PURM
Perspectives on Undergraduate
Research & Mentoring

Digital Mentorship, Global Service-Learning, and Critically-Engaged Undergraduate Research: Case Studies from Omprakash EdGE

Willy Oppenheim, Ph.D., University of Washington; Founder and Executive Director of Omprakash, U.S., willy@omprakash.org
Alex Knott, M.A., Director of Outreach and Curation at Omprakash, U.K.

Introduction

Landmark research about "high impact educational practices" has highlighted positive student outcomes associated with undergraduate research, such as global learning, community-based learning, internships, and integrative capstones or portfolio projects (Kuh, 2008). The same research suggests that historically underserved students tend to benefit most from engaging in such activities, but participate least (Kuh, 2008). In the context of such practices, what does effective mentorship look like? What can it contribute -- especially within programs that use digital technology and distance mentorship as strategies for lowering costs and broadening accessibility for underserved students? More specifically, how or to what extent can web-based distance mentorship effectively support undergraduate students who traverse differences of culture and power to conduct research that is oriented towards critical reflection and social transformation in the spirit of Freirian praxis (Freire, 1970)? This article explores such questions by considering specific cases of mentor-student interaction within a program that provides web-based distance mentorship to students who pursue self-directed research projects while simultaneously engaged in immersive global service-learning and internship experiences.

As employees of the nonprofit organization that offers the program under consideration, we are obviously biased in its favor -- but our hope is not simply to showcase our own work. Rather, we write as research-practitioners who share our experiences and reflections in the hope that they can inform policymakers and higher education administrators who aim to actualize similar learning experiences for students across a wide range of contexts. While we acknowledge that some readers might question our motives for sharing anecdotes from our own program, we would counter that our embeddedness within a particular program and organization offers a unique level of access and a holistic view of the particularities of student learning and pedagogical practice, and that this level of nuance offers unique value to our readers.

The article has two core goals. First, we seek to identify pedagogical challenges and possibilities for mentorship that occurs in contexts where undergraduate students conduct academic research while simultaneously working as interns or volunteers for social impact organizations, usually in contexts far from home. In the particular program from which we draw our data, the majority of mentorship occurs via an online learning platform, and thus the article is especially relevant to questions about how digital technologies can enrich distance mentorship. However, our primary focus is not the specific medium through which this mentorship unfolds, but rather the forms of student inquiry it

aims to cultivate: namely, inquiry that is a) grounded in reflexivity, insofar as it is concerned with the researcher's own power-laden entanglements with the phenomena being studied and the knowledge being produced, b) committed to polyvocality, insofar as it seeks to uncover complexity and disrupt hegemony through consideration of divergent voices, perspectives, and experiences rather than through a positivistic quest for absolute truth, and c) devoted towards raising "critical consciousness" (Freire, 1970, p.8) in pursuit of social change. This is a tall order for mentorship in any context, and all the more so for mentors who seldom meet their students in the flesh.

Our second goal is to address a more specific programmatic question in the sphere of higher education administration and programming. As universities seek to expand students' global engagement in relation to the high impact educational practices mentioned above -- particularly through programs that integrate self-directed research with various forms of global service-learning, volunteering, and/or internships -- to what extent can web-based distance mentorship help increase scalability, encourage ethical practice, and foster rigorous academic reflection?

In order to meaningfully engage with these questions, we must pause briefly for some semantic clarification. This article concerns itself with programs and experiences in which undergraduate students traverse significant differences of culture and power with the intentions of doing good or helping others. Throughout the article, we use the terms "service-learning," "volunteering," and "interning" somewhat interchangeably to describe a range of programs and experiences that involve this sort of traversing. Other authors (e.g., Ausland, 2010; Crabtree, 2008) have usefully delineated between these terms and the various phenomena that they describe -- distinguishing, for example, between internships, self-directed volunteer experiences, and faculty-led trips that self-consciously aspire to ideals of "service-learning." More recent scholarship has productively critiqued the term "service-learning" itself, and has suggested the term "community-based global learning" as a more appropriate descriptor for what such programs or experiences can or should achieve (Hartman, Kiely, Boettcher, & Friedrichs, 2018, p. 4-5). While these distinctions are important, we fear that they might obscure more than they elucidate, particularly with regard to the pedagogical challenges and opportunities that cut across these different modalities of engagement with difference. Thus, in this article, we attempt to treat the phenomenon as a whole, even as we acknowledge its wide diversity of forms and the significant implications of different terminology for describing it.

Our hope is that this wide lens approach allows readers to relate more easily to the pedagogical and programmatic questions introduced in the previous paragraphs. What is at stake is not any particular program model, but rather a much larger challenge that is inherent in the globalization of higher education. As ideals of "diversity, civic, and global learning," "service," and "deepening personal and social responsibility" are increasingly normalized as desirable learning outcomes (Kuh, 2008, p. 6), and as students pursuing these ideals go further from traditional classrooms and more frequently grapple with complex encounters across differences of culture and power, how can mentors (and educators more broadly) most effectively work to deepen students' critical reflection and ethical practice? Rather than suggest any conclusive answer to this question, our argument is that effective mentorship in such a context should avoid final answers, and instead should seek to cultivate engagement with complexity, comfort with uncertainty, and a fundamental posture of humility. Much more than a mere strategy for research, this is an approach to learning and being with profound ethical and epistemological implications that we strive to illustrate below.

Throughout this article, we draw on examples from Omprakash Education through Global Engagement (EdGE), a program that combines immersive global experiences with an online learning platform through which students engage in pre-departure training, receive ongoing mentorship, and ultimately share their own self-directed community-based research projects. One unique element of this model is that mentors and students rarely meet in person; the relationship is one of distance

mentoring that unfolds primarily within the digital EdGE classroom, with occasional supplementary communications via email, phone, or video chat. Yet what is perhaps most unique about this model, and more central to the focus of this article, is the type of inquiry it encourages students to pursue, and what, in turn, this demands of mentors. The EdGE program explicitly aims to help students raise consciousness in themselves and others, to question their own intentions, especially insofar as these intentions might be informed by ethnocentric and paternalistic impulses, and to grapple with difficult questions about their own positionality in relation to the people and the communities they purportedly aim to help.

The research projects and broader learning journeys that emerge from this process are not meant to be positivistic, objective quests for scientific Truth, but rather interpretive and reflective explorations of divergent perspectives about a given social issue. In this context, the intended role of the EdGE Mentors is not so much that of a research supervisor or an expert consultant, but rather something closer to the original role of Mentor in Homer's Odyssey: a friend, a guide, a counselor, and a trusted source of emotional support throughout a period of moral and epistemological uncertainty.

The article raises several questions about how mentorship operates in such a context. First, how are mentors to find the balance between pushing students to question their own assumptions and critically assess their worldviews, while also trying to build trust and rapport so that students do not feel attacked? Second, how can mentors most effectively guide students through research projects that are explicitly intended to be polyvocal, and that encourage an earnest effort to understand multiple and often divergent perspectives rather than attain a single truth, especially given that such a process can be intensely unsettling for students who are preconditioned to be searching for solutions?

Existing research concerning mentorship in the context of undergraduate research has shown that strong mentorship is key to undergraduate students' ability to learn and grow significantly from the research (Guterman, 2007), and that students will often identify mentor-student relationships, along with intellectual stimulation, as the most important elements of their undergraduate research experience (Falconer & Holcomb, 2008). This article seeks to add to the existing literature by exploring the extent to which mentor-student relationships can support critically engaged research within program models where mentors and students communicate digitally and, in most cases, will never meet in person.

We begin by situating the Omprakash EdGE program within a larger context of commodified voluntourism and internationalization in higher education, and then introduce the program structure, research expectations, and mentorship model in further detail. We then present several examples of mentor-student interactions at various stages of the program. The first two examples involve cases where mentors have sought to appropriately push students' thinking during the pre-departure training. The next section focuses more specifically on one particular response prompt within the pre-departure classroom and how it provokes discomfort among students. Next, we present two examples in which mentors successfully guided students to rethink the epistemological assumptions at the basis of their research projects, and one example of a mentor who was unsuccessful in such efforts. We conclude by taking a closer look at one particular example of a student-mentor relationship in which a student embraced the opportunity to question her own preconceived assumptions and reflect on the implications of her positionality, and ultimately produced a research project that sought to achieve a similar impact with its audience. Collectively, these examples offer a glimpse of the challenges and opportunities for pedagogies and mentorship models that seek to provoke uncertainty, discomfort, and humility in relation to students' global learning.

Background: Internationalizing Universities and the Commodification of Service

Undergraduate students are leaving their home countries to volunteer abroad at an unprecedented rate, with recent reports estimating that more than 1.6 million people volunteer abroad each year, spending over $2 billion (Kahn, 2014, July 31; Rieffel & Zalud, 2006). Increasingly, these internships are part of academic programs or research projects. In many cases, universities and nonprofits and for-profit companies enable these international service experiences for undergraduate students from resource-rich countries (the so-called Global North) to travel to resource-poor countries (the so-called Global South or developing world), generally to work in settings such as schools, orphanages, and clinics. Whether under the banner of creating global citizens, preparing students to compete in a global knowledge economy, or fostering intercultural competence, colleges and universities are seeking new partnerships, developing new programs, and mobilizing new discourses that all celebrate the value of immersive, non-traditional educational experiences in international settings. This trend is spurred on by universities under pressure to internationalize, and by a global economy in which youth unemployment is high, unpaid internships are common, and international experience is a desirable credential. The individuals who volunteer abroad tend to be white and privileged (McBride & Lough, 2010). There is also increasing concern with the implications of this inequity (Heath, 2007; Kuh, 2008). Reported motivations of volunteers include the seemingly altruistic desires to do good or give back as well as more egoistic urges to obtain new skills, to do something different, and to become more competitive candidates for future university admission or employment (see Handler, 2013; O'Shea, 2014).

As this trend has gained momentum, scholars and practitioners have worked to define ethical standards and pedagogical best practices for global service-learning (e.g., Crabtree, 2013; Hartman et al., 2018; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Lasker, 2016). However, at the same time, a booming voluntourism industry has emerged in response to unmet student demand for such experiences, and on any given campus one can often find a wide range of different organizations selling volunteer "placements" to students, with or without formal university endorsement. Many if not most of the organizations that sell or facilitate volunteer opportunities promote their work by insisting that a) volunteers will be making a difference regardless of their background or qualifications, b) even a little bit of help is better than nothing, and therefore c) no significant pre-departure training or preparation is necessary. This often has the effect of short-circuiting volunteers' learning, numbing reflexivity, and obscuring the complexity of social problems beneath superficial, sentimental narratives of helping that distract from – and potentially even reinforce – the root causes of the issues in question.

As critiques of these trends have grown more prominent, it has become almost axiomatic for program administrators and participants to emphasize the importance of student learning and ethical global partnerships rather than service per se. Yet it is seldom clear what students should be learning or how such learning actually occurs, particularly at scale, and, as Gardner and Krabill (2017) point out, the term "global partnership[s]...has become so ubiquitous as to be vacated of meaning." It is against this backdrop that the Omprakash EdGE program has emerged, and it is within this context that EdGE Mentors undertake their efforts to stimulate more critical reflection and ethical action amongst their students.

Omprakash EdGE: Program Structure, Curriculum, and Capstone Projects

Omprakash (www.omprakash.org) is a US-based non-profit organization founded in 2005 which connects prospective volunteers and interns with a network of roughly 180 autonomous grassroots social impact organizations -- Omprakash Partners -- in over forty countries around the world. Central to the ethos of the organization is a commitment to avoid the commodified and transactional underpinnings of selling placements, and a parallel commitment to empower partners to autonomously create positions and recruit volunteers of their choosing (Oppenheim, 2018). In

2011, Omprakash launched its EdGE program, which offers online learning and mentorship to students who are embarking on global service-learning, volunteering, or internship experiences. Although originally designed only for students who were preparing to work with Omprakash Partners, the EdGE program now offers online training and mentorship to a much wider range of students engaged in a variety of different experiential learning programs and projects, with the common thread being an intention to do good or help others while crossing significant differences of culture and power. The tuition-based EdGE program is open to the general public, but the majority of students arrive through explicit collaborations in which universities contract Omprakash to build customized EdGE online learning and mentorship programs for their students.

The EdGE program introduces students to research methods, methodologies, and ethics during the pre-departure training. Students go on to pursue self-directed research projects while they are abroad, sharing reflections with each other via the EdGE platform, and periodically posting multimedia "Records of Perspectives" (ROPs), the digital field notes through which students aim to capture diverse perspectives about their topics of study and then share these perspectives and observations with their EdGE peers and with the wider Omprakash network. These opportunities for ongoing reflection and dialogue support the students' research process, and students ultimately synthesize their ROP posts into a Capstone Project that aims to present a rigorous and polyvocal investigation of a particular social issue. Mentorship is crucial to this process: every student is matched with an EdGE Mentor during the pre-departure period, and these mentors support students throughout their learning and research.

The EdGE online learning platform can be customized for different cohorts of students, and within each cohort, students can be enrolled in multiple classrooms. Each classroom is broken up into multiple units. Each unit includes a guiding essential question along with ten to fifteen multimedia slides that include narrative text from Omprakash interspersed with peer-reviewed academic content, videos, popular media, photo galleries, and more. Students interact within the classroom by commenting on slides and by submitting a final response at the end of each unit. Within a given cohort, students can engage asynchronously and are not required to show up at a specific time. However, each unit response is typically due on the same day for all members of a cohort. All submitted responses are visible in a classroom's Roundtable, and students are encouraged (and sometimes required) to read and comment upon each other's work. The EdGE platform also allows students and mentors to engage in private chat, group chat, and video conferencing. It also includes embedded functionalities allowing students and mentors to exchange written performance evaluations on a periodic basis.

The standard EdGE pre-departure classroom includes twelve week-long units that revolve around an interdisciplinary curriculum drawing from fields including anthropology, sociology, education, history, economics, environmental policy, public health, and gender studies. The end-of-unit response prompts often invite students to consider ethically ambiguous scenarios that they might encounter during their travels, and these scenarios typically invite divergent responses rather than any clear consensus about a correct answer. The first three units of a standard EdGE course introduce students to prominent critiques of voluntourism and work to help students recognize that efforts to help others are unlikely to be effective unless they occur within a broader critique and reappraisal of dominant structures of oppression and inequality. The next three units explore "where are we and how did we get here?" -- that is, a broad introduction to the past half-century of "development" and the current state of economic and environmental inequality. The typical EdGE course does not attempt to provide a simplified cultural orientation or feel-good advice for how to engage with a community. Instead, units seven through nine of the typical EdGE course deconstruct the very concepts of "culture" and "community," and invite students to see how these concepts have become buzzwords within the broader industry of global engagement. The final three units help students

prepare for some of the practical aspects of traveling and conducting research in unfamiliar contexts, and meanwhile continue pushing students to grapple with questions about neo-colonialism, neoliberalism, oppression, inequality, and cultural relativism (see Oppenheim et al., 2015 for further detail about the pedagogical vision underpinning the design of the EdGE platform).

Building from the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and his conviction that social change must begin with raising critical consciousness rather than with hierarchical notions of helping, the latter half of the typical EdGE pre-departure curriculum introduces the premise that the tools of social science -- or, put more simply, the act of storytelling -- can and should transform volunteering into opportunities for the discovery, production, and dissemination of disruptive knowledge. Thus, the latter units of the typical EdGE pre-departure classroom slowly introduce research methodologies, methods, and ethics so that students can complete observer-activist Capstone Projects that are educational for them and their communities, and beneficial for their host organizations. As students design their research projects, Omprakash administrators, EdGE Mentors, and university administrators work together to determine the cases in which IRB approval is necessary and/or appropriate.

The basic premise of the EdGE Capstone Project is that it should explore multiple perspectives about the root causes of a given social issue -- typically, the social issue(s) that are the focus of a student's host organization. For example, a student who is volunteering or interning in an after-school literacy program might seek to explore how teachers, students, and parents perceive and articulate the causes of illiteracy in that particular context. During their time abroad, students are expected to post ROPs on the Omprakash Blog. Each student's archive of ROPs essentially functions as a digital repository of qualitative data and eventually becomes the backbone of that student's final Capstone Project.

To prepare students for their Capstone research, the final units of the typical EdGE pre-departure course invite students to practice research methods such as writing ethnographic fieldnotes, conducting qualitative interviews, and engaging in participant-observation. In conducting their Capstone research, students are expected to draw from concepts and ideas introduced in the EdGE pre-departure classroom and point to broader theories and arguments pertaining to global engagement and development. Mentors also encourage students to consider creative alternatives to a traditional research paper, in order to include participatory media and to make their projects engaging to potential audiences. Past students have presented their research in the form of photography, poetry, artwork, video, and a combination of these media. Quality Capstone Projects are shared within the Omprakash network. In some cases, students have also showcased their work at conferences or published their Capstone Projects in academic journals (Canton, 2018).

The underlying epistemological and pedagogical orientation that informs the EdGE Capstone Project and the EdGE curriculum more generally, is that the world as we know it is shaped by how we know it, and that students should seek to "know the world" through a lens that is attentive to the contexts in which they are working and the ways in which these contexts are shaped and sometimes harmed by their own lives and choices. Doing community-based qualitative research is not the only way to form such a lens, but we believe that it is a particularly powerful one insofar as it can generate empathy with individual persons while, at the same time, locating such persons within broader geopolitical contexts and chains of causation. Our aspirational vision is that students who come to "know the world" through such a lens while away from home will be better prepared to disseminate transformative knowledge when they return. Yet while articulating such a vision is one thing, actualizing it for students is quite another. It is here that the work of EdGE Mentors becomes most crucial.

The EdGE Mentorship Model

At present, the EdGE Mentor team comprises 41 people from a range of academic and professional backgrounds including anthropology, public health, community organizing, conservation, journalism, architecture, education, gender studies, migration, and disaster response. When signing up for EdGE, students select a few mentors with whom they would like to work, and Omprakash administrators match them accordingly. Once mentors and mentees have been introduced via email, they typically schedule an introductory call during which they discuss goals and set expectations. From that point forward, the primary mode of mentor-mentee engagement is via the EdGE platform. Mentors receive automated notifications whenever one of their mentees posts a comment on an EdGE classroom slide, and likewise whenever a mentee submits a unit response to the Roundtable. EdGE Mentors are expected to provide students with written feedback on each of their unit responses, so the Roundtable often becomes the epicenter of mentor-mentee engagement. However, some mentors also choose to engage with students on the specific classroom slides where students offer comments, and/or to connect with students via the EdGE chat functionality or via recurring phone calls or videoconferences. Mentors also occasionally host Webinars on topics related to the content of the EdGE program, ranging from qualitative research methods to the carbon costs and ethical implications of air travel to debates about the ethics of short-term volunteering. These Webinars are open to the public, but are specifically targeted towards EdGE students.

As students begin to develop their Capstone research ideas during the final few units of the EdGE classroom, mentors support students' research by offering advice and guidance on how to identify a social issue to study, local stakeholders/participants, and possible methods for engaging in dialogue with local stakeholders. Mentors also support mentees as they conduct preliminary research on their chosen topic and discuss the possible formats their Capstone Projects could take. During their internships abroad, students are supervised by staff members of the organization with whom they are working. Mentors and program administrators act as an additional support system from afar and check in by email or phone with students and host organizations as needed. Mentors also engage with their students by reading students' ROP's and adding comments and questions to encourage further reflection, perhaps by referring students back to relevant course material.

In the interest of holding space for critical and constructive feedback, Omprakash administrators ask EdGE students to complete evaluations of both the EdGE course and their mentors, and request mentors to complete evaluations of their mentees. Evaluations allow mentors to reflect and perhaps reassess their mentorship styles and give administrators access to data about students' satisfaction with the course and mentorship.

Omprakash compensates EdGE Mentors on a per-student basis and offers a number of systems and resources to support mentors and encourage reflective practice. This includes a dedicated listserv for EdGE Mentors to share case studies and ask questions or advice from others within the team. Omprakash also hosts periodic virtual meetings for EdGE Mentors as well as in-person retreats when possible.

Pedagogical Challenges and Opportunities for Navigating Uncertainty via Asynchronous Online Mentorship: Examples from Omprakash EdGE

Given the nature of the EdGE pre-departure curriculum and its explicit aim of encouraging students to radically question hegemonic assumptions and challenge their own worldviews, and that this coursework is followed by an immersive experience in an unfamiliar context during which students are expected to actively seek out and document divergent perspectives rather than a single truth, the EdGE program can be morally and intellectually unsettling in a way that is unlikely to be paralleled in any kind of laboratory or archival research. Some students may resist this discomfort and uncertainty, while others may embrace it, yet find it nevertheless difficult. EdGE Mentors often

articulate the need to strike a balance between pushing students to question their own assumptions and consider other perspectives while simultaneously supporting students through this potentially unsettling epistemological transition.

In the four case studies that follow, we explore how this delicate search for balance unfolds in and as pedagogical practice in the context of asynchronous online mentorship. Besides the more obvious challenges of managing communication across time zones and establishing trust and rapport via digital communications, there is also the more fundamental challenge of determining when to push and when to yield -- that is, determining when the provocation of uncertainty creates space for learning, and when too much uncertainty can short-circuit the whole process.

"Do I Have the Right?": Mentors Pushing Boundaries

The first case study demonstrates how a mentor, in conversation with the wider mentor team, approached a difficult and politically charged subject with an EdGE student from a country in Africa. Details were withheld to protect student's privacy. The student, in this case, had recently graduated from an undergraduate program in Population and Health and had an impressive résumé in women's rights and advocacy. However, while engaged in the EdGE pre-departure course, she occasionally found it difficult to question her own version of feminism, and to engage with the complexity of issues or with contradictory viewpoints, particularly in relation to the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) (Moruzzi, 2005). This student's mentor reached out to the mentor team for advice via the aforementioned EdGE Mentor listserv, with the following questions:

> Because she is from [African country] and not a "Western" country, my perception of her is skewed and I feel (perhaps wrongly) as if I should mentor her differently than I would someone from the US. (Note: she seems to come from a place of relative privilege compared to other [people from her home country] but has dealt with FGM/C in her personal life).

The mentor also explained that in some of her responses and interactions, the student had explicitly stated that her goal was to "end FGM/C".

> If that was an American student's [explicit goal] I would tell them that it sounds paternalistic and branches off from the "savior complex" notion. But since FGM/C is a part of her reality how does that change things? Or does it? Do I have the right to tell her that FGM/C shouldn't be viewed as a black-and-white issue when she's the one who has personal experience with it?

In responding to this challenge, members of the mentor team discussed some of the core questions in mentoring this student, namely: What is the line between challenging critical thought and disempowering young voices? How can we nudge students to reflect on their positionality without coming off as paternalistic or demeaning of that positionality? How does this dynamic change when the mentor-mentee relationship is spanning some significant differences in power, culture, nationality, and gender, among other factors? How do we walk the line between encouraging consideration and disenfranchising the power of someone who has clearly worked to have a voice and make change in her own community? How do we push our students to reflect on their blind spots while remaining ever-vigilant about reflecting on our own?

Some of the suggestions arose from this discussion included: beginning the discussion by acknowledging her different positionality with regards to the issue, asking clarifying questions of the mentee, presenting diverse opinions and literature from a variety of voices on the topic at hand, and including the director of the organization (which seeks to combat FGM/C) at which the mentee would be volunteering. One mentor invoked one of the key points covered in the EdGE Unit on culture that

we should avoid essentializing or romanticizing local communities in a way that obscures important differences and power dynamics on the local scale, and, therefore, everyone can benefit on reflecting upon their own biases. This mentor implemented many of these suggestions in her initial and subsequent interactions with her mentee, which led to fruitful and rich dialogue for both parties. The following is a reflection from this student upon completion of the EdGE curriculum:

> It is common knowledge that feminists, whether western or otherwise, champion women's rights and gender equality. But what is mostly ignored is that there is diversity in that shared commitment. Feminists, regardless of their collective values, do not have a homogeneous identity. I am a feminist, an African feminist, but my identity does not end there. I am an African feminist who was born and raised in a rural community in Africa and currently living in Africa.... As a feminist, I am part of the global feminist movement against patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations and support western feminism. However, my feminism is shaped by my lived experiences, orientation, [and] profession.

This post-course reflection suggests that the mentor was indeed successful in her efforts to encourage reflexivity in her student while still respecting that student's personal experience. However, in many cases, mentors' efforts are not so clearly rewarded.

In this next example, an undergraduate student at a university in the United States wrote the following comments in response to an EdGE prompt asking students to analyze a current event relevant to the country where they were preparing to travel:

> In this recent event, Venezuela's very socialist government leader called Pedro Kuczynski, the Peruvian President, a "coward" and "dog" subservient to the U.S. and President Trump. Obviously, this is both an insult to the culture of respect and the expectation of power in Latin/South America. Calling another man a dog and insulting his position speak on the behalf of what kind of culture the Venezuelan government is promoting. With power comes responsibility, and one should not be attacking another's choices or culture, as Peru is known to be a friendly, helping country and so they would obviously do what they can to help another democracy, the U.S. [...] If one looks at the history of the three countries and their cultures, it is clear why Venezuela, a socialist and often insolent country, would attack Peru for its relationship with the United States.

While it would be easy enough to critique this response as reductionistic in its portrayal of Peru as a "friendly, helping country" and Venezuela as a "socialist and often insolent country," the mentor sought to provide a thoughtful comment nudging the student to reflect more carefully. The challenge, of course, is finding a way to point out problematic assumptions without shutting down the conversation entirely. In this case, the mentor endeavored to strike this balance with the following comment:

> I agree that we should not attack other cultures with such disrespect, but I think that you may have oversimplified the root of the issue - in the article it states how governments across Latin America are moving towards "right" sided policies, so I would also imagine that Venezuela, more than ever, feels threatened by this movement and sees Peru as trying to overly appease the US in this volatile political climate. If Trump can be so unwelcoming to immigrants & Latin Americans (from Mexico especially), it may be in Peru's best interest (as they receive funds from the US) to cater to Trump, and to become as subservient as a "dog on the carpet" which I would argue threatens Peru's autonomy as a nation. No one country should be like "a dog" to another - we should all be at the same table in equal terms. Through this lens, do you see this issue and the article any differently?

Despite this effort from the mentor to engage with the student's comment, the student did not respond. A related challenge for mentors, then, is to decide the appropriate follow-up action. Do they write another comment, try to arrange a phone call, or accept that not all students will be willing or able to engage deeply with these questions all of the time?

Of course, due to the largely digital nature of communication, it can sometimes be difficult for mentors to get a sense of how their comments and questions are being internalized and processed (or not, in some cases) by their mentees, and whether they are striking the "right" balance between their pedagogical responsibilities to support students while also pushing them beyond their comfort zones. In some cases, students' evaluations of mentors seem to suggest that they found their mentors' challenging questions overwhelming. In other cases, seemingly disengaged students have reached out months or years later to thank their mentors for their guidance through the EdGE program and to let them know that it made an impact on them, such as this message sent by a mentee to their mentor several months after completing the EdGE course:

> I know it's been a while, but having started this semester, I just wanted to say thank you for all the help you gave me throughout my experience last year. I know I didn't always reply back to your comments, but I just want you to know that I did read them and it did help me to think more critically about my responses, traveling abroad, and my final Capstone. Looking back, there are definitely a lot of things I would've done differently, including keeping a more active dialogue with you. But I think that it was all part of the learning experience, so that next time I do research, travel abroad, or think critically, I will have a better understanding of what to do!

Such examples suggest to us the value of continuing to encourage critical reflection among students even in cases where there seem to be no obvious or immediate effects on students' learning.

Discomfort as a Pedagogical Space: Supporting Students without Providing Answers
This sort of delayed gratitude raises an interesting question related to the assessment of student learning. In cases where students report feeling uncomfortable and/or unsatisfied with their learning experience, how are we to interpret this feedback? One approach would be to take it at face value and make changes to the curriculum or program structure to relieve students' discomfort. Another approach would be to completely disregard such feedback under the assumption that discomfort is good for them. Of course, both of these hypothetical responses represent extreme ends of a spectrum, and it is easy enough to point out that a better approach lies somewhere in between. But what does this actually look like in practice?

To explore this question, we offer a closer look at how students have responded to one particular response prompt within the EdGE curriculum. The prompt asks students to consider a hypothetical scenario which we quote here in full so as to provide necessary context for understanding the student and mentor experiences that emerge in its wake:

> Your field position is in a context where some women attend university and pursue professional careers, but most of the women that you meet are primarily mothers and homemakers. The domestic work of cooking, cleaning, and caring for children is widely considered "women's work", and the concept of a "stay at home dad" is non-existent.
>
> All of the leadership positions at your host organization are held by men, and the few women who do work in the office are in relatively subordinate positions. You notice that these women rarely speak up in group meetings, and when they do, it seems as though their male colleagues don't take them seriously. This bothers you, but you aren't sure how or if you

should say anything about it.

One day, your male supervisor invites you and some other staff members over to his house for dinner. After arriving, you want to lend a hand in the kitchen, but your supervisor insists that you sit and relax with him and the other staff members while his wife and daughters prepare the food and then clean up afterwards. This upsets you, and you want to discuss it with your supervisor, but you also don't want to seem rude or judgmental.

After the dinner is over, you go back to your hostel and text two friends back home to ask for their input. "I don't know," says one friend. "It sounds like a cultural thing. You're a guest over there so you should probably just to be tolerant of how things work."

You aren't sure what it means for something to be a "cultural thing," but the general sentiment sounds good to you. However, your second friend has a different point of view. "I think you need to say something," says the second friend, "otherwise you are basically condoning sexism and patriarchy."

You take some time to think it over, and then decide to mention your concerns to your supervisor at work the next day. As politely as possible, you mention that you feel uncomfortable with some of the gender norms that you have observed during your time in this context. As examples, you mention your observations from your supervisor's house, as well as your observations of the interpersonal dynamics in the office.

After you explain your concerns to him, he laughs out loud. "Please, spare me," he says. "Your country has a 50% divorce rate, an epidemic of sexual violence against women, and a culture where women's bodies are constantly objectified and sexualized in mass media and everyday life. I don't need your lectures about 'gender equality'."

How do you respond? How do you reconcile your supervisor's perspective with the divergent advice from your two friends?

Students reacted to this scenario in a range of different ways, and mentors worked to acknowledge and support student perspectives, while also nudging students to think more broadly and consider the biases or blind spots that might be coloring their reactions. The following two excerpts of mentor-student engagement in response to this question offer contrasting examples of student perspectives and showcase mentors' attempts to encourage deeper questioning and more nuanced engagement.

The first student suggested a somewhat antagonistic response to the hypothetical supervisor:

> I would respond to my supervisor that statistics based upon the country as a whole does not necessarily reflect individual views of my nation's citizens and it also does not mean that we are not being proactive in trying to assess and fix the inequality issues that are prevalent with my country versus what my supervisor is doing, which is simply perpetuating the

"...mentors worked to acknowledge and support student perspectives, while also nudging students to think more broadly and consider the biases or blind spots that might be coloring their reactions."

inequalities and allowing it to prosper just because that is how it has always been/how it is in many places around the world.

In this case, the mentor encouraged the student to re-frame their concerns in a way that would encourage dialogue with their supervisor and acknowledge the complexity of the issue and different forms of patriarchy. In a comment on the student's reflection quoted above, the mentor wrote:

> I think it's important to demonstrate that statistics do not accurately illustrate individual views, but I fear that if you were to directly tell your supervisor that he is "perpetuating the inequalities and allowing it to prosper" you may risk making him/his culture disrespected. Do you think there is a way that you can engage in this conversation that is more nuanced? Maybe through asking questions about the differences of patriarchy between the two countries?

This comment most likely did not spark an epiphany for the student. In fact, the student did not even respond to the comment. However, if nothing else, the example offers a glimpse of how mentors work to uncover and unsettle the assumptions that seem to inform students' perspectives.

In the next example, the student offered a very different sort of response, one that leans heavily on cultural relativism and seems to ignore important issues related to power and oppression:

> I would respond very politely after that encounter. The reason for this is because I already expressed my opinions and the response of the supervisor seems very harsh but true. So I would offer an apology for my ignorance and I would learn from the situation. It is clear that we live in two very different environments with opposing viewpoints which should be respected. I would be more inclined to critique norms in the office setting. This is only because no matter a person's gender they can effectively contribute in ideas and improvements in the workplace. At the home I would view myself as a guest and I would respect his wants.

In this case, the mentor encouraged the student to be respectful but to also scrutinize power imbalances rather than relying on reductionist conceptions of culture. Furthermore, the mentor introduced another layer of complexity by encouraging the student to consider more nuanced perspectives regarding the universalizing discourses that often underpin conversations about feminism and women's rights, and invited the student to imagine what solidarity or social change might look like in this context:

> While what the supervisor said may be "true," does it really address the issue? Can you justify your complicity in oppression simply by pointing out that it occurs elsewhere? Could one respectful response be..."I agree with you. The treatment of women in the United States is deplorable, and I actively work to disrupt those norms at my home, school, and work. I also believe that women's voices should be upheld and labor should be recognized everywhere. This means that women should have equal opportunity to speak and be heard in meetings, and it means that men should not depend on the household work of women."
>
> And/or what might it look like to speak directly with the women you hold concerns for such that you have a full understanding of their situation and you are not speaking FOR them but WITH them? What could you learn from the feminist perspectives of that country/context? "Feminism" does not belong to the west. Also, while there have been many gains for women in the United States in the last decades, it is far from perfect - and aren't many of these fights cultural? As the supervisor pointed out, we've got our own set of problems - is there a

possibility for solidarity and cross-cultural understanding, are we confined only to have opinions and to act on issues in the culture we "belong" to, or is there something else going on?

Both of these examples of student-mentor interaction beg the question of what, if anything, students are actually learning through these encounters. One way that the EdGE administrative team works to answer such questions is by conducting periodic online evaluations in which students provide feedback on their experience within the program. In response to the question, "Which unit or specific piece of content has been your least favorite so far, and why?" several students have named this unit and especially this scenario. Their explanations for this decision are illuminating:

> My least favorite piece of content in the course so far has been the unit talking about confronting your culture. This is because I felt...there was never really a concrete answer posed.

> My least favorite unit has been the social justice one because I felt like there was never a clear answer what to do in certain situations.

> [My least favorite was] the piece on cultural differences and what norms we should accept or challenge in other cultures. It was just frustrating because I think some of my peers took cultural relativism way too far.

Clearly, for such students, the lack of answers is deeply distressing. Perhaps they would feel more supported if mentors offered more concrete guidance and advice rather than consistently playing devil's advocate. On the other hand, at risk of seeming to ignore student feedback, the EdGE administrative team actually tends to consider this sort of feedback to be a good sign – rather than rest easy in the comfort of what they know, students are confronting new questions and possibilities. Although they report being frustrated and uncomfortable, we contend that this posture of uncertainty opens up space for new forms of learning and inquiry.

Embracing Complexity through Polyvocal Research: Student Transformation and Resistance
The EdGE program offers students an opportunity to undertake research that embraces complexity, which often leads them to ask more questions than they answer. Throughout the program, the framing of the Capstone Project emphasizes polyvocal research, engaging various and diverse stakeholders and complicating hegemonic or simplistic narratives throughout the research process. This runs counter to much of the research that students will have conducted or been exposed to during their university careers thus far. It also tends to be a less comforting research process than other forms of research that encourage clearly defined questions and lead to seemingly straightforward answers. It is not uncommon for students to alter or completely change their research plans, initially formulated at the end of the pre-departure course and partway into their internships abroad. Far from being problematic, we take this sort of shift to be a sign that students are internalizing the realities of the communities in which they are working and are considering new questions that they had not considered during the pre-departure course. However, some students resist this sort of process and become stressed or frustrated when mentors nudge them to rethink their preconceived research plans or when those plans do not work out for logistical reasons. Throughout this process, mentors continue striving to unsettle students' assumptions while also meeting them where they are.

For example, consider the case of an undergraduate pre-medical student who was preparing for an internship at a hospital in Morocco. At the end of the pre-departure EdGE course, his proposed Capstone research project was to investigate the link between child mortality and women's

education and income. This sort of inquiry fits squarely within the dominant paradigm of positivist social science research. It revolves around investigating the relationship between several quantifiable variables and implicitly aims to ameliorate a given social problem (child mortality, in this case) by searching for causal factors and illuminating pathways for intervention. However, during the first few weeks of his internship and through his preliminary ROP's, the student recognized the challenges with conducting such research, including the language barrier, patient privacy considerations, and scope of the study. At the same time, through participant-observation during his work at the hospital, the student realized that many of the patients he met were somewhat mistrustful of "Western" medicine, as exemplified by the prevalence of homemade casts called jbira, which can result in disfigurement and amputations when not done correctly.

The student reached out to his mentor and scheduled a Skype meeting in which they discussed various considerations in designing a new research project, including possible participants, usefulness for the host organization, and the student's positionality as a researcher. After consulting his mentor and the supervisor at his host organization, receiving feedback from his peers, and revisiting content from the EdGE curriculum, the student made a notable shift from a positivist to an interpretivist approach to research and knowledge. The student chose to focus on Moroccans' perceptions of healthcare and doctors, as seen through the case study of homemade casts and used a combination of qualitative interviewing and participatory photography as his research methods. His creative Capstone showcased a variety of perspectives, including those of doctors, traditional healers, patients and others, on this issue. Rather than attempting to draw his own conclusions about how to solve this issue, he invited his participants to share their opinions, and showcased those perspectives in his Capstone Project. His final Capstone included the following reflection:

> Because Moroccans' accessibility to quality healthcare is a multifaceted issue, the responses local people gave me to address the issue were also multifaceted. In fact, no two people suggested the same solution. Some talked about justice, some about education, and others about the media.

This reflection represents a much different sort of research finding than quantifying the link between education, income, and child mortality -- but certainly no less valuable, at least from within the pedagogical and epistemological framework that underpins the EdGE program.

In a different example, a student majoring in Cultural Anthropology and International Relations at a university in the United States worked closely with her mentor, university advisor, and host partner to design and conduct polyvocal ethnographic research, primarily through qualitative interviewing. By the end of the EdGE pre-departure course, under the guidance of her mentor, the student had decided to focus on the link between family planning and child labor, and had identified some potential participatory research methods through which to explore this topic. Her original research proposal was to explore the role of family planning in preventing child labor and trafficking, and to assess whether or not local opinions confirmed claims made in existing literature on the topic. However, during the beginning of her internship with an Omprakash Partner in Ghana, as the student began to conduct interviews with members of the communities in which she was working, her research question and methods evolved. Her research question became more specific and she became more focused on studying the distinct and often discordant voices of individuals. As she began to notice the gendered nature of responsibilities for family planning while conducting these preliminary interviews, she decided to shift her focus to explore contrasting perspectives on the importance of and responsibility for decisions related to family planning.

In order to explore this subject, the student conducted extensive qualitative interviews, with both individuals and groups, as well as observing reactions to the family planning outreach programs that

she led as part of her internship. Research participants, identified in collaboration with her host partner, included NGO workers, local elites (i.e., religious and political leaders and clinicians), and other members of three of the communities in which the organization worked. Rather than working to construct a single streamlined narrative, the student introduced many contrasting opinions on the subject, including perspectives that were not in alignment with the goals of her host organization, and that jarred with her own.

The student's final Capstone took the form of a research paper which she subsequently presented at the National Collegiate Research Conference (NCRC) in January, 2018, at Harvard University. This is an excerpt from the student's Capstone project:

> As an American feminist, I originally hesitated to pursue such a controversial topic, as it's easy to assume my cultural values of individual liberty and personal choice are universal when they are not. However, my experience highlighted that there is no consensus for or against issues of women's decision making or the social acceptance of birth control. While there may be tensions between local and foreign perspectives, these tensions also appear between local education gaps, region, and gender.

In both of the examples above, student research projects are moving towards increasing nuance and complexity, rather than towards a straightforward answer. However, this is certainly not always the case. Sometimes students have a hard time recognizing and letting go of their desires to conduct research within a positivist framework and resist mentor efforts to nudge them towards more interpretivist approaches.

For example, one EdGE student, a recent graduate with a B.A. in International Relations, sought to conduct a needs assessment among refugee populations while interning with an Omprakash Partner in Greece. Although her EdGE mentor was closely involved in the design of this research project and provided suggestions for how to conduct more nuanced and participatory research in this context, the student opted to utilize a survey instrument comprised of quantitative questions eliciting multiple choice responses. In many cases, the questions posed were suggestive in nature, and at no point did the survey allow space for narrative reflection from participants (Figure 1). More importantly, the student was clearly intending to conduct her research among vulnerable populations in a politically-charged environment. Her intended respondents had most likely already participated in similar small-scale research projects without seeing any appreciable impact on their own lives. On the basis of all of these concerns, the mentor urged the student to consider a less-intrusive, more-nuanced approach of participant-observation as an alternative to the intended survey research.

While the student was receptive to suggested alterations to the study, and, in particular, took onboard her mentor's suggestions to ensure the secure storage of data and the anonymity of research participants, she ultimately resisted her mentor's encouragement to move towards a more qualitative and participatory research approach. She was open to modifying some of the problematic leading questions that the mentor had identified (e.g., those shown in Figure 1), but continued to insist to her mentor that her intended study would potentially be valuable to refugee-serving NGOs in the nearby area. Ultimately, the student's research plans were curtailed by logistical challenges, and at the time of this writing, the project is on pause. However, the bigger point of this example is that in spite of being a diligent student with a genuine commitment towards producing impactful research -- or indeed, perhaps because of these characteristics -- the student struggled to recognize and relinquish her preconceived assumptions about what constitutes impactful research in the first place.

Figure 1
Excerpt from Draft Questionnaire Designed by an EdGE Student

I am anxious and/or afraid of the future.				
A. Never	B. Rarely.	C. Sometimes	D. Often	E. Always

Which of the following are the biggest problems you face in Moria? Choose three.	
A. Anxiety/depression/other mental illness.	B. Emotional distress.
C. Boredom.	D. Sickness.
E. Hygiene.	F. Racism/Discrimination.
G. Lack of safety.	H. Lack of education.
I. Lack of employment.	J. Living conditions.
K. Legal status (documentation).	L. Police brutality/corruption.
M. Other: _____	

"Being Me in Nicaragua": Towards Critically-Engaged Undergraduate Research
The examples above have sought to provide a multifaceted illustration of the challenges and possibilities for impactful mentorship in the unique context of the Omprakash EdGE program -- and, implicitly, in similar programs that utilize online learning and distance mentorship with the aim of helping students recognize and rethink some of their core assumptions about the nature of truth, knowledge, and the ethical implications of their own positionality as young researchers and as people seeking to do good in the world. As we have made clear, this sort of learning journey is seldom easy for students or mentors, and in fact is often deeply unsettling. Thoughtful suggestions and comments from mentors often go unacknowledged, and students often report frustration with the entire process. Yet this is certainly not to say that success stories are nowhere to be found. In this penultimate section, we present the case of an EdGE student whose mentor consistently pushed her to question her assumptions, and who demonstrated dramatic personal growth and transformation throughout her experience working as an intern at a hospital in Nicaragua.

As a pre-medical student majoring in Molecular Biology and Religious Studies at a liberal arts college in the United States, this student submitted a preliminary Capstone proposal focusing on inequality in access to medical education in Nicaragua. However, the student's first ROP during her internship included some content that raised concerns among Omprakash administrators in relation to patient privacy and assisting in medical procedures beyond the scope of her training. As a result, an Omprakash administrator and the student's EdGE Mentor reached out to her to suggest edits to the blog post, and to begin a discussion with her about ethical hazards associated with medical volunteering, providing some guidelines and additional resources (e.g., Citrin, 2010; Lasker, 2016; Sullivan, 2017). The student was receptive to their concerns and engaged in discussions with both her EdGE Mentor and the hospital staff in Nicaragua on these issues. The following passage is an excerpt from the student's response to the initial feedback from her mentor:

Thank you for sending all the materials about medical volunteerism! They were definitely eye-opening and worthwhile. I've been working through the implications and what it means for me to be doing what I'm doing this weekend. [...] I've been grappling with how to best use my time here to maximize benefits, and these conversations have sparked so many more with the local students here and the hospital staff.

The student's subsequent ROPs engaged with questions of positionality – both in terms of the student's positionality as a volunteer from the Global North, and as a person of South Asian descent), and broader questions about the ethics of medical volunteering and international engagement. Crucially, her discussions included the perspectives of her Nicaraguan colleagues at the hospital, and thus fused together her polyvocal, interpretive research with a rigorous reflection on who she is and who she wants to be in the world. The following is an excerpt from one of the student's ROPs:

For most people I meet here, I am the first person of South Asian descent they've spoken to. I find myself answering questions of dowry, dots on heads, and veiled women multiple times a day. I think this is a valuable cultural exchange that is supposed to be happening, but it's weird to speak for a country, sometimes an entire continent, that I have never lived in. And weirder speaking for cultures I've never been part of. I've found myself deliberately trying to de-exotify Arabs, dispute Orientalizing terminology and ideology, and defend Islam against claims that it is inherently oppressive to women. I know I am not equipped with the knowledge and experiences to fight racist stereotypes, but even if I could do it effectively, dismissing intangible and obscure prejudices seems like a wildly inadequate contribution to a hospital infested with cockroaches.

[...]

"Not everyone can do what you do, you know.

I was answering a nurse's question about where I was going after Nica and I told her about my plans to spend time with family in America and England and India. She interrupted to tell me this, and I just said quietly, "I know" and wondered why I lived this life and she didn't.

Not only did these discussions inform the student's engagement as an intern at the hospital -- for example, she began focusing on tasks that staff members had identified as particularly useful, such as English classes and keeping medical records -- but also, after further discussions with her mentor, these discussions inspired her to focus on the topic of medical volunteering abroad for her Capstone. While these discussions had been taking place, during the first few weeks of her internship, the student had also begun to realize that her original Capstone idea was likely beyond her ability to study during a three-month internship, and that her original intention of analyzing trends in research participants' perspectives was likely not feasible, nor necessarily desirable.

I've already learnt some interesting things just by listening to their stories over meals and it would be relevant to see their perspectives. This is by no means a representative sample, so I don't know if I could codify data and analyze trends. Rather, these conversations would point to what students feel the problems and solutions are. I've also had the chance to briefly talk to some of the doctors, but I need to ask the right questions. I guess I'm leaning toward the romantic concept of interview, but I'd like to do something more collaborative like postmodern, but I don't know how.

The final sentence of this passage was in reference to Roulston's (2010) typology of five conceptions of interviewing, each representing different underlying epistemological and theoretical assumptions. Excerpts from this article form part of the EdGE curriculum. The student's mentor worked with her to design a research project based in part on qualitative interviews conducted with doctors, nurses, and medical students (both local and international) at the hospital in which she interned. These discussions were intentionally open-ended and informal, and the student succeeded in emulating a postmodern conception of interviewing by sharing her own perspectives with her interviewees and seeking to understand others' perspectives in relationship with them, rather than attempting to minimize bias and researcher influences and striving for a neutral role, as in the neo-positivist conception of interviewing. The student's mentor also encouraged her to include her own reflections and discussions of her positionality in her research project, alongside observations garnered through her role as an intern in the hospital.

In terms of making her research more collaborative, the student's mentor suggested using Photovoice, a participatory photography method, to involve interviewees in the process and catalyze deeper reflection and dialogue through the creation of visual media. The student included several examples of the resultant photographs and reflections in her final project. Throughout her internship and the research project, the student concentrated on building trust, rapport, and friendship with her interviewees, and aimed to portray them how they wished to be portrayed. The student also checked in regularly with her mentor regarding potential ethical issues relating to the use of photographs, names, or personal information, and ensured that all of her interviewees were aware of what the information was being used for, and how it would be presented.

The resulting Capstone Project was at once critically engaged, reflexive, participatory, and useful to hospital administrators and future volunteers. The Capstone Project discusses various perspectives on the role of international volunteers in the hospital, the student's own experiences as an American medical student of South Asian descent in Nicaragua, the costs and benefits for hospitals, hospital staff and patients of hosting international volunteers, and the ethics of medical volunteering more broadly. The following is an excerpt from the student's Capstone:

> Before any volunteer flies to another country, they should seriously ask themselves what their contribution can be. For unskilled and untrained undergraduate students, the answer to this question is difficult to come up with.
>
> As University of Minnesota's Global Ambassadors for Patient Safety puts it, "Traveling abroad to find opportunities to provide medical care as an untrained individual is unethical and unsafe." If a student is given an opportunity to go abroad in a volunteering capacity, they need to think critically and plan a trip that will be helpful and useful. This requires centering the communities' voices and needs. Often the behind-the-scenes work is not glorious nor exciting, but lending manpower to an effort that is spearheaded by a local organization is the most helpful.
>
> [...]
>
> What am I doing in Nicaragua? There is no question that I have learned and grown, but that's not the point. What did I contribute in return? I didn't provide direct medical care, but I gave something much more ethical: two months of impeccably written and kept vaccination records.

Conclusions

As increasing numbers of undergraduate students leave campus and traverse geographic and social differences to engage in various forms of research without direct faculty oversight, there is an acute need for innovative modes of enriching their pre-departure preparation and ongoing critical reflection. Online learning platforms such as Omprakash EdGE present a uniquely scalable and affordable mechanism for delivering curriculum and scaffolding that curricular content with personalized mentorship and peer-to-peer support. The sort of distance mentorship that this platform makes possible is undoubtedly limited in its capacity to reproduce the qualities of trust, intimacy, and robust dialogue that can characterize instances of successful in-person mentorship. However, the example of Omprakash EdGE suggests that asynchronous online learning platforms can indeed be a venue for effective and impactful mentorship.

This finding would be noteworthy in any context, but it is all the more so when one considers the particular learning objectives of the Omprakash EdGE program. Unlike an online course in Statistics, Spanish, or Calculus, all of which are surely challenging and important in their own right, the EdGE program does not aim to lead students towards a definitive conclusion or mastery of specific content. There are no answer keys, study guides, or multiple-choice tests. Accordingly, the research projects that emerge from this program do not aim to resolve preconceived questions or determine truth so much as they aim to open new questions and elucidate multiple truths of ever-increasing nuance and complexity. In such a context, mentors are quite literally unable to provide students with the answers, because no such answers exist. Instead, mentors must commit themselves to the ongoing work of thoughtful engagement with their students and with the phenomena they apprehend together. This work requires that mentors maintain the delicate balance of nudging students out of their comfort zones while still providing enough nurturance and support to maintain students' trust and enthusiasm. The outcomes of such work are sometimes imperceptible and slow to arrive, and sometimes they do not seem to arrive at all. Nonetheless, our efforts in this space have yielded enough anecdotal victories to inspire us to keep treading this razor's edge, and we hope the same for our readers.

References

Ausland, A. (2010, August 27). Poverty tourism taxonomy 2.0. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/aaron-ausland/poverty-tourism-taxonomy-_b_697399.html

Canton, C. (2018). Mental health in Ghana: A study on the practice and understanding of mental health in the Volta region. *The International Undergraduate Journal for Service-Learning, Leadership, and Social Change*, 7(2), 16-24.

Citrin, D. (2011). *"Paul Farmer made me do it": A qualitative study of short-term medical volunteer work in Northwest Nepal* (Unpublished master's thesis). Seattle, WA: University of Washington.

Citrin, D. (2010). The anatomy of ephemeral health care: "Health camps" and medical voluntourism in remote Nepal. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 5(1), 27-72.

Crabtree, R. (2008). Theoretical foundations for international service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 15(1), 18-36.

Crabtree, R. (2013) The intended and unintended consequences of international service-learning. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 17(2), 43-65.

Crossley, É. (2012). Poor but happy: Volunteer tourists' encounters with poverty. *Tourism Geographies*, *14*(2), 235-253.

Falconer, J., & Holcomb, D. (2008). Understanding undergraduate research experiences from the student perspective: A phenomenological study of a summer student research program. *College Student Journal*, *42*(3), 869-878.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Gardner, B., & Krabill, R. (2017). *Against the romance of study abroad*. Retrieved from https://africasacountry.com/2017/07/against-the-romance-of-study-abroad/

Guterman, L. (2007). What good is undergraduate research, anyway? *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *53*(50), 11-11. 1p.

Handler, R. (2013). Disciplinary adaptation and undergraduate desire. *Cultural Anthropology*, *28*(2), 181-203.

Hartman, E. & Kiely, R. (2014). A critical global citizenship. In M. Johnson and P. M. Green (Eds.), *Crossing boundaries: Tension and transformation in international service-learning* (pp.215-242). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Hartman, E., Kiely, R., Boettcher, C., & Friedrichs, J. (2018) *Community-based global learning: The theory and practice of ethical engagement at home and abroad*. Virginia: Stylus Press.

Heath, S. (2007). Widening the gap: Pre-university gap years and the economy of experience. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *28*(1), 89-103.

Hickel, J. (2013). The "real experience" industry: Student development projects and the depoliticisation of poverty. *Learning and Teaching: The International Journal of Higher Education in the Social Sciences*, *6*(2), 11-32.

Kahn, C. (2014). As "voluntourism" explodes in popularity, who's it helping most? *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2014/07/31/336600290/as-volunteerism-explodes-in-popularity-whos-it-helping-most

Kuh, G. (2008). High Impact Educational Practices. Washington, DC: AAC&U.

Lasker, J. (2016). *Hoping to help: The promises and pitfalls of global health volunteering*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

McBride, A., & Lough, B. (2010). Access to international volunteering. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *21*(2), 195-208.

Moruzzi, N. (2005). Cutting through culture: The feminist discourse on female circumcision. *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, *14*(2), 203-220.

Mostafanazhad, M. (2013). Getting in touch with your Inner Angelina: celebrity humanitarianism and the cultural politics of gendered generosity in volunteer tourism. *Third World Quarterly*, *34*(3), 455-489.

Oppenheim, W., O'Shea, J., & Sclar, S. (2015). Interactive technology for more critical service-learning?: Possibilities for mentorship and collaboration within an online platform for international volunteering. *The Journal of Interactive Technology & Pedagogy*, *7*. Retrieved from http://jitp.commons.gc.cuny.edu/interactive-technology-for-more-critical-service-learning/

Oppenheim, W. (2018). *The problem with "placements"*. Retrieved from https://www.omprakash.org/blog/the-problem-with--placements-

O'Shea, J. (2014). *Gap year: How delaying college changes people in ways the world needs*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Rieffel, L., & Zalud, S. (2006). *International volunteering: Smart power*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Roulston, K. (2010). Considering quality in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research*, *10*(2), 199-228.

Simpson, K. (2004). "Doing development": The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development. *Journal of International Development*, *16*(5), 681-692.

Smith, V., & Font, X. (2014). Volunteer tourism, greenwashing and understanding responsible marketing. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *22*(6), 942-963.

Sullivan, N. (2017). Why international medical volunteering does more harm than good. *Role Reboot*. Retrieved from http://rolereboot.org/culture-and-politics/details/2017-04-international-medical-volunteering-harm-good/

Zakaria, R. (2014, April 21). The white tourist's burden. *Al Jazeera America*. Retrieved from http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/4/volunter-tourismwhitevoluntouristsafricaaidsorphans.html