

LEARNING TO SERVE: DELIVERING PARTNER VALUE THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS

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We consider types of value created by service-learning projects for partner organizations. We analyzed a sample of 30 international service-learning projects that are part of a single graduate business course to answer (1) what types of value do our partners derive from service-learning projects, and (2) what conditions increase the likelihood of value creation for our partners. We differentiate between two types of value: direct and indirect. Most of our projects generated some indirect value for our partners, but a smaller number of projects generated direct value. We then discuss three dimensions of service-learning projects (partner readiness, project design, and project execution) associated with the creation of direct value for partner organizations. Our manuscript extends the research on service learning by focusing on partner value and provides practical insights for instructors looking to improve service-learning offerings.

Service learning (SL) is an increasingly popular pedagogical approach in business schools (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, & Colby, 1996). This approach encourages students to apply academic theories to real-world problems outside the classroom (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Sigmon, 1990) in a way that generates social value (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Giles & Eyler, 1994). SL programs challenge students to broaden their worldview while providing them with the opportunity to apply their skills in the field (Crabtree, 2008; Godfrey, Illes, & Berry, 2005; Kolenko et al., 1996). A burgeoning array of literature explores the value of SL courses for a variety of stakeholders. SL benefits society at large (Boland, 2008; Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009); impacts positively on student learning (Crabtree, 2008; Culross, 2010; Pompa, 2002); and develops ties between universities and outside communities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Research also considers the challenges facing faculty who attempt to teach SL courses (Boland, 2008; O'Meara, 2002; O'Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2008).

The benefits of SL for students and universities are clear; however, few studies focus on the impact of these initiatives on the host communities or partner organizations without whom SL collaborations would not be possible (Crabtree, 2008; Kenworthy-U'Ren, & Peterson, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel,

2000). Designing SL experiences that have a substantive positive impact on partner organizations can be challenging (Godfrey et al., 2005; Kolenko et al., 1996). For example, having examined nine SL courses, Kolenko and colleagues (1996) suggest that even in the most impactful case, it remains “unclear the degree to which service learning is occurring (from the perspective of the partner), rather than simply (providing students with) exposure to (the) issues,” (p. 137). Similarly, in a review of courses in universities known for their emphasis on SL, Papamarcos (2005) finds that half of the courses described as SL are not substantially different from experiential-learning projects.

Research is beginning to move beyond student centric perspectives to explore how instructors can ensure that the partners in SL projects derive substantive benefit from collaborating with student teams (Crabtree, 2008; D'Arlach, Sanchez, & Feuer, 2009; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Boland, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). We wish to contribute to this small, but emerging subset of literature that looks at value created for partners (Crabtree, 2008; D'Arlach et al., 2009; Dorado & Giles, 2004). Using a qualitative comparative analysis of 30 SL projects over 8 years as part of a single SL course, we ask (1) what types of value did our partners derive from participation in our SL projects, and (2) what conditions increased the likelihood of value creation for our partners?

Our findings identify two categories of value that accrued to our partners, *direct* and *indirect*. We split our cases according to the type of value created and identify the features of those projects that were associated with indirect and direct value.

SERVICE LEARNING

As noted above, SL builds knowledge experientially while simultaneously contributing to the production of societal good. Successful SL projects often emphasize a realistic perception of social ills such as homelessness, poverty, or illiteracy (Godfrey, 1999; Jacoby 1996). In the United States, congruent with the National and Community Service Act in 1990, SL projects must (1) meet a real community need, (2) integrate and augment academic curricula, and (3) contain a reflective component (Yorio & Ye, 2012). Heffernan and Cone (2001) and Kolenko and colleagues (1996) outline similar models that represent the best practices of SL courses. From the perspective of Heffernan and Cone (2001), SL involves four key elements: (1) student engagement, (2) reciprocity between students and partners, (3) deep reflection, and (4) broad dissemination of insights derived from the SL experience. Kolenko and colleagues (1996) add two dimensions: (1) the application of skills by students, and (2) student development of deep understanding of social issues. Well executed SL provides high-quality real-world learning experiences for students (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008). Poorly executed projects may provide both service and learning in name only (Godfrey et al., 2005) and divert valuable time and resources away from communities in need. At worst, SL could provide students with a false sense of superiority (DiPadova-Stocks, 2005) and diminish their grasp of the magnitude of societal challenges (Kenworthy-U'Ren & Peterson, 2005).

International settings magnify these challenges. Grusky (2000: 858) writes that “without thoughtful preparation, orientation, program development and the encouragement of study, as well as critical analysis and reflection, (international service learning) programs can easily become small theaters that recreate historic cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes and replay, on a more intimate scale, the huge disparities in income and opportunity that characterize North-South relations today.” However, well-designed international SL courses have the potential to dramatically transform students’ worldviews by increasing cultural literacy, tolerance for ambiguity, and appreciation for the

complexity of global challenges (Kiely, 2004; Porter & Monard, 2001; Pyle, 1981).

Therein lies a central challenge of SL. Within SL literature, a consensus is emerging on the characteristics of SL experiences that provides value to students (D’Arlach et al., 2009), but it is unclear whether these experiences deliver the same value to the partner organizations that contribute the context for student learning (Boland, 2008). Kolenko and colleagues (1996) note specifically the challenges of ensuring partner outcomes. Of the nine courses they study, “[i]nvolvement levels ranged from observing a service agency’s operations and clients, working in the agency, or taking a leadership role to address a social issue or community problem” (1996: 137). Similarly, through analysis of SL syllabi, Steiner and Watson (2006) demonstrate that almost half of the projects labeled as SL did not substantially differ from any other class project. In fact, Eyler noted “most studies of student outcomes have simply used ‘SL’ as the predictor variable, and (the term) ‘SL’ covers dramatically different experiences” (Eyler, 2000: 12). Godfrey and colleagues (2005) echo this variation and create a typology of SL projects. They describe “big S/big L” projects as having both “targeted problem-solving focus on organizational, social, technical needs” and “directed field-study to reinforce key curricular concepts” with projects that are “expertise-based and entail significant service deliverable or implementation” (Godfrey et al., 2005: 311). They note that most of the projects studied had “big L” but “small s,” given the difficulties of designing projects that serve a real partner need.

What Constitutes Partner Value?

Designing a “big S/big L” project is difficult (Godfrey et al., 2005). Creating value for partners while encouraging deep student learning certainly depends on the willingness, skills, and capacity of the student participants (Armstrong & Mahmud, 2008; Godfrey et al., 2005; Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009). Scholars have also begun to consider the conditions that increase the likelihood of delivering value to partners. Much of this research emphasizes that partners derive value when universities are committed to the development of long-term reciprocal relationships (D’Arlach et al., 2009; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Boland, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). This research further highlights the importance of both parties bringing valuable contributions to the initiative and co-creating knowledge (Fleck, Smith, & Ignizio, 2015; Heffernan & Cone, 2001; Kenworthy-U'Ren,

2008; Kolenko et al., 1996; Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Reciprocity involves more than outreach and knowledge transfer. It requires a generative democratic discourse where “good” is generated not “for the public” but “with the public” (Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). D’Arlach and colleagues (2009: 5) eloquently describe the consequences of SL without reciprocity, stating:

instead of creative, reciprocal, empowering partnerships to alleviate poverty, for example, SL takes the form of tutoring the poor. Tutoring is a safe choice: the university benefits from community exposure and the community members receive needed help. But safe does not necessarily mean transformative, as these uninspired interventions tend to replicate existing patterns of power.

Reciprocity is encouraged in several ways, such as designing projects to empower partners through their relationship with universities (Fleck et al., 2015). D’Arlach and colleagues (2009) study an SL program that paired Spanish-speaking immigrants with university students to teach each other their native language and culture. They found that community members who participated in the SL program positively changed their views of university students, the manageability of social issues, themselves, and it gave them a voice. They recommend an SL class format where community recipients can have expert roles, knowledge is co-created and multidirectional, and ample time is devoted to dialogue about current social issues.

The selection of partner organizations further facilitates reciprocity. In the case of international SL programs, Crabtree (2008) suggests that universities should choose smaller partners, as they are more likely to enable participants to “connect more meaningfully to organized communities in developing countries” to facilitate “cross-cultural relationship building and project participation” and to provide “needed perspective on development and politics in the countries where we work” (Crabtree, 2008: 23). Dorado and Giles (2004) describe several types of university–partner relationships. Early tentative collaborations can turn into partnerships where the goals of both parties align. Committed partnerships move beyond a single project and enable long-term collaborations. Despite the value of committed partnerships, many scholars note the challenges associated with building them (Kenworthy-U’Ren, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Finding ways to move beyond “simple, short-lived, and disposable partnerships” is the

significant problem faced by SL today (Kenworthy-U’Ren, 2008).

Although we recognize the importance of the broader university–partner organization relationship, it lays beyond the influence of individual instructors. Thus, we consider other factors that may influence the value that can be added to partners. We use archival data that followed up with partner organizations and participants of 30 projects in an international service-learning course after the individual projects had been completed. This data allows us to empirically develop a typology of the value that our partners derived from our service-learning projects. Next, using the findings from the first portion of the analysis, we divided projects based on the types of value derived by our partners and used a comparative case analysis to induce a few dimensions that predict indirect and direct value creation.

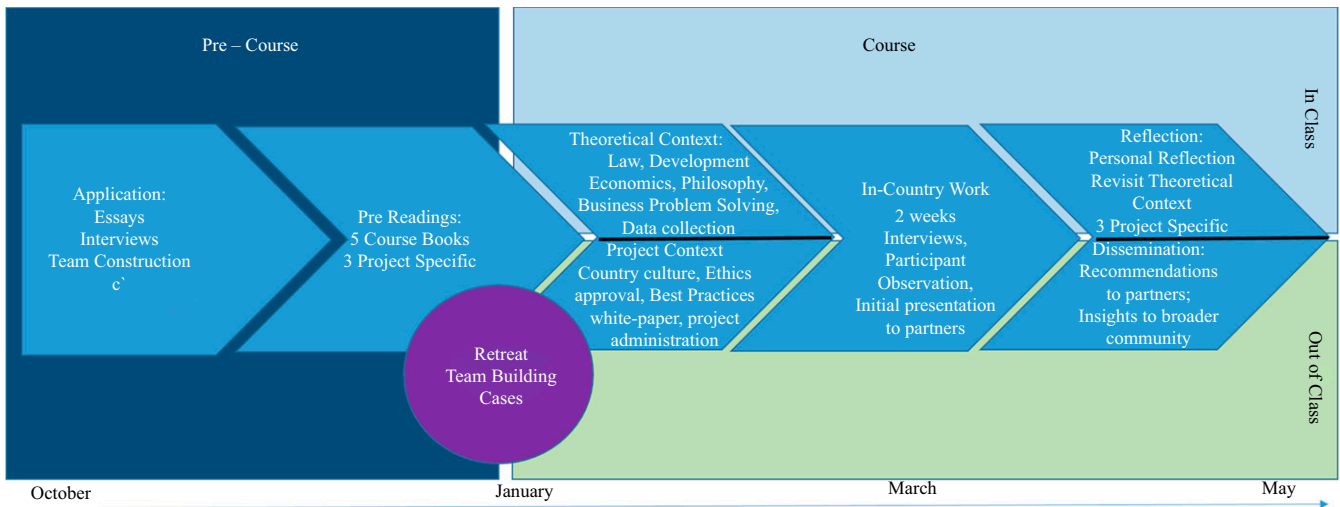
CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

Our data comes from 30 SL projects conducted within a single course in the MBA program at a private Midwestern university. Teams of 5–7 students and an advisor were paired with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct business- and peace-related projects in a variety of international contexts. This course design fits squarely under both Heffernan and Cone’s (2001) and Kolenko and colleagues’ (1996) definitions of SL, as it includes the four key elements: (1) engagement, (2) reciprocity, (3) reflection, and (4) dissemination. Please see Appendix A for a detailed description of the design, the student teams, curriculum, partners, projects, and learning objectives of the course and Figure 1 for an overview. Through the regular operation of our service-learning course, we noticed variations in the value created for our partners. This motivated our inductive empirical inquiry.

Data Collection

Sampling. Thirty projects over 8 years of a single service-learning course provide the sample for our analysis (see Table 1 for a description of projects). We reduce the bias in our sample by analyzing the entire population of projects across two instructors and multiple partner organizations that vary in size and represent different constituencies, nationalities, and subject matters. Because of the variation in this sample, we believe that our findings may generalize more broadly to other service-learning courses and

FIGURE 1
Course Overview



projects (Yin, 2011). Further, using multiple projects enhances our ability to make theoretical propositions (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). However, unlike traditional comparative case analysis, we did not engage in theoretical sampling to maximize variance across projects.

Two broad categories of data were collected for this project: data produced by each of the projects and data produced through project follow-up. All data are archival, in that it was assembled by project teams throughout their 6-month service-learning project or through follow-up activities conducted by instructors and students associated with the normal operation of the course. Informed by Yin's perspective on data collection, the design of the course incorporates elements of interviewing, observing, collecting and examining, and feeling using both formal instruments and rigorous data collection procedures (Yin, 2011). For example, students were trained to use interview techniques such as semi-structured interview protocols, keeping field diaries, dividing the responsibilities of questioning and note-taking, and making notations regarding nonverbal and environmental observations. As such, we are somewhat able to account for the consistency and quality of the archival data collected.

Project data. We collected a variety of archival data generated over the course of each service-learning project including data produced at the project planning stage where instructors and partners exchange emails, generate memorandums of understanding and proposals outlining the scope of work to be conducted by the project teams. The

project planning documents range in length from 2 to 63 pages, with the average of 14.6 and a standard deviation of 11.1 pages. Once the project began, each team kept an archive of their work process. This archived data includes desk research, interview notes, emails among team members and between students and partner staff, and meeting agendas and minutes. Archived material during this phase ranges between 22 and 420 pages with an average of 130.2 and a standard deviation of 104.6 pages.

During the immersion phase, students produced primary data for this analysis including interview transcripts and field notes, direct quotations, observations (including the physical environment, non-verbal cues, and interactions between individuals) and the impressions, thoughts, and feelings of the students. Digital recordings were collected wherever possible to facilitate the team's transcription of field observations. Teams produced between 13 and 212 pages of field notes, with an average of 92.1 and a standard deviation of 50.9 pages. We also utilized other archival documents including presentations and final deliverables that produced an average of 102.0 pages per team. Finally, each individual student produced four reflection papers throughout the course. In total, our archives consist of 11,659 pages of material across 30 projects.

Follow-up interviews. We conducted a systematic evaluation of past projects twice: once after Year 4 and again after Year 8. These two systematic evaluations consisted of two parts. First, we conducted interviews with the key partner staff involved in each project. Wherever possible we interviewed individuals at

TABLE 1
Project Descriptions

ID	Project Name	Yr.	Region	Initial Plan	Actual Work	Final Deliverables
1	Post-civil war youth reconciliation & employment	8	Asia	Identify revenue-generation opportunity	Assess organizational assets, capabilities, relationships	Youth employment/revenue-generation business plan
2	Community & company disaster preparedness	8	South East Asia	Identify needed capacity strengthening	Assess disaster preparedness	New business investment ideas
3	Child sex trafficking interventions	8	South East Asia	Assess interventions to diminish trafficking	Mapping market for child sex trafficking	Estimates of demand for and economics of child sex trafficking
4	Agricultural supply-chain linkages	8	South East Asia	Assess needed support to farmers	Map food value chains from producers to consumers	New partnerships with local businesses to capture market opportunities
5	Business opportunities based on trash	7	South East Asia	Business opportunities based on trash	Assess business opportunities based on trash	Business cases for investment
6	HIV/AIDS NGO organizational support & revenue generation	7	Southern Africa	NGO capacity strengthening	Identify market opportunities and underutilized assets	Business cases for investment
7	Evaluation of rural/urban electrification project	7	South Africa	Evaluate project	Problem solve around project expansion, given market need	Assessment of market opportunities for expansion
8	Evaluation of rural electrification project	7	East Africa	Evaluate project	Assess legal and other barriers to project expansion	Plan to address legal challenges in country
9	Midmarket lending	7	East Africa	Assess barriers to midmarket lending	Problem solve around collateral, credit, and other barriers	Identify opportunities within crowded lending market
10	HIV/AIDS NGO revenue generation	6	Southern Africa	Revenue generation business cases	Assessment of NGO management, data, operations	Revenue opportunities and NGO organizational improvements
11	New agricultural crop (e.g., amaranth)	6	Central America	Assess viability and nutrition of new crop	Evaluate supply/demand of new crop	Business case for investment in new crop
12	Nutrition	6	East Africa	Assess nutrition program	Analyze drivers of continued malnutrition	New framework for nutrition programming based on education & behavior
13	Nutrition	6	South East Asia	Evaluate nutrition programming	Assess behavior change needed to improve nutrition	New framework for nutrition programming based on education & behavior
14	NGO-MNC collaboration	6	West Africa	Identify new funding for NGO	Analyze collaboration potential among NGOs & MNCs	Collaboration introductions and negotiation initiated
15	Meso-finance	5	South East Asia	Assess meso-finance market needs	Assess meso-finance market	Entrance into meso-finance market
16	Health systems	5	West Africa	Integration of traditional medicine into health system	Assess health systems lack of infrastructure, capacity	Gap analysis of national health system
17	Youth unemployment	5	East Africa	Analyze persistent high youth unemployment	Introduce NGO to new techniques for data gathering	Novel approaches to generating youth employment
18	Meso-finance	5	Central America	Assess meso-finance market needs	Uncover fraud in partners, lack of business capabilities	Fraud exposed, training developed
19	Mining	4	South East Asia	Analyze mining context	Mapping mining support/opposition among various stakeholders	Civic organizations to pressure miner and environment safeguards

TABLE 1
(Continued)

ID	Project Name	Yr.	Region	Initial Plan	Actual Work	Final Deliverables
20	Business-NGO linkages	4	Middle East	Evaluate opportunities for business-NGO cooperation	Analyze local agricultural opportunities	Business case for investment in local food processing
21	Co-op expansion into new crop (e.g., bananas)	4	Central America	Analyze market opportunity for new crop	Uncover and address co-op cash flow problems	Three options to address financial problems
22	Program measurement and evaluation system	4	East Africa	Work with partner to develop program measurement system	Support major reorganization implementation	Gap analysis on program measurement and evaluation
23	Scaling small farm-holders' investments	3	East Africa	Assess barriers to small farm-holders' expansion	Financial and business skills gap assessment	Partnership with other NGOs to provide complete farmer support
24	Water & sanitation	3	East Africa	Assess water & sanitation expansion to rural areas	Technical solutions for improved well maintenance	Introduction to engineering MNC to provide well technology
25	Crop supply chain (e.g., coffee)	3	South East Asia	Evaluate crop support program effectiveness	Create cooperatives to achieve needed economies of scale	Business and peace-related projects based on crop
26	Crop supply chain (e.g., soybeans) & mobile money	2	East Africa	Evaluate mobile money as means to support programs, evaluate crop program	Mobile money provides efficiency savings	Business case for targeted investment in crop infrastructure
27	Crop supply chain (e.g., ground nuts)	2	East Africa	Evaluate crop support program effectiveness	Assess barriers to farmer's capturing value from crop	Business case for targeted investment in crop infrastructure
28	Electricity infrastructure	2	Middle East	Assess electricity infrastructure damage from most recent conflict	Assessment of needed economies of scale	Needed cross-community negotiation and collaboration for electricity scale
29	Post-conflict business environment	1	Middle East	Develop understanding of business challenges in post-conflict societies	Identification of needed additional skills in economy	Vocational training investments
30	Post-conflict business environment	1	Eastern Europe	Develop understanding of business challenges in post-conflict societies	Entrepreneurial human capital requires assistance to start local businesses	Plan for business incubators

multiple levels of the partner organization, including the regional director or coordinator, the country director, and the staff who worked alongside our team. These semistructured interviews lasted between 30 and 70 minutes. We used a semistructured interview format to probe the project, team process, and interactions, impact of the recommendations, and lessons learned from the collaboration. Second, we conducted interviews with students who had been involved with the project using the same semistructured protocol. Finally, after completing the interviews, we created a 2-page overview of the project detailing its origin, objectives, process, and outcomes, which we shared with our interviewees for validation.

Data Analysis

We analyzed our data in three distinct ways. First, we sought to identify the common themes among the cases. Second, we engaged in cross-case comparisons to determine the relationship between the characteristics of projects and the types of project outcomes. Finally, we analyzed the partner feedback data to predict the creation of direct and indirect values. In the first set of analyses, we used Yin's (2011) Five-Phased Analytic Cycle: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. We compiled the data for each project and organized subfolders by data type (documents before project start, field notes, final recommendations, etc.). During the disassembling phase, both authors independently coded a subset (approximately 10%) of archival documents using open in-vivo coding, selecting individual segments of data and applying first-order codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). One author conducted this initial analysis using pen and paper, while the other used a PDF note-taking software and Microsoft Excel. These first-order codes were consolidated in an Excel file, and again, we independently developed second-order codes at higher levels of abstraction. This recursive process continued until we reached agreement on the codes in the subset of the data. We then divided the remaining archival materials and coded independently, meeting weekly to discuss the emerging themes.

Next, as guided by Eisenhardt (1989) and Huberman and Miles (1984), our second set of analyses involved the identification of patterns across cases. We selected categories, placed each project into its appropriate category, and then looked for similarities and differences in the axial codes among

cases within a category. We investigated patterns regarding the size of partner organizations (i.e., large global humanitarian organizations vs. small local NGOs), type of economic sector served (e.g., agriculture, mining, infrastructure), and nature of the project (e.g., measurement and evaluation of existing program, new opportunity assessment, extending alliances/partnerships in the local environment). Because we saw no clear patterns emerge, we returned to coding the cases and dividing again by different criteria to try to discern patterns across cases. To illustrate, we considered whether the project lent itself more to business approaches, such as the extension of agricultural supply chains and the formation of farming cooperatives (Projects 4, 18, 21, 26, 27), versus those projects less immediately amenable to clear business approaches, such as reducing child malnutrition and improving disaster preparedness (Projects 2, 12, 13).

During this stage of our analysis, we began to see the importance of outcome in shaping our model. We selected categories of project outcomes and once again place each project into its appropriate category and then looked again for similarities and differences in the axial codes among cases across outcomes. This led us to separate and re-analyze the data on outcome to consider whether different partner value was created for partners across projects. Using only data from the two systematic program reviews, we employed a similar process as in the first phase, disaggregating and re-aggregating the data produced by the two program reviews.

We returned to our cross-case comparisons using the project outcomes. We analyzed the data using forced comparisons of selected pairs of projects to examine further similarities and differences in the cases that produced indirect and direct value. For example, the service-learning course served the same international humanitarian organization in the same Middle Eastern country with essentially the same senior executive team in the field in Years 1 and 2 (Projects 28, 29). We served the same NGO in Southeast Asia with the same leadership team in Years 3, 4 and 5 (Projects 15, 19, 25). Under such similar circumstances, we could ask why these two or these three projects produced different types of value. These questions lead us to further refine our dimensions. We also made comparisons across seemingly different pairs of cases (e.g., country, partner, sector) to find commonalities across the cases and further refine our model.

This analytic process produced themes and possible drivers of partner value. As Yin (1984) advises,

we compared each theme with the data from each project, which in effect treats all 30 service-learning projects as experiments to confirm or disprove our initial hypotheses regarding the factors critical to success. Through this process, some cases did not confirm the relationships among factors as expected, thereby forcing us to reconsider our emerging themes regarding how a service-learning project provided value to partners. We approached closure in the iteration between theory development and data analysis once we discovered only minor incremental refinements to our proposed theory. From the data, we discerned the pattern that underpins our proposed theoretical contribution: service-learning projects produced two distinct types of value for partners, direct and indirect, and the three factors related to the production of direct value are partner readiness, project design, and project execution. We explore these findings in detail below.

FINDINGS

What Constitutes Partner Value?

Our first research question considers the types of value that partners derive from their engagement with graduate students through SL projects. Our partners experienced value in two ways: *Direct value* reflects the specific outcomes associated with the project deliverables and the degree to which they shape partner activities beyond the specific engagement. *Indirect value* reflects benefits to the partner that are not specifically linked to the project itself, but rather accrue from the partner's interactions with the students and the university community.

Direct value. Our analysis of partners' perceptions of value demonstrates several conditions under which our projects provided direct value to the organization's ongoing operations. When partners implement their SL teams' recommendations, direct value accrues, such as the extension of an agricultural supply chain program that gained funding from an Australian funding agency (Project 4) and a business plan for a trash recycling franchise that competed successfully in a business plan competition (Project 5). By implementing the recommendations, the partner improved its existing programming and enhanced current operations. Sometimes the recommendations also assisted the partner in securing future funding.

Our partners noted that a direct value occurred when the joint SL team created something different than what the partner would have likely achieved

on their own. This included projects whose recommendations changed the partner's strategy when implemented, such as the redesign of refugee housing to include commercial space (Project 30) and the partner's direct investment in storage, transportation, and other infrastructure to support the marketing of agriculture products (Projects 11, 21). The critical component of our partners' perception was that they could not have accomplished the program improvement or new strategy without the outside assistance of the SL team. For example, one partner stated, "because of the team's recommendations, we are now working with local civic organizations to help teach wildcat, artisanal miners about worker safety and train them on preventing environmental degradation" (Final Deliverables, Project 19).

Our data suggests the projects that partners perceived as creating direct value transcended the direct engagement of the project team and persisted beyond the project's end. For example, some projects led to identification of new potential partners and subsequent longer term collaborations, such as a local NGO that required other community alliances to execute its outreach programs (Project 6). By contrast, a project that launched a new collaboration between an NGO partner and an agribusiness firm that was quickly cancelled does not fall into this category of direct value (Project 14). Another example of direct value with lasting impact included those that prevented loss. To illustrate, one team discovered that our partner's local affiliate was operating without a legal license, allowing the partner to rectify the problem before the project moved forward to next-stage funding, thus providing direct value to the partner (Project 22). Another example includes the discovery of fraud that led to the termination of programming (Project 18).

Indirect value. Partners noted other benefits of participating in service-learning projects that did not fit into the category of direct value in our data analysis. They indicate these benefits were substantial and valuable, but were neither the motivation nor sufficient to be the ends in and of themselves for engaging in the collaboration. They were often unplanned and underspecified, but nonetheless provided value to the partners. We label these benefits as providing indirect value.

Often indirect value had less to do with the project team or project outcomes and more to do with building a relationship with the broader university community. In these cases, a given project was viewed by the partner as merely one in a portfolio of

TABLE 2
Example of Coding of Project Outcomes

Construct	Subdimension	Axial Code	In-Vivo
Direct Value	Durability	Directly Implemented	<p>“Through the sustained commitment of the university and the student team, we have been able to serve the people of this country when they needed it most. Our new programs, developed based the student team’s recommendations, have helped refugees build new businesses and new lives.” NGO country representative interview, Year 4 review, Project ID 30</p> <p>“We implemented the team’s findings on amaranth directly into our agricultural program.” Final deliverables, NGO country representative, Project ID 11</p>
		Secure Funding	<p>“Without the advice of the student team, we would not competed successfully for the next round of \$1.5 million in funding for the project.” Year 8 review, Partner project leader, Project ID 8</p> <p>“The team helped us write the successful grant proposal to support our new program helping informal trash workers to start their own businesses.” Final Deliverables, Project ID 5</p>
		Innovative Output	New Partnerships
	New Strategies		<p>“Our cooperative was running out of cash. We were using loans to pay our operational expenses. Our student team devised a way for us to rent our assets and prevent our cooperative from going bankrupt. For their efforts, we are all indeed grateful.” Field Notes, Cooperative General Manager, Project ID 21</p>
	Loss Aversion		<p>“We stopped work with the cooperative once the team showed us that the general manager has defrauded us of \$40,000 in grant money.” Quote from partner. Final Deliverables, Project ID 18</p>
	Indirect Value	Project Propulsion	Accelerated Activities
Low Cost skills			<p>“We run this NGO on a shoestring. We would never have been able to hire consultants to help us with our operations and strategy.” Quote. NGO director, Field Notes, Project ID 6, 10</p>
Professional staff development			Mind-set
		Skills	<p>“I am so tired of Universities sending us 20-year-old sophomores who want to save the world. This team was different. My staff and I learned so much about basic economics, the working of markets, and even agricultural value chains from them that we now include in our strategic discussions.” NGO Country Rep, Year 4 Review, Project ID 26</p>
		Relationships	University
Government			<p>“Having a student team from such a prestigious American university opens doors. We had been trying to secure a critical meeting with the national Minister of Health. Their presence helped us do so in days.” Field notes, Project ID 16</p>

TABLE 2
(Continued)

Construct	Subdimension	Axial Code	In-Vivo
		Business	“Left on our own, our NGO would have never interacted with executives from the extractives industry. But our team trusted the business leaders. And we trusted our team not to compromise our interests or values. The meeting they arranged was eye-opening.” International NGO Regional Director, Field Notes, Project ID 14
		Identify Future Employees	“We love (name). He is a great addition. And we found him because he was working on our service-learning project.” International NGO Regional Director, Year 8 Review, Project ID 15 “Our Fellows program is designed to bring in young talent into our NGO. We identified (name) as a promising potential Fellow through her work on our joint project in the field.” International NGO President interview, Year 8 Review, Project ID 11

projects with the university. Partners also noted the benefits of collaboration extended to other relationships as well. Particularly outside of the United States, affiliation with a prestigious American university was able to open doors to new contacts in society and to human capital not otherwise accessible. For example, our teams have gained access across the globe to multinational corporation executives, high-level government officials, bishops, imams, and community leaders. One team secured a critical meeting with the national Minister of Health in a matter of days, whereas the partner had been trying to get an audience for months (Project 16). Partners cited these opportunities as one of the benefits of such a collaboration.

Our partners also cited professional staff development as another benefit of working with the SL team. Specifically, partners in the NGO sector noted that they do not often interact with the business community. Many held negative preconceptions of business based on stereotypes and biases. Partners commented that simply working with business students resulted in a shift in mind-set and an openness to considering a wider range of future collaborations. When such tentative collaborations between NGO partners and businesses did occur, our partners found that working with graduate business students eased the transition.

Partner–student teams also benefited from the skills exchanged organically as they spent time together. Partners cited the value of exposure to the students’ technical knowledge of business principles (such as supply-chain management, designed thinking, and marketing) as professional development for their staff. For example, one NGO staff member stated, “No one had ever explained compound interest rates

and other business basics to me, and frankly, that’s not what I studied in grad school. Members of this team took the time to share their business expertise. I feel I can run my programs better because of it” (Field Notes, Project 18). Similarly, students realized the limitations of their theories when applied in complex environments. Working together, the joint teams were able to develop a common language and mutual understanding that laid the foundation for collaboration.

Our partners remarked that programming initiatives received a jump start by accessing hard-working and dedicated human capital. Nevertheless, our partners suggested that simply speeding up existing activities was insufficient to constitute direct value creation. However, the value of accelerating activities was still notable. For instance, we assisted in the implementation of a survey for a partner trying to understand the types of ventures young entrepreneurs wish to pursue (Project 17). This project was funded and ongoing, and our SL team simply accelerated the activities. According to our partners, this constituted indirect, not direct, value. Partners stated that working with SL teams enabled them to identify potential skill gaps and, in some cases, even identify individuals who might be able to fill them. On several occasions, students secured full-time employment with the partner organization after graduation (Projects 11, 15). This suggests SL projects can be part of a larger recruitment-and-selection initiative for partners.

Assessing indirect and direct value. In the section above, we add to the small number of studies that focus on partner outcomes (Crabtree, 2008; D’Arlach et al., 2009; Dorado & Giles, 2004) by mining our archival data post-project to identify indirect

and direct value. It is notable that nearly every partner mentioned that they derived some indirect value from interacting with the students and the university. However, not all the projects that created indirect value also produced direct value. Further, we found no incidences where partners experienced direct value and did not experience indirect value as well. This suggests that indirect value is necessary, but not sufficient to produce direct value. Although we cannot empirically test the relationship between direct and indirect value given the limitations of our archival data, we proceed with the assumption that indirect value is necessary but insufficient for direct value, and that direct value is the desired outcome.

Predicting Value

Given the assumptions stated above, this section now focuses on identifying the features of SL projects that increased the likelihood of both direct and indirect value creation. Our data suggests that there are three underlying mechanisms that lead to value creation: partner readiness, certain features of the project design, and project execution. We detail these findings below and summarize them in Table 3. We then discuss the way these dimensions interact to produce direct and indirect value.

Partner readiness. Partner readiness was important to the production of direct value. This is not an assessment of the partners' general capacity, but rather both the capacity to absorb the team and workload associated with co-producing the SL project and the resources necessary to implement new recommendations. The dimensions of partner readiness that emerged include the partner priorities, the organization's human and knowledge capital, and the operating environment.

Projects that created direct value for partners were prioritized at the executive and the local levels. This often meant that projects had passionate internal champions. At the local level, those instrumental individuals facilitated co-production by creating the conditions for the collaboration and serving as lynchpins for the integration of the student and partner team members. We found that buy-in was produced when the idea for the project came from country-level staff members, who had been pondering the issue but lacked time and resources to launch a more formal examination of the idea (e.g., Project 5). Further, buy-in increased when the project was focused on solving a day-to-day problem experienced by local staff (e.g., Project 28). For example, in one project, our partners called a meeting on child

protection, and every important figure in the local and provincial system attended, from the governor's deputy to the city mayor and the local clergy of the Catholic Church (Field Notes, Project 3).

However, local buy-in was not enough for readiness. The alignment of local and headquarter priorities played a significant role in determining how value was created. When the local and the executive priorities were not aligned, projects that seemed to have enormous potential failed to proceed, even after seemingly effective work in the field. For example, one project investigated the unmet need for capital investment and financing for new small-scale enterprises (Project 15). Although our team uncovered an underserved section of the market, which the country program was excited to target, the micro-finance sector did not align with the international NGO's strategic priorities.

Our findings illustrate the importance of identifying and capitalizing on existing partner resources and capabilities. A good deal of the service-learning research focuses on the skills students brought to the partnership (see Kolenko et al., 1996). Our findings support the work of D'Arlach and colleagues (2009), which underlines the importance of ensuring that community partners also have skills, knowledge, and relationships that are necessary for implementation of project recommendations. Projects that provided direct value often took full advantage of the joint team's human capital, which includes the knowledge, habits, and personality of the SL team (Becker, 1993), as well as the cultural, social, economic, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) held by the in-country individuals involved in the project. In contrast, projects that failed to produce direct value tended to focus on areas in which the country, the partner, and the students lacked deep levels of expertise. This skill and knowledge gap is apparent in one project where the team explored ways to strengthen local healthcare systems (Project 16). Unfortunately, many gaps in capacity derailed this project. The country lacked basic healthcare infrastructure: It had very few doctors for the entire national population of over 6 million people. The partner organization similarly lacked healthcare expertise and relationships with local health providers, and the student team included no medical professionals. Feedback from this partner suggests that for the project to be successful, our team should have brought a greater wealth of public health knowledge.

Our work also extends the concept of partner readiness to include the ability to assess and respond

TABLE 3
Example of Coding of Archival Project Materials

Construct	Subdimension	Third Order	Axial Code	In-Vivo
Partner Readiness	Partner Priorities	Executive Level	Executive Support	<p>"We wish to thank our student team. Their research into child sex trafficking made our strategic priority of fighting this tragedy a reality." Global humanitarian NGO executive director, Project ID 3</p> <p>"Once the Country Director departed, no one else took disaster preparedness seriously." Student reflection, Project ID 2 "Cross sector engagement will NOT extend to mining companies." International humanitarian NGO's president, Project ID 14</p> <p>"Our local team had not the time to assess the amaranth opportunity, so we were happy the team came to help." Post-project review interview with local partner staff, Project ID 11</p> <p>"HQ just told us the team was coming. We had no say in the matter." Post-project review interview with local partner staff, Year 5 Rwanda</p> <p>"We do humanitarian work. I am not certain how HQ folks will react to proposals to work with business." Interview with local NGO leader, field notes, Project ID 23</p>
		Local Level	Local Support	<p>"Walk in the footsteps of the <i>campesinos</i> . . ." Advice from our partner, local Bishop, who opened all doors across the region for our team. Field notes, Project ID 21</p>
		Local Relationship	Village Contacts	<p>"Our partner did not even know that their major local partner was undergoing a major reorganization." Project ID 22</p>
Operational Environment	Human and Knowledge Capital	Technical Knowledge	<p>Strong Technical Expertise</p> <p>Weak Technical Expertise</p>	<p>The partner has spent nearly 50 years developing child protection labor and trafficking based on that expertise." Field notes, Project ID 3</p> <p>"It became clear very quickly that neither our partner nor the state had the requisite healthcare expertise to pull off this project. Our partner did not want to hear that." Field notes, Project ID 16</p>
		Movement	Ability To Move Freely	<p>"Before, we would have done this project. However, now given the Arab Spring, we can no longer guarantee our staff's safety." Interview with Regional Director of International Humanitarian NGO, in Year 4 review, Project ID 20.</p>
			Controlled environment	<p>"We implemented the recommendations, only to see those middlemen we displaced by investing in coop transportation and infrastructure come back and threaten the farmers we were trying to help. The middlemen had the guns." Interview with International Humanitarian NGO President, in Year 4 review, Project ID 26, 27</p>
		Openness	Willingness To Share	<p>The partner shared all of their contacts with our team. Indeed, when they called a meeting on child protection, everyone from the governor's deputy, to the mayor, to the Catholic Church showed up. Field notes, Project ID 3</p>
			Guarded Population	<p>Even the managers of a highly profitable juice production cooperative were reluctant to take a loan for expansion. They were unwilling to make their business vulnerable to a lender who may be of a different tribe (e.g., Hutu vs. Tutsi). Field notes, Project ID 23</p>

**TABLE 3
(Continued)**

Construct	Subdimension	Third Order	Axial Code	In-Vivo
Project Design	Project Timing	Opportunity Assessment	Pet Project	<p>“This is priority for me – if possible, we would like to help informal trash workers build sustainable businesses.” Communication with NGO leader regarding project scope of work, Project ID 5</p>
			Risky Idea	<p>“As a matter of risk mitigation, our NGO does not normally introduce new crops given market and survival risk of the poorest of the poor. The student team’s research enabled us to understand the potential economic viability of amaranth and incorporate it into an ongoing grant.” Field notes, Project ID 11</p>
			Wide Open Space	<p>Unemployment was incredibly high, despite high education levels. Locals could not obtain work visas, and thus, we need to think through ways to create more local jobs. No local business school existed. The team worked with our local partner to develop a business incubator concept on the ground floors of the low cost, social housing it was building for returning refugees. Ultimately the recommendations centered around an exchange to match foreign direct investment with start-up owners, mentors to help entrepreneurs navigate red tape and advice on general business problems, and basic courses on accounting, marketing, supply chain, and business ethics. Field notes, Project ID 30</p>
		Monitoring And Evaluation	Potentially Launching A New Program	<p>The team proposed that the international development organization bridge the distance between rural farming communities and potential supermarket purchasers in the capital city by applying for a specific international aid grant to purchase refrigerated trucks and mobile cold-storage facilities. Cold storage at centralized points between farms in the outlying districts and transport routes into the capital city would reduce produce spoilage after harvest, while also enabling retailer more efficient pick-up and distribution routes to further increase supplies and decrease cost. Deliverables, Project ID 4</p>
			Natural Breaking Point	<p>“We might have invested millions of dollars in this new micro-finance initiative, had not the student team’s evaluation discovered so many problems.” Interview with NGO President, Years 5-8 evaluation, Project ID 18, 19</p>
		Ineffective Timing	Not In Established Budget	<p>“Our team’s frustration increased as staff explained to us that in the middle of grant funded program, their degrees of freedom to make changes were limited by donor prescriptions.” Field notes, Project ID 17</p>
			Not In Workable Timeline	<p>“The project was superimposed in the middle of an ongoing internal program. It was never going to work. The timing was off. However, the students were very hard working, polite and dedicated. We enjoyed their visit.” Interview with local partner, Year 4 review, Project ID 22</p>
	Skills	Multidisciplinary	Among Students	<p>After significant in-country research, the law student team member found that the generation and distribution of power in the country requires regulatory approval. Our partner had been operating for some time, generating, distributing and selling electricity in the country without a legal license. Therefore, a viable transition from Phase I to Phase II of the project would rely on four factors: substantial funding beyond the original grant, strategic site selection to reduce installation costs and improve pricing, improvements in technology to meet well-defined technical needs and regulatory approvals. Deliverables, Project ID 8</p>

TABLE 3
(Continued)

Construct	Subdimension	Third Order	Axial Code	In-Vivo
	Between Students And Partners			The forensic accountant/MBA student on the team discovered \$40,000 embezzled from the cooperative unbeknownst to our local partner. Deliverables, Project ID 18
	Supply Chain	Specific Skill Gap		Given the team's research into every step from growing bananas to transporting them to markets, and even our banana plantation inspections, in the end, bananas produced in the Zacapa highlands were not an economically viable option. The mountainous geography meant that all agricultural products from the small plots of land, including bananas, needed to be carried on the farmer's backs down the steep hillside paths. The transportation would badly damage bananas. The costs added up would be higher than the prices for bananas in local and regional markets. Field notes, Project ID 21
			Relationships	"If it were not for the prestige and relationships of the university, we would never have gotten the meeting with the head of the Muslim Brotherhood." Interview with Regional Director of International Humanitarian NGO, Year 4 review, Project ID 20
			Marketing	"Our local partner, had already organized farmer cooperatives within three different districts close to the capital. These farmer groups could more produce than was needed to cover supermarket needs, yet this mutually beneficial connection between the private sector investor and NGO had not been made. Our team developed the marketing and pricing approach and even kick-started the negotiations between the NGO and the local supermarkets." Deliverables, Project ID 4
Project Execution	Co-Production	Consistency	Accessibility	"This partner works like clockwork. Every Wednesday, they are on the call working through problems with our team. They comment on all materials, including the white paper, before it goes to their senior executives. I feel that we are in this together." Predeparture notes, Project ID 3
			Non-Accessible	"I cannot count how many times our partner's leaders missed out weekly phone calls." Student reflection, Project ID 1
				"Our partner was stretch too thin and could not spare staff to work with us on our project." Field notes, Project ID 10
			New Shared Experience	"Sameer was a terrific driver and partner for our team in the Middle East. From him, I learned that the war will always be with me." Student thank you note describing his deployments to Iraq as a Marine, Project ID 28
		Immersion		"As part of their time in country, the joint team of students and NGO staff not only participated in the NGO's courses which taught women to cook nutritious food on a gas stove, they also spent two days in a rural village talking, cooking, playing with families. They observed that while the omelets made over a gas stove in class were tasty, when participants tried to cook on their fire stoves at home, the omelets burned quickly. Afterwards, women would not attempt to cook the healthier meals from class again. The NGO staff had never stayed with their beneficiaries in the field overnight." Field notes, Project ID 13

TABLE 3
(Continued)

Construct	Subdimension	Third Order	Axial Code	In-Vivo
			Getting Past Formalities	<p>“When we first arrived, the entire family was dressed up in their Sunday best, but fast forward 48 hours and the kids are running around naked and the women are complaining about their husbands.” Field notes, Project ID 13</p> <p>“One suggestion for next year would be that teams perhaps share a meal or two with our partner hosts. We never really got to see them on our visit. They would just pick us up/drop us off at our guest house.” Student reflection, Project ID 23</p> <p>“We drove around half of Mindanao, but our partners never came to visit the coffee plantations with us.” Field notes, Project ID 25</p> <p>The team discovered material and design defects in local water pumps. Although senior executives of a multi-national corporation (MNC) with an infrastructure business unit found the team’s business case compelling for R&D investment, the partner determined that collaboration with this MNC would conflict with its longstanding faith-based mission. Undaunted, the team then developed a plan for the formation of women’s water committees to overcome the tragedy of the commons by conducting maintenance and repairs on existing water pumps in the region. Deliverables, Project ID 24</p> <p>“In order to address the team’s detailed questions, the Coop’s General Manager confessed that the coop was running out of cash, and thus, on the verge of bankruptcy. The coop was paying off one loan with another; it did not have the funds to advance to farmers to buy fertilizer for the next year’s coffee crop. The team went to work to develop ways to monetize the coop’s assets to stave off bankruptcy.” Deliverables, Project ID 21</p> <p>“The team discovered after a few days they were able to get much better insights by interviewing the village men and women separately (with interviewers of the same gender). There were significant gender disparities, as the men did little more than drink every day, but expected water when they came home and would subject their wives to violent outbursts if it was not ready for them. The wives, meanwhile, were enterprising as the main income earners for the family, while also providing food and water for their families, often walking miles both ways to do so.” Field notes, Project ID 24</p> <p>“An unexpected visit to a small gold mine showed the team that, despite our partner’s protests, mining was here to stay. The gold was too close to the surface. Everyone, even children, was mining it. As a consequence, our project focus shifted to working with civic organizations to use their influence to enhance mining safety standards and adherence to basic environmental regulations.” Field notes, Project ID 19</p>
		Closeness	All One Team	
			Us-Vs Them	
	Adaptation	Change In Scope Of Project	Recognize New Information/Constraints	
			Identify Hidden Problem	
		Change In Planned Itinerary	Divide And Conquer	
			Unplanned Stops	

to the local context and national environment. Our data suggests that projects failed to create direct value when our partner's assessment of environmental stability was inaccurate. In these cases, instability created barriers to data collection, limited access to critical populations, and prevented successful project completion. Instances of these environmental circumstances included a military coup (Project 20), election violence (Project 27), and faulty knowledge about local partners vital to the SL project (Project 18). In all these cases, partners were unable to implement recommendations in part because they misdiagnosed the operational environment.

Project design. Our data reveals that projects that produced direct value have several design features in common. Such projects occurred during predictable stages of the project life cycle. Further, our data shows that successful projects capitalized on a precise, and narrowly defined, set of student capabilities. Under some circumstances, the perceived independence provided by the student team served as a useful tool for partners seeking information that they had difficulty accessing.

One feature of projects that produced direct value was the timing, either at the beginning or at the end of the partner program life cycle. These projects focused on assessing new opportunities at the beginning of a new program or on measurement and evaluation at the end of the program. Projects focused on new opportunity assessment added direct value when they incorporated elements outside the range of the partner's standard operations. Sometimes joint partner–student teams were able to approach the context with an open mind, thereby identifying opportunities that would not have been recognizable to partners or student teams working alone. Other times, the partner had an idea of the opportunity, but lacked the time or skills to independently, and accurately, assess its viability. For example, one SL team investigated the potential of amaranth as an alternative for traditional cash crops, such as coffee and cacao. Amaranth has the benefit of high cash value and drought resilience, while simultaneously having high nutritional value (Project 11). The collaboration with our student team allowed the partner to investigate the economic viability of amaranth and eventually incorporate it into an ongoing grant. This opportunity assessment project constitutes direct value by testing a risky proposition with minimal outlay of partner resources. One contrasting example of this value is a project that prevented investment in an initiative. Our partner stated, “We might have invested millions of dollars

in this new micro-finance initiative, had not the student team's evaluation discovered so many problems” (Interview with NGO President, Years 5–8 Evaluation, Projects 18, 19).

At the other end of the project life cycle, collaborations that focused on measurement and evaluation were also likely to create direct value. Such projects highlighted problems with existing program design and execution, assisted partner organizations in making needed changes, or served as an audit of successful projects to generate donor or marketing materials. For example, two projects (Projects 7 and 8) evaluated the sustainability of a solar technology solution as part of a rural electrification program. The partner managed to secure several million dollars of next-stage funding, in part due to our joint team's assessment of the program and recommendations for improvement. In another example with opposite results, our joint team uncovered a lack of sustainability in one partner's agricultural assistance programs (Project 18). Based on the discovery of flaws in project planning and ongoing financial mismanagement, the partner gradually discontinued some agricultural programs and institutionalized an internal staff-training program on market economics, value chains, and price fluctuations to improve future planning (Project 18). Thus, even “negative” findings from SL projects resulted in the creation of direct value when they were incorporated into future partner programming. The success of some early- and late-stage life-cycle projects contrasts with the challenges associated with projects that occurred midstream during later programs. At times, recommendations arrived too late to be incorporated within ongoing operations, given donor and other constraints. This was the case for our recommendations for water and sanitation procedures for returning refugees (Project 24), opportunities for unemployed youth (Project 17), and electricity infrastructure (Project 28). In each of these cases, joint teams learned that many of the decisions that could have influenced the trajectory of the project had already been made.

Our analysis notes that direct value was realized when projects were designed to take advantage of the perceived independence of student teams from the partner organization. As outsiders, students were able to access information that was either logistically or politically inaccessible to partners. For example, student groups served as a legitimate opportunity for partners to observe their subcontractors' activities. For example, our team uncovered the embezzlement of tens of thousands of dollars that escaped the notice

of our partner (Project 18). Alternatively, students can investigate issues that the partner is unable to address due to political reasons. For instance, our project team assessed the impact of illegal wildcat mining for a partner whose governing body is publicly constrained by its rigid political stance on all extractive industries (Project 19). The information gathered by students served as the basis for an action plan to serve the rural mining communities more effectively without alienating the partner's key stakeholders.

Rapid project evolution on the ground made effective project design difficult. One team conducted an analysis of the local electricity infrastructure (Project 28). When they presented their early findings, the staff of the international NGO asked whether the team could expand its scope and develop tools for a potential community-level training and engagement program. Eager to serve their new partner, the team immediately agreed. Unfortunately, the team had limited experience with adult learning, creating learning objectives, and developing the necessary teaching tools. As a result, this project failed to contribute to the desired expansion of the partner's outreach programs.

Project execution. Projects that produced direct value for partners varied across their execution. Teams that successfully produced direct value were able to adapt to the changing environment and shift gears when necessary. Digging deeper into these occurrences, we found three common themes: First, they engaged in true co-production with their partners, forming cross-disciplinary teams; second, they adapted dynamically to changing circumstances; and third, they had a chance for deep immersion during field work.

Co-production occurs when the students and the partner organization staff come together as a single team to work toward project outcomes. This produces reciprocity (Heffernan & Cone, 2001) by structurally acknowledging that neither the students nor the partner's staff have all the expertise required to be successful (D'Arlach et al., 2009; Dorado & Giles, 2004). We found that co-production occurred when partner staff did not simply manage project scope and logistics, but rather fully participated as team members: traveling, problem solving, interviewing, even sharing meals, and engaging in new immersive activities. We found that this type of co-production produced an internal champion to propel the recommendations. For example, one project's original scope focused on investigating the economics of banana production for the farmer

members of a coffee cooperative (Project 21). However, the close working relationship between the cooperative managers and the students revealed a larger problem: The coffee cooperative was on the verge of bankruptcy. Having uncovered this problem, the students and cooperative managers worked together to develop ways to monetize the cooperative's existing assets quickly and generate incremental revenue, which was the original and hidden motivation behind the focus on producing and selling bananas. Had the team not been composed of both students and cooperative managers, they would have never addressed the underlying partner needs.

Successful teams were able to adjust to the changing conditions in the field. Our teams inevitably encountered unexpected constraints, interview and meeting cancellations, logistics difficulties, illness, and many other challenges. The teams that created direct value for partners were able to pivot quickly based on the evolving nature of the project scope, changes in travel itineraries, or modifications in partner staff and priorities. To illustrate, our team working on a water and sanitation project discovered after a few days in the field that they should divide and conquer when conducting water and sanitation meetings: The female teammates took the village wives aside, further from the main scheduled meeting with village elders, to gather more insight in the challenges presented by the water pumps. When our partner determined that our proposed collaboration with a large multinational corporation to fix defects in local water pumps would conflict with its faith-based mission, this same team, undaunted, went on to form village women's water committees to conduct maintenance and repairs on existing water pumps in the region (Project 24).

Many projects that delivered direct value for partners involved not only co-production, but also immersion where students and local partner staff work side-by-side in the field: traveling, interviewing, shopping, mapping agricultural supply chains, and even working the fields (Projects 4, 12). Immersion occurs when students and partners work and live alongside potential beneficiaries. This proved important for both the students and partners, who are often either expatriates or locals who live relatively affluent and urban lives. One program manager reported that she had never spent a night in a village in her home country (Project 12), and another commented that he had never had the opportunity to plant rice, despite working on many agriculture projects (Project 4). Immersion encourages

introspection by forcing participants to work through discomfort associated with culture shock (Crabtree, 2008) and allows meaningful relationships to form between team members and beneficiaries (Crabtree, 2008; Boland, 2008; D'Arlach et al., 2009).

Teams working alongside locals, rather than simply observing or interviewing them, were able to more accurately validate their assumptions, recognize patterns, and reduce the bias in gathering their information. For example, the joint SL team studying the causes of children's malnutrition conducted interviews with local experts who indicated that vulnerable families grew and purchased nutritious food, were aware of best practices associated with hygiene, and were able to prepare nutritious meals (Project 13). Yet malnutrition rates were not improving in the country. When the joint team of partner staff and students shopped, cooked, and ate meals with families in villages, they observed the reason: For a meal of soup villagers consumed rice and broth but none of the soup's meat and vegetables. Due to the unique cultural history, families continued to fill themselves with rice, even though their children's growth was stunted, while feeding the vegetables and protein to their livestock. These insights enable the team to develop recommendations that diverge from and ultimately improve the partner's nutrition programming. Similarly, returning to the coffee and banana cooperative (Project 21), augmenting coffee revenue by selling bananas seemed a promising solution, until our team experienced the arduous challenge of carrying bunches of bananas up and down steep rocky hills, as demanded by the local geography. After carrying the banana loads, the team more realistically calculated the banana volume available for sale in regional markets and discovered that the proposed cooperative expansion into large-scale banana production, which looked promising in theory, proved untenable in practice.

In our analyses, we specifically differentiate immersive from observational data-collection activities. All teams spent 2 weeks in country and conducted extensive interviews with subject-matter experts. While these activities were necessary to begin to understand the problem at hand, they were often inadequate to generate the novel insight that added direct value. To illustrate, in a single year, two teams (Projects 26 and 27) served a single partner in two countries to generate comparative data regarding post-conflict agricultural market creation. Although both teams conducted multiple interviews with subject-matter experts to explore agricultural

supply chains, these interviews were more observational than immersive. The teams' recommendations on ways to shorten the supply chain and to foster more transparency in markets certainly made financial sense: The international NGO invested in many of the teams' ideas on storage and transportation. Yet given the more removed nature of the data gathering, both teams entirely missed the social and political realities in the rural villages. It turned out that the new investments in transportation assets directly threatened the interests of powerful and well-armed intermediaries in these rural areas who had been providing transportation at exorbitant prices. As farmers began to utilize the new storage and transport assets, these activities eroded the middlemen's profits. The subsequent formal evaluation of this service-learning course in Year 4 revealed that the recommendations were implemented, but ultimately abandoned, as farmers feared violent retaliation. This example illustrates the dangers of the superficial data gathering without field immersion. In this case, neither of these two teams of students and their NGO staff partners were able to anticipate the violent local backlash to their recommendations, which would have likely been discussed had the teams been more deeply embedded in the local communities.

Relationship Between Partner Readiness, Project Design, and Project Execution

One question that emerges from our study is the potential interrelationship between partner readiness, project, and project execution. However, the data on these relationships does not provide a clear picture of the relative importance of each dimension or the most effective combination of dimensions. For example, we found that most of the time when direct value was created, all three dimensions are present. In fact, of the 14 cases that produced direct value for partners, 12, or approximately 86%, had all three dimensions present. To complicate matters further, the two outliers vary in the dimension that is missing: One had poor project execution and the other had poor project design. In both cases the combination of the other two dimensions are, quite surprisingly, able to compensate for the absence of the third. We were unable to find dimensions that explained this variance, including the location, the type of partner (Dorado & Giles, 2004), and the experience of the faculty advisor. What the two outliers do have in common is that they were both incredibly important for the program. The first was one of the initial

TABLE 4
Cross-Case Comparison

	Dimensions			Value	
	Partner Readiness	Project Design	Project Execution	Indirect	Direct
1	0	1	0	0	0
9	0	1	1	0	0
16	0	0	1	0	0
29	0	0	0	0	0
22	0	0	0	1	0
2	0	1	1	1	0
14	0	1	1	1	0
20	0	1	1	1	0
24	0	1	1	1	0
26	0	1	1	1	0
27	0	1	1	1	0
12	1	0	1	1	0
17	1	0	1	1	0
23	1	0	0	1	0
25	1	1	0	1	0
28	1	1	0	1	0
30	0	0	1	1	1
10	0	1	0	1	1
3	1	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1
8	1	1	1	1	1
11	1	1	1	1	1
13	1	1	1	1	1
15	1	1	1	1	1
18	1	1	1	1	1
19	1	1	1	1	1
21	1	1	1	1	1

projects, and the second was the first time we expanded beyond our initial partner. As a result, these projects may have had a slightly higher level of “hands-on management” by the instructional faculty, or the perceptions of value may have been biased by partners hoping to develop a sustained relationship with the program. However, we have had 23 project teams that serve either a new client or a new country program, and there seems to be no pattern among the type of value created across that variable. Thus, our findings suggest that in most cases, all three dimensions are critical for direct value.

We conducted a similar analysis regarding the creation of indirect value, where direct value is absent. Twelve projects fit this description. There is a single case where none of the three dimensions are present and indirect value is still generated. In six cases, indirect value is a product of project design and execution. In two cases, projects produce indirect value through partner readiness and project

execution, despite poor project design. In two other cases, indirect value is produced through partner readiness and project design, despite poor project execution. Finally, in one case, partner readiness alone produces indirect value. As you can see, it remains difficult to interpret the patterns in the data.

Our data also provides insight as to the relationship between dimensions, direct value, and indirect value. Our overall pattern of results suggests that direct value is produced when all three of the dimensions are present, and indirect value is produced when two of the dimensions are present. We have no evidence of partners deriving direct value without the simultaneous production of indirect value. In other words, indirect value seems necessary, but not sufficient to produce direct value. Given this observation, we assert that SL programs should seek to generate direct value for partners and that effective promotion of direct value will also simultaneously produce indirect value. We found three exceptions

to this pattern, where value is created without meeting the underlying criteria. We attribute these to luck. We found no instances where the dimensions are present, and value is not created.

DISCUSSION

Our purpose here was to extend research on SL benefits beyond those that accrue to students (Crabtree, 2008; Culross, 2010; Pompa, 2002); universities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; Saltmarsh et al., 2009); and society (Boland, 2008; Saltmarsh et al., 2009). We believe this work makes several theoretical and practical contributions. In our model, the partners sit at the center of our inquiry. This allows us to zone in on the types of value created by SL projects. This explicit focus on partner value provides a distinct lens into the expectations and aspirations of partners. From our perspective, the partner is the critical element of any SL initiative for several reasons: First, without delivering partner value, these courses simply provide a vehicle for students to engage in experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). SL courses are likely to be unsustainable if partners do not truly benefit from them (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; Kolenko et al., 1996). Moreover, failure to deliver partner value has implications for the attainment of student learning. Without delivering partner value, students may exit SL courses with a false sense of superiority (DiPadova-Stocks, 2005) and a diminished grasp of the magnitude of societal challenges (Kenworthy-U'Ren & Peterson, 2005).

To date, only a small number of studies address the creation of partner value (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Our manuscript speaks directly to this gap. Our annual and periodic course follow-up interviews with partners provide data that is positioned to consider what types of value partners derive from working with student teams. Our findings support Kolenko and colleagues' (1996) observation that partners capture value multiple ways. Some, which we refer to as *direct value*, reflect the specific outcomes associated with the project deliverables and the degree to which they shape partner activities beyond the specific engagement. Further, direct value accrues to partners when the work provided by a SL team results in recommendations that are implemented after the specific project is completed in a way that the partner would not have realized had they been working alone. Others, which we refer to as *indirect value*, reflect benefits to the partner that are not

specifically associated with the work of the project itself nor anticipated by the partner, but rather accrue from the interactions with the students and the university community. This finding aligns with the scholarship on SL reciprocity (Fleck et al., 2015; Heffernan & Cone, 2001; Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; Kolenko et al., 1996; Saltmarsh et al., 2009) where "good" is generated not "for the public" but "with the public" (Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Both students and partner staff bring their unique knowledge and skills that combine synergistically to generate a novel product (Godfrey et al., 2005). Kolenko and colleagues suggest that applying student skills is at the heart of service learning (1996). Our partners agree and suggest that the unique contribution of student skills, in fact, is one of the key differentiators between direct and indirect value.

Our research supports and extends research on the importance of reciprocity in SL collaborations (e.g., D'Arlach et al., 2009). Our data shows that several specific activities, such as immersion and co-production, are essential to reciprocity. As one local bishop notably advised us, "we must together walk in the footsteps of the *campesinos*" to truly understand one another. Our partners point specifically to immersive activities, homestays, and a focus on depth of relationships rather than covering maximum ground as providing the foundations for a truly reciprocal relationship that enables the production of value.

Although there is little existing research directly focused on the performance of service-learning teams and their impact on partners, our findings align with the rich literature on teams, including product-development teams and cross-functional teams (Denison, Hart, & Kahn, 1996; Ancona, 1990; Hackman, 1987; Katz, 1982; Katz & Allen, 1985). Our findings fit clearly within Denison and colleagues' three-stage model for cross-functional teams (Denison, Hart, & Kahn, 1996). They suggest that effective teams pay attention to features of their context, process, and outcomes. In our model, context is reflected in our focus on international projects in post-conflict environments and our emergent dimension of partner readiness. These are characteristics that are "external to the team yet internal to the organization" (Denison, Hart, & Kahn, 1996: 1006–1007). It is notable that some features of the context did not emerge as factors that predicted value creation, such as the size of the NGO, region, language, or the experience of the faculty advisor. Rather, we found that the partner's ability to absorb

and utilize the project team and the degree to which the partner prioritizes the collaborative work are salient contextual features.

Furthermore, our findings regarding project design and execution relate to team process. They reinforce key features of team process already present in the literature, including the importance of norms and creativity (Denison et al., 1996). We show that teams that can pivot through adaptation and build strong working norms through co-production and immersion are able to transcend the challenges of functioning in diverse work teams and translate that diversity into value creation (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Finally, we align the work on service learning with the research on teams through our emphasis on outcomes, which, as noted above, has largely been underspecified.

Our data produced several observations that did not conform to the existing theoretical expectations that derive from the extant literature. First, our findings were in contrast to theory regarding the optimal size of a partner organization. Crabtree (2008) recommends that international SL courses seek out smaller NGOs as partners, as they allow students to connect more meaningfully to communities. We examined archival data with respect to the postproject evaluations conducted by smaller partner organizations to attempt to observe variation. What we discovered is that there are differences between partners, but that these are unrelated to their size. Additionally, we expected to see a relationship between project type and success. We expected our graduate business students to be better at doing one or two types of activities (i.e., value-chain analysis in agriculture, cooperative business plan development), as they would capitalize on the unique knowledge that the student teams bring to the reciprocal project. However, when we compared project success across a wide variety of topics—from agriculture to health systems to human trafficking projects—we were unable to see systematic variation along this dimension of project type.

We expected to find that our attempts to create direct value were substantially more successful in the later years of the SL program and that this improvement would be a function of our increased experience, creating a learning effect (Dorado & Giles, 2004). Indeed, during the first 4 years of conducting this course, only four of the 12 projects delivered direct value to partners. Over the subsequent 4 years, 14 of 18 created direct value. One could make the argument that these failure-and-success rates are the result of the natural development of our SL program

over time: As the coauthors and co-instructors became better equipped to run this SL program, direct value delivery to partners improved as we improved. However, the data does not reveal such an underlying pattern. Although it is true that our project success rate improves in the later years, the data suggests that this was largely due to improvements in assessing partner readiness, negotiating project design, and executing projects, rather than in either our longer term relationships with partners or our own human capital. In fact, it was in those later years that we diversified our partnerships. For example, in Year 7, two of our five projects were unsuccessful in producing direct value for partners, as we were unable to engage in true co-production. Those partners were largely engaged with the project team, instead delegating implementation to subcontractors. Another example comes from comparing the projects in which the course co-instructors are also the team advisors in the projects where teams have more novice advisors. We found that projects in which more experienced course co-instructors act in the role of faculty advisor are no more successful than those that are supported by advisors with less experience.

This observation—that practice does not seem to make perfect—contributes to the generalizability of our findings to other SL contexts. Our data reveals that long-term embedded university–partner relationships are neither necessary nor sufficient for success. Thus, if the best predictors of direct value creation for partners are not a product of history, but rather of partner readiness for the project, and the design and execution of the project itself, these dimensions are more likely to drive outcomes.

Future Research

We suggest that there are several specific avenues for service-learning scholars to pursue to build upon our findings and engage with the broader literature. First, we suggest that our research brings up questions as to the types of partners that facilitate effective service-learning initiatives. Dorado and Giles (2004) highlight the diversity in the types of service-learning partnerships, outlining a continuum of the commitment to partnerships that range from tentative through aligned, to committed, with a connection between the age of the partnership and the level of commitment. They argue for the value of long-term embedded partnerships between the university and a given organization. We were able to test that proposition, as approximately half of our projects fit

that description, with the other half being one time only or early-stage collaborations. We found that in the first 4 years, when we were exclusively serving a major university partner, we had no greater levels of partner readiness than in the last 4 years, where our partnerships were more diverse. At times, projects with embedded partner–university relationships have lower levels of partner readiness, and tentative relationships can create partner value even when they do not progress into more formalized relationships. This may be due to the importance of organizational factors such as mobility and hierarchy that can derail aligned or committed partnerships, or to the reality that commitment at the executive level does not always trickle down to the local co-producing team. Theories of service learning could benefit from further empirical investigation regarding the factors, institutional (Dorado & Giles, 2004) and others, that influence both student and partner value.

Second, our research highlights a critical issue regarding the level of analysis at which value is realized. Extant research in SL has largely looked at the value derived to the recipients of service rather than the value to the organizations that provide those services. For example, D'Arlach and colleagues (2009) explore the reciprocal value produced from a program that paired Spanish-speaking Latino immigrants and English-speaking university students to teach each other their native language and culture. Their findings report important benefits to the students and the immigrant participants, but did not focus on the impact on *Intercambio*, the NGO partner facilitating the exchange. It remains an open empirical question as to whether the value derived by service-learning courses should measure impact at either or both levels.

Finally, our research speaks to the theorized trade-offs that may manifest in SL initiatives. Kolenko and colleagues (1996) note the challenges of managing multilevel partnerships and suggest that “conflicts between providers of services, recipients, and students need to be minimized early so as not to threaten student learning objectives or community relationships,” (p. 134). However, our findings suggest that elements such as partner’s lack of readiness do not necessarily impede student learning. In fact, aligned with research on group conflict (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999), we have some anecdotal evidence from our cases to suggest that certain types of task conflict between partners and project teams can even enhance partner value. Future research might explore the nature and timing of conflict in service-learning projects and the consequences for both student and partner outcomes.

Limitations and Boundary Conditions

As with all research, our study has limitations that are important to note. Our data comes from a single SL course. As a result, there are commonalities among the context and process that are underspecified in our model that are likely to contribute to the project outcomes. For example, we used the same strategies to select each of the projects. We chose projects that were located in contexts that were either rebuilding from war or subject to ongoing low levels of conflict in resource-constrained environments, thereby increasing the likelihood that the countries would have at least some common features (post-colonial, weak civil society, high rates of poverty and unemployment). We used a common procedure to interview students and place them on teams to maximize their diversity and effectiveness. It is possible that these inherent commonalities may have controlled some of the exogenous variables that would inherently vary across service-learning courses. We believe that this is mitigated somewhat due to the variation among our project locations, partners, and instructors. However, we were unable to identify features that would distinguish our SL projects from others. We hope that this initial theory-building will provide the foundation for future cross-SL course studies focused on partner value creation.

One additional limitation of our study is that our archival data does not allow us to test the relationship between the dimensions in our model. For example, true co-production through project execution, which is a manifestation of reciprocity, might predict partner readiness. Our data reveals multiple examples in which co-production is an integral feature of the collaborative project between students and partners, yet some aspects of partner readiness inhibit the partner from implementing the project’s recommendations. We believe this question of causality sets a limitation to our current study and should be the focus of future research when the scholar has some control and can create a live experiment. Further, our findings point to the partner organization as providing most of the variation across the projects. There are likely several reasons for this: First, our experience with the projects and the partners are inextricably linked. The partner organizations largely mediate the context for our student teams. As a result, many of the challenges associated with the environment (security, resource constraints, skills) are also reflected in the partner organization.

Implications for Instructors and Generalizability Across Service-Learning Initiatives

Armed with this increased detail on outcomes that partners value, we were then able to explore the contextual factors that promote partner value. Our findings regarding these contextual factors will shape the way we structure our future SL projects, and it is our hope that other instructors will derive benefit from these insights as well. Our data suggests that instructors should pay particular attention to the features of partner readiness, project design, and project execution to create the conditions for partner value creation. *Partner readiness* considers the partners' ability to accommodate and engage in reciprocity with student teams. This encompasses the partner's ability and willingness to dedicate human and social capital to the project. Our findings suggest that this engagement must occur at multiple levels in the organization. It is neither sufficient to garner support at the executive level nor at the program level. Rather, instructors should aim to build relationships and buy-in from stakeholders at multiple levels to increase chances of direct value creation.

With respect to project design, we found that the timing of the project is of importance. Instructors may benefit from prioritizing projects that occur either early in a program life cycle, when innovative ideas are investigated, or at the back end of programs, where the teams can perform the critical measurement and evaluation function. In addition, our findings support Kolenko and colleagues' (1996) emphasis on the importance of the application of student skills. Our findings regarding project design show that instructors might benefit from designing projects around a partner's specific skill gap that is particularly well-suited to the student's capacity. Our findings indicate that if the gap was not well-delineated, and if both parties to the partnership were not clear on what to bring to the engagement, the production of direct value would be more difficult. Finally, our analysis points to the importance of immersion and co-production in the execution of projects. When project teams lived and worked in communities, it hastened the development of student's cultural awareness (Crabtree, 2008), and these shared activities facilitated the development of interpersonal relationships that SL scholars argue are instrumental in driving value (D'Arlach et al., 2009; Boland, 2008).

Interestingly, some of the observations that come out of our data suggest that some features instructors attend to may not be instrumental in shaping value

creation. For example, Dorado and Giles (2004) argue for the value of long-term embedded partnerships between the university and a given organization. Approximately half our projects fit that description, with the other half being once only or early-stage collaborations. We found that in the first 4 years, when we exclusively served a major university partner, we had no greater levels of partner readiness than in the last 4 years, where our partnerships were more diverse. At times, projects with embedded partner–university relationships have lower levels of partner readiness. One reason for this may be that commitment at the executive level did not always trickle down to the local co-producing team. This is good news for instructors hoping to negotiate service-learning projects who may feel disadvantaged due to lack of institutional support. On the other hand, it provides a cautionary note to instructors who hope to develop partnerships and subsequently “press play” year after year. We found that it is important to continually assess partner readiness at the project level, independent of the embeddedness or longevity of the relationship.

Our context was a master's level course, which Godfrey and colleagues (2005) found produced greater partner value than undergraduate ones. Second, we conducted our SL projects overseas with international or local partners under conditions of post-conflict and extreme poverty. Third, our private university is well-endowed and has access to resources and donors. Fourth, our SL course design emphasized significant preparation and back-end work developing recommendations for partners with limited time for field work. For all these reasons, it may seem difficult for instructors building their own service-learning programs to gain insights from what may not seem like a mainstream SL program. However, we do believe we can derive some lessons for SL instructors from this research.

First, our research indicates that partners achieved both direct and indirect value from SL collaborations. Indeed, our SL teams and projects did not need perfect alignment of partner readiness, project design, and project execution to have a positive impact on partners. After the projects were completed, the partners told us through the evaluation process that in most cases, (26 of the 30 projects), they were able to realize some positive impact; thus, even when our SL projects “failed” to produce direct value, our SL teams contributed positively to the organization through indirect value. Instructors should conduct discussions with their partners that balance both direct and indirect impact to establish appropriate expectations.

Second, SL projects must balance all three conditions to create value for partners. Through our analysis, we found a complex relationship between partner readiness, project design, and project execution without one emerging as the most important or dominant dimension. This finding enables instructors to collaborate with less-than-perfect partners, to innovate around project design, and to change direction midstream if the situation requires it without risking the overall success of an SL project in creating value for the partner. Regrettably, our research found no “silver bullet” in building SL programs.

Third, our SL program evolved significantly over the 8 years of our study to include a wide range of partners. In some ways, our program started with what is typically considered an ideal situation (Dorado & Giles, 2004) with a single committed partner. Over time, we included service to many other partners with varying levels of commitment from tentative to aligned. Instructors who have access to committed partners should clearly take advantage of those institutional relationships. However, because our data suggests that our outcomes are no better with the committed partner than with the more tentative ones, instructors without institutional support should not fear that they face a lower chance of developing partners and projects that create value. On the opposite side, those with committed partners should not rest on their laurels, as SL projects for such partners require as much effort as those for newer, more tentative partners.

Finally, instructors may fear that this type of program is only possible in high-resource environments such as private universities with sizeable endowments and donors with strong service-learning focus and mission. However, over the last 2 years, which is outside of our sample window, the first author successfully launched this SL program design within a publicly funded institution with neither administrative support nor mission alignment. This experience certainly provides greater confidence in urging instructors to attempt this type of SL programming, given that it has not only survived, but thrived in quite dissimilar resource environments.

Service learning instructors, Carpe Diem!

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APPENDIX A

Description of Service-Learning Course

Our data comes from the SL projects conducted within a single course in the college of business at a private mid-western university. This 6-credit elective course has an average enrollment of about 24 graduate students. The majority of students are in their last semester of their MBA program, although some 3rd-year law students, masters of peace studies students, and PhD students enrolled in an internationally focused biology specialty were included as well. We based student selection on a competitive application process comprised of essays, interviews with program alumni, and consultation with professors in the MBA core courses.¹

Teams of 5–7 students and an advisor were paired with nongovernmental organizations (NGO) with humanitarian missions to examine the impact of business in post-conflict societies through the conduct of business- and peace-related projects in a variety of international contexts. Students received their project assignments in the fall semester, conducted background research over the winter break, engaged in case work and team building during a retreat before the course began, and started collaborating with their partner organizations in early

January. The course readings and class discussion supported the project work by examining the context in which each team was serving. The coursework explored business concepts, such as problem-solving and decision-making, as well as theoretical topics outside of business, such as development economics, international relations, law, and philosophy. Students spent 2 weeks in the field midsemester working alongside their partners and returned for the second half of the semester to analyze their data and codify their recommendations to partners. Each summer, course instructors conducted project follow ups with partners and selected projects and partners for the subsequent year.

Over the last 8 years, the course has conducted 30 projects that varied across several key dimensions. The first is location. We have conducted projects in 20 countries, including Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Nicaragua, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Egypt. The locations were selected in consultation with partners but shared the common feature of having experienced significant violent conflict in recent history. The course partnered with three large international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and five smaller local NGOs working in both rural and urban settings. Since partners proposed projects based on their strategic and operational priorities, significant variation existed among the projects in terms of economic sectors examined, such as agriculture, mining, and infrastructure and in terms of issues explored, such as access to capital/microfinance, healthcare, human trafficking, disaster preparedness, and entrepreneurship. Given the variation across geography, project focus, and partners, we suggest that this sample has sufficient breadth to generate insights that may inform other service-learning courses, particularly those conducted in international contexts.

This course design fits squarely under both Heffernan and Cone's (2001) and Kolenko and colleagues' (1996) definitions of SL. From the perspective of Heffernan & Cone (2001), SL involves four key elements: (1) engagement, (2) reciprocity, (3) reflection, (4) dissemination. Our course fits across those categories in the following ways: We encouraged *engagement* with the academy through the course work that focuses on interdisciplinary topics such as law, economic development, international business, ethics, and public policy. Class sessions were designed such that students took turns leading discussions. We also encouraged engagement with the country context and the specific problem they were researching. Before the students began the course, we asked them to read several books on the history of the country in which they would serve. During the first part of the semester, the first deliverable to the partner was a white paper on global best practices regarding the partner's specific problem (i.e., infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, microfinance, disaster preparedness, mining). Students were also encouraged to meet with fellow students or other community members who are from the regions in which they would be serving. They learned basic phrases in the language and

¹ The selection ratio for the course ranged from one-half to one-eighth of student applicants.

sampled regional cuisine. During the in-country portion, the students lived with families to immerse themselves in daily life and gain a firsthand understanding of the challenges associated with their project. To illustrate, during their fieldwork, students have planted rice, cooked meals, carried bananas to market, collected and processed garbage, and implemented training programs on business concepts. We further fostered student engagement by requiring them to absorb some of the administrative burden of the course, such as travel logistics and acting as the partner liaison.

Our SL program also focused on *reciprocity* by requiring the co-production of all recommendations by a joint team that consisted of students and staff from the partner organization. We began the student selection process by warning students that our SL program is not looking to “help,” but rather to “learn and serve.” Students joined with partner staff who were deeply embedded in communities to work toward a common goal, where both parties had the opportunity to learn and teach one another (Heffernan & Cone, 2001). We incorporated *reflection* through four individual personal reflections required from students during the semester. This forced students to explore their experiences and convictions. We also facilitated nightly reflection activities during the in-country immersion phase. This is consistent with Lewin’s early research on the Connecticut State Interracial Commission whose members gathered in the evenings to talk about their experiences. Kolb characterized Lewin’s model as one where “[d]iscovery was made that learning best facilitated in an environment where there is a dialectic tension and conflict between immediate concrete experience and analytical detachment” (Kolb, 1984: 9). Finally, we *disseminated* our emerging findings in a variety of ways. The student teams presented their recommendations to their partners in the field, to the broader university community, and whenever possible, to executives within the partner’s headquarters in the United States.

Kolenko and colleagues’ (1996) theory of SL adds two dimensions: The application of skills and understanding social issues. The *application of skills* is central to the value derived by partners. Our student teams provided expertise in business fundamentals, such as business plan development, sensitivity analyses, market research, and value-chain analysis. Indeed, partners have frequently provided feedback on how much their staff learned more generally about business and more specifically about financial analysis and market assessments by working

alongside the student teams. The *understanding of social issues* was built into the curriculum and project design. Readings in development economics, international relations, politics, peace studies, philosophy, and law helped to prepare students for the context in which they would be serving. Moreover, no project focused exclusively on business issues, but rather required the application of business skills to broader social issues.

Our students spend only 2 weeks conducting fieldwork in country. This is a limited amount of time for the deep immersion required for an international service-learning course, where jet lag and culture shock can combine with hurried data collection to inhibit substantive engagement in the context. We sought to maximize time in country in several ways. First, project teams worked with partners for several months before and after the in-country portion of the coursework. We attempted to make the in-country portion a vital, yet small part of the overall service-learning objective. Second, many project teams were able to collect data before travel, gaining access, albeit indirect access, to beneficiaries. For example, teams have read interview transcripts collected by partners and even conducted preliminary photo narrative data collection to gain a more robust understanding of the project and context. Finally, during the immersion phase, project teams endeavored to gain depth of experience over breadth whenever possible, encouraging teams to spend more time in fewer locations, allowing for the development of deeper and more natural relationships. During their 2-week in-country immersion, teams conducted between 10 and 12 days of fieldwork, which included interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and homestays. The days spent in country varied across projects and teams. On some days, teams would conduct three focus groups of 10 or more individuals. On other days, teams would split up and work alongside farmers, fisherman, traders, and even informal trash workers. Our project teams have interviewed all types of stakeholders, including government ministers, doctors, drivers, students, sex workers, imams, and bishops. Teams have, among other activities, planted rice, weeded gardens, sold goods in markets, attended health and nutrition training sessions, woven fabric, and fished. Upon return, teams are encouraged to continue to reach out to partners and beneficiaries to continue the process of reciprocal learning. On multiple occasions, our students have returned as alumni to their project sites at their own expense to continue to work with their partners and to visit individuals they met through their project work.

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