impulse to lash out or cause harm when 'home' is not what one expected.

Questions for discussion:

1. Work together in a small group to think about a time when someone entered your home, school, workplace, community in a way that was difficult for you, or those around you. What happened? How did you feel when this happened?
2. Reflect on what home means for you. Draw a picture of things that come to mind. Now, what are ways you might try to reproduce home in a new place that are respectful of local ideas of home or place? That might be disrespectful or damaging to those around you? What are ways you want to live 'home' during your GSL experience?
3. What are some things that you think will be challenging for you to live in a new family with new rules? What are some rules or expectations that may be especially tough for you? What are some boundaries that you need to maintain, and what are some things you are willing to compromise? How might you talk about this with your host family?

Questions for Programming:

1. Do students and hosts come together to create group guidelines? This is a great activity that can lead to a lot of intercultural learning. For example, if someone says that a guideline is to be respectful, this opens an opportunity to discuss what respect looks like for all involved.
2. How are students supported in placements for challenges that may arise around rules and expectations? Is this labor that hosts are expected to take on in their processing and frustration or is there support for them?

Building a more equitable GSL pedagogy and practice

Centering the essential participants who enable GSL through their labor, teaching and caring for Northern students is part of the necessary work to be done in this field. Despite the often good intentions of students and GSL practitioners, programs are steeped in Northern colonial ideas, and therefore, despite all good intentions, Northerners are set up to reproduce power relations and inequitable power structures and engage in inequitable relationships with Southern hosts (Mahrouse, 2014). These structural realities make the work and process of building equitable and mutual partnerships so difficult for students

and educators, especially ones who identify as allies, activists, or global citizens. They (we) struggle with their (our) fundamental desire to engage in encounters with the other as equal, but the historical conditions are there which reproduce power. They cannot be erased, the encounter happens within these conditions (see for example Cameron et al., 2018).

Our desires live in complex contexts, historical contexts (for an excellent exploration of this in the context of international development see Heron, 2007). While we may understand power structures and seek experiences outside of it, the structures remain. This is the deep tension for students and educators in this space that cannot be remedied by small programmatic changes. Students and educators who are feeling alienated and frustrated with ways global racial capitalism and neoliberalism have shaped their lives and the lives of others, may find themselves drawn to GSL as a space in which to build relationships and mutuality in struggle. Intellectually working through the effects of colonialism and being asked to live them in intimate ways, while living with those who have been marginalized or disabled by the very forces that have privileged you is daunting and uncomfortable work. Engagement in the commodified global service learning project serves to perpetuate neoliberal modes of being in the world, despite the student's desire to confront global inequality with such encounters (Mostafanezhad, 2013). There is great danger in entering into this pedagogical work in a simplistic or palatable way. GSL is a space that can easily reproduce historical unequal relationships (Andreotti, 2014). So, we must enter into this work in careful and intentional ways, and there is no guarantee that we can or will succeed in doing this work well.

While there is a push to decolonize GSL practices, it is fraught and there are critical questions about whether the process of decolonizing this space is even possible. There is an absence of the acknowledgement of settler colonialism in GSL preparation and programming (Santiago-Ortiz, 2019). Practically, how do we decolonize a system that needs colonial processes to work (AU, 2014)? Critical global citizenship education is often taken up as a postcolonial project, but it is "still very much implicated in the colonial legacy of education" (Pashby, 2012, p. 9). This reminds us of Tuck and Yang's (2012) essential teaching, that repatriation of land as the central and non-negotiable principle of decolonization. As practitioners of and educators in GSL, we cannot give land back. We can acknowledge settler colonialism in the space of GSL (both from the land on which we depart and often the land to which we travel), we

can incorporate anticolonial and decolonizing methodologies to counter disabling narratives in GSL and we can build shifts in the ways we build and nurture relationality in GSL community partnerships, but we cannot give land back. A reckoning with being complicit in ongoing coloniality and rejecting the rescue-narrative of GSL is an honest and truthful position to begin from.

Conclusion

In our research with host families, they asked for preparation and training for them to live and work with students (MacDonald & Vorstermans, 2015). We suggest that this is an area for increasing scholarly and practical intention and provide tools to enable the role of hosts in the pedagogical project of GSL. Students receive preparation and space to work through issues and challenges in GSL, in preparatory sessions, in placement through access to professors, group reflections and other supports, as well as after their travel through paper writing and reflections. Hosts need these spaces and supports as well; part of GSL programming fees should go to fund this preparation. We imagine this preparation not as ‘how to welcome and care for students’ but rather, ‘how to deal with a problematic student,’ ‘how to counter microaggressions in your home’ and ‘what are resources available when students are not living well with your family?’ Hosts would design and execute the workshops and they would be economically compensated, as this is labor essential to GSL programming. Further research with hosts on what these would look like and necessitate is needed.

A shift in thinking that we only need to prepare those from the North to live in the South is long overdue. We hope that this article provides some opportunities for scholars and practitioners to center hosts in all aspects of GSL. This is work that will move us closer to doing GSL in more equitable relational ways, ways that are oriented towards an otherwise way of being in disabling systems of power. Andreotti’s concept of doing this work otherwise is a response to the current ways in which GSL programs do not include “perspectives that are based on ontological assumptions that challenge Western humanism” (2010: 5). In other words, ways of being otherwise that are outside the Western way of understanding the world. Centering hosts in meaningful and participatory ways is essential in creating other and more equitable relations in GSL. As we move into our with- and eventually post-COVID world the time for reckoning with ways we have built our social worlds is imperative (Brand, 2020). GSL, like all

other spaces of our social and material world must be re-thought, and this re-thinking, re-imagining, must meaningfully include and center hosts. We end with the words of Sonya Renee Taylor (2020) on the need to build more generative futures:

We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.

The weaving of this new GSL garment will be a beautiful and difficult exercise in relationality, one that recognizes the colonial and inequitable realities that GSL is situated and complicit within, and ways we can resist together, in solidarity, hosts participants, student participants and instructors and higher education institutional participants.

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