Bulls, Goats, and Pedagogy: Engaging Students in Overseas Development Aid

William F. S. Miles, *Northeastern University*

ABSTRACT This article illustrates the profound learning that occurs—for students and instructor alike—when a class on third-world development attempts to undertake foreign aid. With undergraduate, graduate, and departmental money, I purchased bulls and carts for farmers, and goats for widows, in two West African villages. Such experiential learning personalized for students the study of micropolitics under conditions of poverty, the development of organizational structure, and north-south dependency.

GENESIS OF AN ALTRUISTIC LEARNING PROJECT

Through the General Assembly of the United Nations, the world community has identified 0.7% of gross national income as the appropriate level of assistance for each industrialized nation to allocate toward international development. Given the subject nature of my course, and the profile of my university (self-consciously in the vanguard of "experiential education" (see Cantor 1997; Lempert 1996), and "service learning" (see Canada and Speck 2001; Speck and Hoppe 2004)), I proposed that 0.7% of the tuition generated from student enrollment in my class on the Politics of Developing Nations (PDN) be rolled back to the course for pedagogic-cum-development purposes. (My proposal also invoked the Earth Institute project managed out of Colombia University, which tests the hypothesis that U.N.-designated test villages can be lifted out of poverty with directly targeted project aid of $110 per capita [Sachs 2005].) While my dean congratulated me for "thinking outside of the box," he nixed the idea.

Fortunately, I have an enlightened department chair who, in his role as town councilor, had personal experience in developing sister-city relationships between Massachusetts and Central America. He offered department matching funds for monies donated by the students themselves. Even without the matching fund offer, students were eager to "do something" after I presented on the two neighboring West African villages with which I have had an ongoing relationship, as researcher, since the early 1980s. (The research, focusing on the long-term legacies of the superimposed colonial boundary dividing the Hausa people and published in the *APSR* [Miles and Rochefort 1991] was an outgrowth of my experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger from 1977 to 1979.) The two communities fall into the "dollar-a-day" per capita income bracket used by the World Bank to define "the poorest of the poor."

As described in an article in the *African Studies Review* (Miles 2008b), this first class (PDN-I) voluntarily proffered hundreds of dollars of their own money to finance latrines in the designated Nigérien village.[1] Diversion of this money for purchase of school furniture in another village entirely (after the principal had been reassigned, ostensibly for political reasons) generated lively classroom discussion. So did the principal's request for a cell phone.

Direct correspondence between a school principal from the least-developed country in the world (according to the U.N. Human Development Index), and college students from the most powerful one, had a deep impact. It made real and personal "The Challenge of Third World Development" (the title of our class text [Handelman 2003]). However unintentionally, it also personalized, more than could any classroom discussion, the meaning of dependency. But it also energized some students to improve and expand upon their efforts. Accordingly, an enthusiast from PDN-I willingly agreed to address her successors in PDN-II when I offered the class the following semester.

DEVELOPMENT ENTHUSIASM REDUX

Students of PDN II contributed their own money to purchase a bull and a cart in Yardaje, the neighboring village in Nigeria. (A colleague from the sociology department of Shepherd University in West Virginia, originally from The Gambia, suggested it as one idea among several.) This is how I presented the offer to the prospective beneficiaries, in correspondence with a schoolteacher in the community.

> [My] students … have taken great interest in Yardaje, to which I have introduced them. Although they are not rich, they have decided to reach into their own pockets to invest in a development project there. These students, most of whose signatures appear below, wish to purchase a plow and plow animal. They will be the owners. The plow and plow animal will be made available for hire on a daily basis in Yardaje. However, the destitute of the village will not have to pay. It is expected that whoever uses the animal will provide for its feed for the day of its use.

We requested cost estimates for bull or ox, cart, plow, harness, and daily hire. Explicitly invoked, so as to avoid the foreseeable pitfalls of outright donation (dependency; diffused ownership and responsibility), was the culturally operative concept of this

William F. S. Miles *is professor of political science at Northeastern University in Boston and adjunct research professor of international relations at the Watson Institute of Brown University. A former Peace Corps Volunteer (Niger, 1977–9) and State Department intern (Nigeria,1980), he is the recipient of four Fulbright scholarships. Miles has published nine books on Africa, India, Israel, Martinique, and Vanuatu, the most recent of which is* My African Horse Problem *(University of Massachusetts Press, 2008).*

doi:10.1017/S1049096509090179

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090179 Published online by Cambridge University Press

assistance as *jari*—placement of capital. So as to preserve my reputation as visitor, as opposed to donor, I emphasized that I was acting as intermediary, this time with my *dalibai* (disciples, pupils). From the village interlocutor arrived the following reply:

> Nobody gives an animal for hire. It is not the practice of the people in the village or its surrounding area. What is usually done, in contrast, is for the well-to-do to buy an animal and give to those who cannot afford for a certain period of time, for fattening or rearing. When it is fat enough, then it is sold. The profit is then shared equally between the owner and the person who has taken care of the animal. . . . Animal and cart can be used for carrying goods to various places, and the money paid to the person in charge will be used for buying animal feeds.
>
> If your students want to do something, let them try it this way. It is the practice of the area. Many people are willing to take the animal. Let the students give it a try. And this is the right time. As we Hausa say, "Corn stalks and puppies are all obtainable at harvest time."

Given my knowledge of the local culture, I found such resistance to the hiring proposal puzzling. Inanimate objects that supersede animals were readily available for hire in the village: bicycles, motorcycles, minivans. Even those fortunate children who had bikes would rent them out to other kids. Was there some kind of cultural taboo operating with respect to the hire of animate possessions?

Undergraduate donors were forced to grapple with the conflict between externally designed project design and sensitivity to culturally appropriate practices. Undetermined, too, was the mechanism for choosing the local trustee of the class animal. (Left to myself, there could be only one candidate: he who had looked after my horse [Miles 2003/2005, 2008a]. But how appropriate would this outcome be?)

As these issues were being thrashed out, three new circumstances converged. First, my chairman renewed his commitment to provide matching department funds to encourage the undergraduates' initiative. This immediately enabled the replication of the bull and plow/or cart proposal for the neighboring village in Niger (Yékoua), with all of the ensuing potential for another Africanist social science cross-border "natural experiment" (see Posner 2004). This one, however, would contain a developmental sub-theme.

Second, a budgetary windfall from the graduate public administration program of the college enabled the expansion of this applied learning developmental activity to graduate students enrolled in my seminar on Development Administration and Planning. Group drafting of a dual-village proposal became part of the course requirements. Four hundred dollars were allocated for each village.

Third, I determined that initiating all these activities required a supervisory, on-site presence. Years of cumulated frequent-flyer mileage enabled me to travel to West Africa during the spring break of 2006 and to personally dispense the undergraduate-generated, and graduate student-dedicated, village development funds.

With regards to (1), I sent a letter to Yékoua that basically[2] replicated that sent to Yardaje, proposing the plow-cum-plow animal for hire. This was done to test Yardaje's "plowing for hire is not done" response: was it idiosyncratic or rather reflective of wider rural Hausa norms? Significantly, the same description of the traditional arrangement (*kiwu*—caring for/fattening of an animal for future sale and divided proceeds) was, once again, counterproposed. There is no indication (as confirmed by my subsequent visit) that Yékoua's correspondent (in Niger) was knowledgeable about the plow-related ministrations with Yardaje (in Nigeria).

With regards to (2), the graduate students' proposal was twofold. Sensitized through course readings, lectures, and my "most needy" lists,[3] the students eventually[4] decided to purchase goats for village widows. (That the seminar was composed entirely of female students may also have shaped the decision.) Second, they proposed that a smaller portion of the assistance be allocated toward school supplies (notebooks, pens and pencils, etc.), with preference for elementary schools.

With regards to (3), preparations were complicated by the extended loss, in conjunction with the application for visa, of my passport by the Nigerian Embassy in Washington. Recovered in time, I prepared for departure in early March 2006 with single-entry visas for both Nigeria and Niger. Learning of the impending trip, members of a local religious community, family, and friends offered additional aid money.

BULL BUYING AND THE GREAT GOAT GIVEAWAY

Dates of the scheduled visits to Yardaje and Yékoua did not correspond with the market day for either village. However, a robust livestock market was in session for the corresponding days in nearby villages on each side of the border. Although I had previously purchased horses, the task of acquiring additional goats and bulls in Africa required an additional level of expertise. I therefore contracted a local specialist in animal selection and bargaining for each set of transactions.

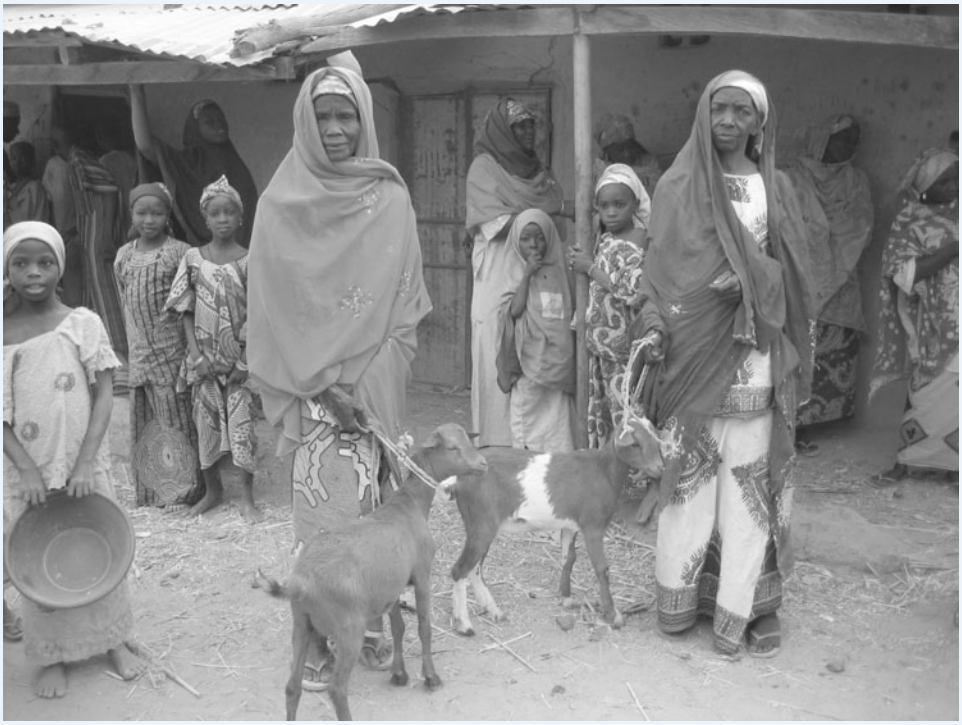
Market day closest to Yardaje fell on Tuesday in Garke, about 25 miles away. After vigorous comparison and bargaining, I purchased one bull and a total of 14 goats (13 female, one male[5]) from several different vendors; the former was led back by foot by a resident of Yardaje, the latter was placed in the back of the minivan in which I traveled. Pending distribution, the goats were stored in an empty compound;[6] my having to feed the goats prior to widow distribution was one of several unforeseen costs associated with the project.

In Yardaje (Nigeria) the number of widows exceeded the supply of project-purchased animals. It was Sarkin Fulani, the village chief of Yardaje, who suggested that groups of three women each be established, who would collectively be responsible for each of the goats. This dovetailed with my students' proposition, inspired by Heifer International, that offspring from the goats be distributed, first to the other two members of the same group, and eventually to other needy women in the village. No women's association existed in Yardaje, and therefore no head widow was available to call a meeting for consultative purposes. Two senior sons of the chief therefore went house to house to instruct the widows to assemble early the next morning for the distribution.

By the appointed hour, only a handful of widows actually had appeared. Leadership fell to one Habi Gwama Ma'azu. The women were unfamiliar with formal election procedures; Habi was suggested by one of her fellow widows as an elder, and she accepted the nomination by default. Habi took one she-goat for herself, and in short order the other 12 were also distributed as was (after some grumbling) the he-goat. (Chosen by myself for studding purposes, the he-goat was disdained for its inability to reproduce and its potential for unruly, wandering behavior.)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090179 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Widows Receiving Students' Goats



With little experience or self-initiative, however, Habi was incapable of organizing or maintaining the groups. Within a week, she had not only resigned but, citing difficulties in caring for it, surrendered her own goat. Absent any real leadership, the widow groups that had been formed for the goats soon collapsed. At the same time, other destitute women in the village, needy and not, soon began to demand goats for themselves: collective notions of goat care were trumped by individual claims. When personally prevailed upon by a longstanding female acquaintance (though not a widow), I responded by giving her the following letter to deliver to one of the widows said to be contemplating return of her goat.

> A letter to Umar Kwakwa. Greetings, blessings, and wishes for good health. I hear that you do not wish the goat that my students have given you. Perhaps it is so, perhaps it is not so. If it *is* so, I wish that you hand over the goat to Azimi. If it is not so, then just leave things as they are.

I do not know if Azimi delivered the letter to Umar Kwakwa.

My village correspondent was similarly besieged, prompting him to write the following:

> This distribution of goats to women is causing a lot of problems. Widows who did not receive are disturbing me seriously and also those received. . . . They are saying if it is free, they will take the goats but if it is *kiwo* [to care of on behalf of the student owners in America] they don't want them. The idea of 1 goat to 3 women is the cause of all the problems. In fact I'm having sleepless nights. Women!

Across the border in Yékoua (Niger) both the purchase (in the Thursday market of Kwaya) and distribution of goats reflected the much more organized nature of Nigérien society. For each of those 14 goats a tax was paid, and a printed receipt issued, on behalf of the *Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Décentralisation*. A village women's association had been established long before, during President Seyné Kountché's corporatist Development Society structure in the 1980s. In 2006, its leader in Yékoua was Hajara Adamu. It was she who, with some input from the chief of Yékoua Kofai,[7] came up with an informed listing of the 14 neediest widows. Although some women did later approach me with goat requests, it was never with the level of insistence commensurate with that in the Nigerian village of Yardaje.

Within several months of the distribution, I received word that most of the Yardaje (Nigeria) goats had died; some were slaughtered for money; and the he-goat had run away, presumably in search of a mate. In short, differential organizational structures and local cultural norms distinguishing the rural Hausa women in Nigerian Yardaje and the Nigérien ones of Yékoua contributed to markedly different outcomes with respect to the U.S. graduate students' widow distribution project. With respect to the bull and cart donation, however, the difficulties were, in some senses, reversed.

BULL AND CART AND POLITICS

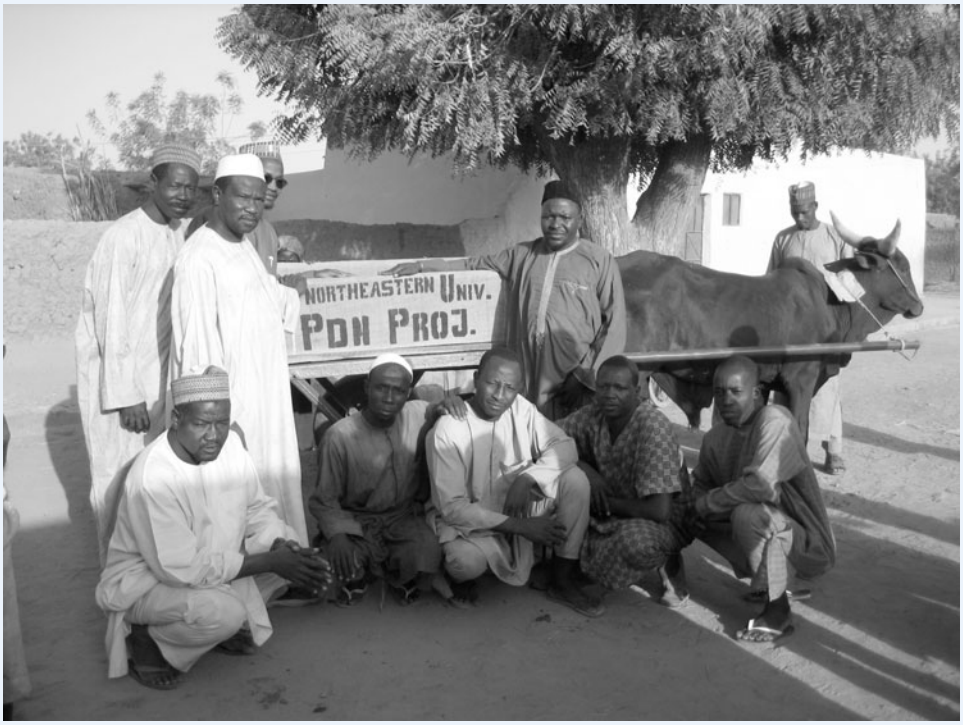
As seen through the prism of Yardaje, self-help development associations in the rural context of Nigeria rise and ebb according to local personality and politics. The original youth club that I had joined during early fieldwork was long since defunct. Different associations had subsequently sprung up in competition for membership, recognition, and eventual funding. At the time of my visit, the most viable local group—complete with typewritten charter—was the Yardaje Youth Forum. Despite its all-male membership, the Yardaje Youth Forum, a self-help village association with no governmental funding, was doing good deeds that benefited all residents of the community: digging and maintaining deep wells to increase the village's water supply; digging latrines (men's and women's) at the village health facility; wiring the dispensary for electricity; putting in a water drainage system for the village's main street. Here was a tried and true association that could benefit from a means of supply conveyance. I contracted with the village welder to build a cart that would go behind the bull. On the morning of my return trip to the U.S., I presented my students' cart and bull to the Yardaje Youth Forum.

In Yékoua, politics had created local tensions that would redound to the bull and cart project.

Since 2004, in Niger the local system of governance through traditional chiefs (both at the district and village levels) had been complemented by that of an indirectly elected mayor chosen by a

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090179 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Students' Bull and Cart with Members of Village NGO



newly constituted municipal council. The mayor,[8] informed of my impending visit, and propelled by the national policy of development through decentralization, had prepared several documents. One was an elaborate four-year development plan (in French) for the entire commune of Yékoua. The plan recognized the fragility of the commune due to: "a limited financial resources base, insufficient surface water and therefore lack of potable water, depleted soil, few natural resources, little socio-economic infrastructure, constrained access by the population to basic social services, etc." It was the mayor's fervent hope that I would post the plan on the Internet and thereby generate funding from generous donors in the United States and the world over. He invoked Bill Gates as a possibility.

The second document was a statement by the mayor that, in recognition of my attachment to the population of Yékoua, specialization in its customs and traditions, and love for the local society, I had been declared "citizen of the Rural Commune of Yékoua." As he delivered the document, the mayor emphasized that such citizenship conferred "obligations" as well as "privileges."

In addition to the honorific nature of the declaration of citizenship, I admit recognizing a personal legal benefit: that the mayor could assist in the officialization of a deed for the plot of land that, ceding to a local friend's suggestion, I had purchased during my previous visit. The mayor readily acceded, the next day summoning the seller, Alhaji M.H., to affix his signature to the Attestation of Land Sale (No. 001/2006).

Unknown to me at the time, there were serious tensions between my friend and the mayor. Part of the tension may have stemmed from the implicit supplanting of power from the Yékoua-Kofai village chief—a close relative of Alhaji M.H.—by a mayor who expressed an inveterate disdain by Francophone *évolués* of supposedly old-fashioned and uneducated traditional authorities. ("We must make concessions," the mayor said. "At least at the beginning.") Another informant revealed that the mayor and the alhaji (an honorific Islamic title for one who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca) had clashed in recent local elections, backing rival parties.[9] On the eve of my departure, Alhaji M.H. revealed the deepest reason of the rift: he accused the mayor of corruption. In particular, the alhaji swore that the mayor had diverted 30 bags of cement earmarked for communal purposes to his personal use. I knew none of this as I established my own relationship with the mayor, and let it be known that I was seeking a reliable group to take possession of the bull and cart (which a Yékoua welder had been contracted to construct). The mayor steered me to one of the three established development groups: the *Groupement de Jeunesse*, or Youth Group.[10]

Alhaji M.H. was adamant: under no circumstances should the cart and bull go to what he characterized as "the government group." Rather, it had to be offered to the Samariyya, the youth group of the commoners. Otherwise, he said, I would be siding with the élites against the people; the alhaji would not lend his support to the project under such circumstances.

Associated with the *ancien régime*, the Samariyya hearkened back to the Development Society of President Seyni Kountché (r.1974–87). Despite its longevity and local legitimacy, it was no longer a recognized group, at least not by the new municipal authorities. Were I to follow my friend's advice and grant Samariyya the cart and bull, I would not only be alienating the mayor, that newly critical lynchpin in the village polity, but jeopardizing another friend of decades' acquaintance, the village chief. For the chief well understood the necessity of working with the new authority, and could not risk compromising his position by sanctioning the project with an unofficial, unrecognized group. He too was caught in the middle, squeezed between the passion of his younger relative Alhaji M.H. for "the people," and his own need to toe the line with the new government executive. But the village chief did not have to feed an undelivered bull. Nor did he refrain from expressing a somewhat patronizing view of the bull donors: "Those students of yours don't have much money to give. If they had more—and especially if they were more knowledgeable—they would not have tried to help out by buying and offering a bull in such a way." "If it's *your* baggage," he commented proverbially, "it won't go neglected" (i.e., property that has no identifiable owner is likely not to be taken care of).

A way out of this dilemma was offered through the wisdom of another old friend, Souleymane, a mallam (Islamic teacher/priest) who had traveled from my previous Peace Corps service

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090179 Published online by Cambridge University Press

site to visit me. It is not a big problem, he affirmed; I was not compelled to choose between the two sides: "There is democracy everywhere in the world now, is there not? In America, too, there is democracy. Let your students themselves decide."

In the meantime, Mallam Souleymane further suggested, the bull and cart could be left in the care of my former horse handler, Gito. He conveyed no urgency with respect to my undergraduates' decision. Indeed, it was not even pertinent to point out to him that, since the semester had ended, the class had disbanded and its students would never actually reassemble as a whole. Mallam Souleymane's "temporary" solution was expediently, if not ingeniously, indefinite. Both the mayor and alhaji agreed, independently, that it was indeed proper to leave the choice of bull recipient to the students.

Pending word of the decision, we drew up a more informal system of communal bull and cart access. Transport being a major constraint on individual farm and house holders, these would be used, for example, to lug fertilizer to the fields; to bring home crops after harvest; to haul bricks for home construction. I commissioned the town crier to circulate through the village announcing that, thanks to my students, a bull-and-cart was now available for any one's usage. Whether one could pay the costs of the day's hire (evaluated at between 40–50 cents, depending on distance) was irrelevant: even those without money could borrow.

The village chief asserted that it was publicly known who would be able to pay and who could not. Monies collected would be used for the feeding of the bull, and the village secretary would keep records. (Nine months later, when I returned to Niger with a group of PDN-inspired students, the village secretary showed them his scrupulous records with the name, dates, purpose, and financial arrangement of every bull-and-cart user.) To provide an initial cushion, I opened a community chest for bull feed of approximately $25.00.

FROM LIVESTOCK TO SCHOLARSHIPS: PDN-III AND BEYOND

Digital photos of the students' bulls-and-carts and goats became powerful visual stimuli in the relevant undergraduate and graduate courses on development and developing nations; they have since been posted on the Internet.[11]

PDN-II alums visited class to similarly encourage their successor counterparts in PDN-III. Competing values vied with one another. One set was continuity versus innovation. Some students argued for maintaining and strengthening the projects already begun; most others, however, expressed a desire to "do something different" from their PDN predecessors. Discussions about *what* to do highlighted another set of competing values: the reality of Third World scarcity was driven home as students had to choose between promoting food or health or education or any other number of basic human needs. (The backdrop for such discussions was course readings about the value of foreign aid and the different modalities of its provision.) Electronic balloting resulted in a virtual tie between two proposals. The upshot was a different project for each village: in Yékoua (Niger), monies for emergency health transport; in Yardaje (Nigeria), scholarships to enable one boy and one girl to continue their education at the secondary level. Criteria for selection—whether they should be based on merit or need—were vigorously debated but not resolved at the outset.

A scholarship committee consisting of PDN-II and PDN-III alums was formed, along with current PDN-IV students.[12] The latter intended to motivate their class to continue the tradition of their course predecessors. With my advice the scholarship committee drew up an application form. Multiple copies were sent to the head of the local education district in which Yardaje lies, with a request that the forms be distributed to the principals of the two Yardaje primary schools.

In January 2008 the completed forms arrived back from Nigeria, with two wrinkles: whereas applications were returned for several girl students, only one came back from a boy. Moreover, the school principals took it upon themselves to endorse one of the girl applicants and the (sole) boy applicant. How to discount the influence of the principals surprisingly turned out to be the lesser of the dilemmas.

In over two decades of teaching and countless admissions, scholarship, and grant determinations, I had never realized how wrenching it might be for undergraduates to be put into an analogous decision-making position. Watching my students grapple over the application of primary-school Africans was powerfully instructive for both them and me. It was a searing lesson to observe them agonize between this 13-year-old versus that 14-year-old. Students internalized the potential enormity of the consequences of their decisions on the lives of remote African schoolchildren. But these children had names, and were living in households whose family size they listed in the 14–22 range. Abstractions like scarcity, underdevelopment, and population density transmogrified into biosketches of real kids on pieces of paper that the undergrads students had themselves designed and were now holding in their hands. So overwrought was the student assigned the role of tie-breaker between two girl finalists that she pleaded for permission to sponsor the runner-up herself. (I demurred, explaining that this was not the point of the exercise.) My overwrought student felt compelled to select the more qualified applicant (with a higher class ranking) over the more needy one.

COURSE FEEDBACK

Perhaps because the project was presented as a voluntary and ancillary activity within the course, rather than an integral component, most PDN students did not address it in the open-ended course evaluation. (That the standard evaluation did contain specific questions about written requirements and assigned readings may also have militated mention in this forum.) Lesson to instructor: resolve any ambivalence about the appropriateness of integrating such activity within the course earlier on in the process.

Students who did invoke the project in course evaluations were uniformly enthusiastic:

- "The best part of the course is that we not only learned current and historical issues pertaining to the developing world, but that we are helping as well. I know that our class project to aid communities in Niger & Nigeria will impact those people. This way, we get the information we need for the course & they get the resources we can provide."
- "Honestly, the best part of this course was the development project the class is involved in. I wish more classes offered opportunities to become involved in relevant ways and showed real life effects of the subject material."
- "I really liked setting up a project to benefit people in developing countries."
- "Class development project adds to the applications of the class."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090179 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Delayed communications with the villages presented a problem. Used to instantaneous chat via IM or email, students (many for the first time) had to rely on international postal service and waits of between four and six weeks for an exchange of messages. Invariably, this meant that project proposals (much less implementation) could not be completed within the duration of a semester. The following comment was followed by a couple of floating question marks: "The discussion on a dev project was interesting & rewarding—but I'm not sure exactly where it went."

REPLICATION

There is no need for instructors interested in integrating or adapting these kind of activities to travel (or purchase livestock) themselves. Finding a personal connection between undergraduates and low-income communities abroad is surprisingly easy. One of the three explicit missions of the Peace Corps is for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to sensitize Americans to the realities of life in the developing world. With nearly 200,000 RPCVs around the country, there is hardly a college town in the United States without a local connection to some Third World urban neighborhood or rural village. An annual Peace Corps Day already facilitates the interaction between RPCVs and American students; college instructors could tailor this program to suit their own pedagogic preferences. RPCV chapters are already organized in virtually every state. Peace Corps also runs a "Partnership Program" that connects Peace Corps Volunteers currently in the field with Americans interested in participating in ongoing projects. Instructors can choose the level of project innovation most appropriate for their particular class. The key is that there be some intermediary between the college undergraduates and the overseas beneficiaries with whom the students can identify.

Only a minority of my students will have the opportunity to actually travel to West Africa and to see and touch (and smell!) their goats and bulls. Nor will they ever meet with the recipients of their scholarships. Nevertheless, the direct and tangible connection that they have established through their voluntary aid greatly reinforces their learning of international development and the (micro) politics that occurs in developing societies. Years after completing the course, PDN students still identify themselves as having been "in that class where we bought a bull" or "decided to build latrines" in Africa.

PEDAGOGY, PRAXIS, AND "CLASS" CONSCIOUSNESS

As instructors, we should not underestimate our students' desire to *do* with their knowledge, not merely to increase it. *Doing* need be part of the formal learning: bull-buying and goat-giving should not replace course readings; allocating scholarships ought not substitute for doing homework. Students' urge to expand the *doing*, moreover, may need to be resisted, for the sake of controlled learning. Many PDN students quickly go into "fund raising" mode, a laudable tendency which I nevertheless resist for two reasons.

For one, PDN projects are for PDN students alone, and within the context of their course. The point is not just to enable college students to assist Third World communities, but rather to integrate this assistance within the learning experience as outlined in the syllabus. As advisor to two development- and human rights-themed student groups, and as a general campus observer, I see the naïveté of undergraduate activities that have little academic or experiential grounding. Fund-raising for good causes may be laudable but in and of itself is not instructive. As an educator, I am not seeking to involve the greatest number of students, or to obtain the highest level of funding possible. My aim is rather to maximize deeper understanding of development, and the conditions that impede it. The flip side of this is recognition that too much knowledge, if it comes prematurely, can be counterproductive. Whether to share all of the dirty details of development in "real time" is a difficult question: as teacher, one must balance the imperative to speak truth with the responsibility of not unduly disillusioning the idealistic.

Second, selecting projects is an integral point of the experience. Once "outsiders" (i.e., non-PDN students) are involved, their input would need to be taken into account, thereby diluting the autonomy and "class consciousness" of PDN. To quote Schumacher (1973)—also in the context of international development assistance—"small is beautiful." Pedagogically, incorporating a sense of personal responsibility in students is more effective than having them adhere to a mass group. Similarly, instilling a long-term interest in a small group activity will leave a deeper imprint in consciousness and conscience than the fleeting sense of feeling good by giving to a good cause.

Creating a sense of institutional continuity is a major aim of university development offices. Typically, this takes the form of promoting alumni associations and activities. The expectation is that, eventually, alumni loyalty will lead to donations to the alma mater. On the individual level, the graduate's identity as a member of the class of 1959 or 2009 is supposed to last a lifetime. In PDN, I have recast the notion of alum(nus/na) to create trans-semester bonds based on course. Students who have already taken PDN are invited to return to class to speak to their currently enrolled successors. PDN alumni readily agree because of their pride in what *their* PDN class has accomplished.

"Class ownership of property" need not be merely a theoretical notion of Marxism: when university students in a specific course collectively purchase animals in Africa, they impart another meaning to the term entirely. Such activity goes beyond their normal college experience, inside or outside of class. So does assuming an identity with other students based not on anticipated year of graduation nor athletic team membership nor extracurricular organization. Class identity can be fostered by being part of a course whose altruistic component never really ends.

In successive iteration of the same course, albeit in different ways, my students have contributed directly to the development of two of the most impoverished Third World communities in the world. Along the way, they have learned first-hand about the realities of scarcity, and the difficulties of doing good abroad. So, thanks to them, have I. ■

NOTES

The author wishes to thank Professor John Portz, chair of the Northeastern University political science department, without whose unstinting support bulls, goats, and scholarships would not have become such a part of our students' learning experience. In the absence of conventional receipts for departmentally-purchased livestock, Professor Portz displayed particular fortitude vis-à-vis Accounts Payable. Professor David Rochefort has been an inspiration for experiential learning writ large. I also wish to acknowledge Professor Bruce Wallin who suggested that I write up my long-distance pedagogic experiences for the benefit of the profession. Undergraduates whose enthusiasm realized these projects include Nick Boston, Sobaika Mirza, Estella Moriarty, Sarah Tishler, and Kelsea Zetterman. Graduate students who have taken a leadership role include Alisa Houghton, Jennifer Hackbush, Kristen Hudak, Alison Uzdella, and Marketa Vavreckova.

1. For this first, and all subsequent class aid experiences, I avoid knowing which students do, and which do not, give money.
2. Inasmuch as the Yardaje correspondent was a government school teacher, much of the correspondence with him was in English. The Yékoua,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090179 Published online by Cambridge University Press

correspondent, on the other hand, was a mallam, an Islamically-trained cleric, and so letters were entirely in Hausa.

3. The correspondent in one village had responded to an earlier request to list the least fortunate of the community by creating the following categories: blind (or partially sighted); mentally disturbed; extremely poor; crippled (polio, crawling); deaf; widowed; leprous; other deserving [individuals].
4. Initially, each student was required to draft her own proposal. These ranged from providing mosquito nets to additional bull buying. In conference, the individual proposals were reviewed and discarded; the group proposal that emerged was entirely different from each of the individual nine.
5. For reasons explained below, I was chastised for purchasing a billy.
6. I stayed in the shelter constructed by my mother and aunt for blind women.
7. Yékoua is actually two villages, Kofai and Hamada, that have grown into one spatial entity but have maintained their separate corporate identities: Hamada has its own chief. While he endorsed their being Hamada widow recipients, the chief of Kofai insisted that, his being the more populous of the two, more goats be distributed to widows in "his" Yékoua.
8. Both the mayor and the high school principal identified themselves as my former students; that is, they had been enrolled in the same middle school, at the same time, of my Peace Corps service.
9. The mayor stood with the Convention Démocratique et Sociale (CDS), headed by Mahamane Ousmane, the second largest party in the national governing coalition. The alhaji backed the Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme (more commonly known as Tarayya), the major opposition party headed by Mahamadou Issoufou.
10. The two others were the Agricultural and Women's Credit groups. Acting on behalf of donor friends, I made contributions to all three groups.
11. Bulls-and-carts and goats photos available at these sites: www.polisci.neu.edu/achievements/development_projects; www.northeastern.edu/voice/pdfs/2006/060425.pdf ⟨p. 6⟩; http://media.www.huntington-news.com/media/storage/paper600/news/2006/04/05/CampusLife/African.Villagers.Get.Help.From.Spring.Break.Delivery-1783536.shtml; www.polisci.neu.edu/international_opportunities/niger_2006.
12. As it turned out, PDN-IV as a whole did not warm up to the project as PDN-I–III had. Two PDN-IV project advocates attributed the lack of widespread resonance to late introduction of the project idea during the semester and their own lack of availability in meeting with (and collecting from) fellow students who might otherwise have been supportive.

REFERENCES

Canada, Mark, and Bruce W. Speck. 2001. *Developing and Implementing Service-Learning Programs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cantor, Jeffrey A. 1997. *Experiential Learning in Higher Education: Linking Classroom and Community*. Washington, D.C.: George Washington University Press.

Handelman, Howard. 2003. *The Challenge of Third World Development*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lempert, David H. 1996. *Escape from the Ivory Tower: Student Adventures in Democratic Experiential Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, William F. S. 2003/5. "A Horse, a Chief and a Political Anthropologist: Indigenous Politics, Conflict Resolution and Globalization in Niger." In *Indigenous Political Structures and Governance in Africa*, ed. Olufemi Vaughan. Ibadan, Nigeria: Sefer Books. Reprinted in *Tradition and Politics. Indigenous Political Structures in Africa*. Trenton, NJ: First Africa World Press, 2005.

———. 2008a. *My African Horse Problem*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

———. 2008b. "The Rabbi's Well: A Case Study in the Micropolitics of Foreign Aid in Muslim West Africa." *African Studies Review* 51 (April): 41–57.

Miles, William F. S., and David A. Rochefort. 1991. "Nationalism Versus Ethnic Identity in Sub-Saharan Africa." *American Political Science Review* 85 (2): 393–403. Reprinted in *Theory, Case, and Method in Comparative Politics*, ed. Nikolaos Zahariadis. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1997.

Posner, Daniel. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529–45.

Sachs, Jeffrey D. 2005. *The End of Poverty. Economic Possibilities For Our Time*. New York: Penguin Press.

Schumacher, E. F. 1973. *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*. London: Blond and Briggs.

Speck, Bruce W., and Sherry L. Hoppe, eds. 2004. *Service-Learning: History, Theory, and Issues*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090179 Published online by Cambridge University Press