

avert a potential global health disaster.”

As a scholar, Brandt has been involved in graduate training at the master's and doctoral level within both FAS and HMS; the latter's Ph.D. programs are offered through FAS's departments of anthropology and history of science. In 2005, he was appointed director of a new social-sciences track in the joint M.D.-Ph.D. program, combining work in anthropology, health policy, government, or psychology with clinical medicine (www.hms.harvard.edu/md_phd/program/sstrack.htm). In earlier FAS discussions concerning revision of the undergraduate curriculum, Brandt urged broad perspectives on how faculties from other Harvard schools

might be further involved in education in the College, and advocated a holistic assessment of students' coursework, extracurricular activities, and study abroad. He has also served as the director of the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments (see “Telltale Apparatus,” March-April 2006, page 42).

In the official announcement, FAS dean Michael D. Smith noted, “Allan is an exceptional scholar and teacher who will bring to the position a deep understanding of the complex issues facing the graduate school.... [H]is service on committees, experience as a department chair, and his service as the director of the social-sciences track of the M.D.-Ph.D. pro-



gram give him a unique background on which to draw when looking broadly at our graduate programs.... With creative energy, enthusiasm, and a collaborative spirit, Allan will continue to move us forward in the areas of teaching, training, and funding for graduate students....”

THE UNDERGRADUATE

Off Harvard Time

by SAMUEL BJORK '09

MANY Harvard undergraduates give personal happiness and reflective decision-making short shrift in the race for academic accolades and pre-professional success: focusing on the seminar papers and section preparations, the problem sets and practice tests, the paperwork of fellowship applications, even the intensity of high-powered extracurricular commitments. At least, as the four semesters between my first ill-fated math set freshman year and the caffeine-fueled completion of my final sophomore essay flew by, that was the case for me.

Unsure of what I wanted to do with the second half of my undergraduate career, and still a bit startled by the first, I took time off for a bit of service and self-reflection, seeking an antidote to Harvard time in the languor of African time. Since September, I've made my home in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, a dusty, sunny, and rather quiet country of bleating goats, braying donkeys, and the second-highest prevalence of HIV in the world. I've come, appropriately enough, to work on a public-health project aimed at assisting pri-

mary- and secondary-school teachers in the fight against the HIV and AIDS epidemic in their classrooms.

At least, that was the plan. In reality, the first few months in-country found my stomach too often in my mouth for self-reflection, and whatever “service” I hoped to render seemed an exercise in futility: my poor command of the local language severely handicapped me; the grossly overworked government officials involved with the project had limited time and resources to offer; and what few results I did get left much to be desired. My enthusiasm for my work waned. I raided libraries to justify my growing cynicism and found, through an unfair fixation on the critical parts of otherwise nuanced books, enough validation to have me washing my hands of global do-gooding for life.

I should have taken a bus instead. “When does this leave?” I impatiently asked the driver the first time I did, leaning over the tightly bound and blinking chicken with which I shared my seat. “When it is full,” he replied with a leisurely smile. Some minutes later, a respectable-looking man sat down opposite

the chicken, looked with amusement at my fingers drumming on the seat-back, and pointedly closed his eyes, falling into the endemic African trance-like state of endless patience. Two hours later, the bus was full, and my own impatience had turned to embarrassment. I realized that I had never really left Cambridge, never really left the world of deadlines and timetables, of problem sets to be solved and turned in on time. I had a lot to learn, and Widener couldn't help me.

I SOON FOUND other ways to be a student. Not long after the bus incident, I traveled with a team of community workers to villages outside Gaborone to test at-risk inhabitants for HIV infection. We drove past sun-burnt fields, worked by stooping women with babies strapped to their backs; past the spreading acacia trees where their husbands gulped cheap *chibuku* by the liter. Some trips to village health centers brought empty rooms and disheartening facilities; at other times, with a bullhorn declaring our presence and purpose for all to hear, our car was surrounded by eager subjects. Back in Gaborone, Western doctors working on the hospital wards introduced me to the maddening unpredictability—the needless deaths, the spectacular recoveries—of Third World medicine. For every excuse to doubt the future of this embattled country, I learned there was a reason to hope.

I had also hoped to teach. Gradually, the team of medical officers and social

workers with whom I worked found its way to some schools. Our “workshops”—two-day marathons of lectures, questions (“Is it true that if I shower after...”), and discussion sessions—had been devised, long before I arrived, as a response to the growing number of school-age children with HIV in Botswana. If we have covered far fewer schools since my arrival than I anticipated, we have, at least, been welcomed with far greater enthusiasm than I could have dreamed.

Frequent lulls in this work have allowed me to continue my education outside Botswana. My wanderings have

do-gooders who click cheap bottles of beer and toast leaving “Africa to Africans.” The experience has been invaluable, the conversations enlightening, the endless kilometers of bus travel immensely liberating.

Somewhere along the way—and for the first time in 14 years—I watched the Southern Hemisphere spring give way to summer without the startling rush of formal schooling. It’s odd, then, that my education has never been so intense.

THE BENEFITS of taking time away from school should come as no surprise. Stu-

was unable to remain in Africa. “I’d always wanted to do a community governance project,” he e-mails, “and I’d been involved in school politics in my town, Great Falls, Montana, when I was in high school.” So Kavulla used the freedom of time off to engage in some “unremunerated volunteer work” aimed at reversing a local school closure. It was, he says, a commitment undemanding enough to allow him to strengthen his family ties and appreciate some of the most rewarding aspects of unstructured life. “I spent most of my time catching up on fiction, and improving my pool game and alcohol tolerance,” he reports. “Time well spent, if you ask me.”

The decision to leave school is not easy. My two years at Harvard passed by so rapidly in part because I love the College so much: the classes, the students, the quiet study nooks in the libraries. Schooling, for better or worse, has defined much of my life to date—so much so that at times I have hoped never to leave this familiar world. Fitzsimmons, in fact, cautions that students “often find it very hard [to take time off] during college because they become so involved with roommates, friends, academic work, and classes.”

For others, however, this all-consuming and sometimes crippling involvement with the daily workings of Harvard is reason enough to step away. After transferring from the University of Pennsylvania to Harvard following her freshman year, Elise Wang ’07 found a different sort of campus than she had expected. “Maybe I never found the right group of people or the right classes,” she e-mails, “but sophomore year was very difficult. Everyone seemed to care [about] and be doing something, [but] it just seemed like everyone was president of their two-person club, rather than forming any sort of movement...I began to feel like this sort of attitude was all that was available if one wanted to become involved in an effort to change things, and it was getting depressing.”

In need of another change, Wang traveled to Taiwan, a country whose language she knew and where distant relatives lived, but which she had left as an infant. It was, she says, “a balance between striking out on my own and still feeling like I had somewhere to go for a meal when I was just too tired to go haggle at the mar-



Samuel Bjork at the hospital where he works, in Gaborone, Botswana

taken me through Swaziland, a beautiful but ailing country with the highest prevalence of HIV in the world, to the poverty of Mozambique; across Botswana’s riparian border with Zambia, where the endless line of truckers waiting to cross the Zambezi River forms, in the words of a doctor with whom I was traveling, the epicenter of the HIV epidemic in Africa; and through the rice fields of Malawi to Tanzania. Everywhere people in need, and everywhere, for better or worse, volunteers lined up to help them: Peace Corps types with their hand-rolled cigarettes and scraggly beards; Dutch relief workers on holiday; students, like myself, swapping job descriptions and mounting frustrations on terraced escarpments overlooking Lake Malawi; jaded one-time

dents have long had the option of taking a “gap year” between high school and college, and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions has promoted it in their letter of admission for more than 30 years.

Even as an increased number of study-abroad opportunities has created options for a more structured break, or at least change, from Cambridge, Harvard College’s dean of admissions and financial aid, William R. Fitzsimmons, says that there can be great benefit in taking unstructured time off as well: “Such an experience can lead a student in a very different direction from a personal, academic or vocational perspective.”

After a semester studying abroad in Tanzania, Travis Kavulla ’06 found himself as unwilling to return to campus as he

ket.” At first, she studied Chinese, taught English, and, like Kavulla, “enjoyed having the time to read all those books I’d always meant to read.” From Taiwan, she set off for Beijing University, where she supplemented her Mandarin studies with courses on immigration and Chinese history in an academic setting unlike anything she had seen at Harvard or Penn.

After further travels throughout China, Wang worked for Senator Barack Obama in his Chicago office, a job perhaps most valuable for allowing her to concentrate on her growing interest in immigration issues. “In a way,” she says, “a year away from doing ‘productive’ work was really what threw me into focus, so to speak. At the end of it, I was ready to begin again, not only with energy, but also with the knowledge that this wasn’t the only thing out there—that, contrary to popular belief, a world does exist on the other side of the Charles and past Porter, not just in a theoretical future way.”

AFTER TWO YEARS of living in Boston, I’m not entirely sure that I’ve actually been past Porter Square; I’m even less sure that any of the lessons I’ve learned while away will throw anything into focus for me back at Harvard. I am, after all, still in the midst of things, having written this on a dirty street corner in Dar es Salaam, to be sent overseas—the chaos of overland travel in Africa permitting—from my home in Gaborone.

I do know, however, that my newfound commitment to the worlds of public health and international aid is only one part of my time abroad. In some probably selfish sense, what I’ve done in my time off has mattered less than the simple fact that I did it away from Harvard. My work, although supported by a generous Harvard-specific fellowship, was not arranged by an established work- or study-abroad program or through any of Harvard’s international channels. It arose instead from a few simple e-mails to outside organizations I admired. This probably resulted in a more chaotic project than a formal Harvard program might have provided, but I’m not convinced that is all bad. In fact, it has allowed me to step away not just from the routines of Cambridge, but from the academic co-

150 Years of Glee

During its first international tour, in 1921, the Harvard Glee Club inspired French composers Francis Poulenc and Darius Milhaud to write new pieces for the group. Milhaud set Psalm 121. Poulenc penned a drinking song. So began a tradition that continues this April 11, when the club premieres opera and choral composer Dominic Argento’s *Apollo in Cambridge* at a gala 150th-anniversary concert in Sanders Theatre (see www.harvardgleeclub.org).

The debut caps an eight-year project. In 2000, Bernard E. Kreger ’59, secretary of the Harvard Glee Club Foundation, donated \$25,000 (which was matched by the foundation) to commission a new piece of men’s choral music annually, culminating in a major work for the sesquicentennial. He formed a five-man committee and began considering likely sources. He even remembers a vacation spent driving all over Maui, “listening to a stack of CDs to see if I could whittle it down to a couple that I thought were really worthy.”

The committee ran its selections by director of choral activities Jameson N. Marvin, the group’s conductor, and began commissioning composers, including Charles Fussell, a professor at Boston University, and Sir John Tavener, who composed music for Princess Diana’s funeral. “We probably do more twentieth-century music than any genre,” explains Marvin. The commissions help because “in general there’s not a lot of great male chorus music out there.” Kreger and current Glee Clubbers agree that their goal is not only to support the group, but also to push the boundaries of men’s choral music with every piece.

Of the new works, club president Quentin Sedlacek ’08 says, “Some are now performed by choirs throughout the country.” The professional men’s group Cantus recorded Sedlacek’s favorite, “Ave Dulcissima Maria” by Morton Lauridsen, a winner of the National Medal of the Arts. Peter Lifland ’10, who “came to Harvard for the Glee Club,” enjoys “Credo,” by Paul Moravec, but says some audiences—put off by its dissonant cluster chords—don’t. He admits that the new pieces can be difficult, sometimes requiring months of rehearsal.

Nothing has been more difficult than *Apollo in Cambridge*, a setting of works by Harvard-affiliated poets James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that Marvin introduced in rehearsal more than a year ago. Argento’s 15-minute piece contains three sections, each with its own shifting time signatures, syncopated rhythms, and flurries of sharps, naturals, and flats. But the challenges and intricacies, say the singers, don’t mean the piece isn’t fun to listen to. “It sounds really luscious,” agrees Kreger, who serves as an accompanist for the group. “[Argento’s] not an ‘out-there’ modern composer making odd noises.” Sedlacek sees the new music connecting the group’s present with its storied past. “This anniversary,” he says, “will really highlight that continuity.”



coon in which I’ve been ensconced for two years. I have been able to define my public-health experience for myself, in part by ignoring time altogether, in part by responding in my own way to the

difficulties of the developing world. I still don’t know what I’ll do when I return to campus, but for the first time in years, I’m comfortable with that.

My African adventures do occasionally

strike me as somewhat ridiculous. My knee-jerk cynicism regarding public-health work may have given way to a wary faith in its utility, but I harbor no delusions of the impact I'll make in just six months. I've had my doubts even about the transformative power of travel. I find myself wondering—as often at work as on empty buses, waiting for them to fill with

more than poultry—if the independence, the suspension of time, the break from the pressures and decisions of schooling that I have found in Botswana might just as easily have been found amid the comforts of the West.

But whether there's more to my wanderings than a few good stories and a partially successful project is beside the

point. What matters is that I've finally learned one of the more difficult lessons a Cantabrigian can: there is more to my education than Harvard. ▽

The work Berta Greenwald Ledecy Undergraduate Fellow Samuel Bjork '09 is doing in Botswana is supported in part by a Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Public Service Fellowship.

SPORTS

Stick, Helmet, and Butterfly

Protecting against the puck

HOCKEY PARENTS, they say, don't like their kids to become goalies because goaltenders wear so much costly protective equipment. But those special helmets do save money on dental bills. Unlike many icemen, Crimson goalie Kyle

Richter '10 has a perfect set of teeth.

This season, Richter has had ample reason to smile. Although individual statistics change with every game, Richter ranked second in the country in goals-against average (at 1.46 per game) and led the nation with a .951 save percentage after the Crimson's first 11 contests. He had shut out Rensselaer, Union, and Dartmouth. Harvard ranked thirteenth nationally, with a 6-3-2 record, at that point, and the performance in goal of the six-foot, one-inch, 188-pound Richter was an important factor. "I like the extent of responsibility, being the one guy there to stop a goal," he says. "As a goalie, your mistakes get counted on the scoreboard."

But stopping opponents from scoring has become more difficult in recent years. Both the National Hockey League (NHL) and the NCAA have changed their rules to promote the offense by broadening the definition of what constitutes infractions such as hooking or interference by defenders. This means more penalties called, hence more power plays and more opportunities for goals. At the same time, technology has improved hockey sticks: today's more flexible graphite/composite sticks put more power into a shot

than the older wooden sticks, while the wider variety of curves in the new sticks' blades lets skaters cradle the puck and lift their shots, if they choose, toward the upper reaches of the net.

Goaltending has also progressed. Modern goalies like Richter employ the "butterfly" style—dropping down onto the ice with flared legs, knees drawn in tightly, using flexibility in the hips—to make saves. Coaches feel the method allows a goalie to get more body between puck and goal than the older "stand-up" technique. (Richter, who grew up in Calgary, is a fan of the Calgary Flames of the NHL, but also admires the butterfly moves of goaltender Roberto Luongo of the Vancouver Canucks.)

Line changes give the skating players relief from their exertions every couple of minutes, but as a goalie, "You are on the ice the entire time," says Richter. "There's no time to relax. You're always on your feet, and when the puck is in the zone, you are constantly in the crouch position. It's physically draining, and equally draining mentally." Hyper-alertness is essential, not only because of the speed of play and the velocity of shots, but to stay on top of oddities like a "flutter puck"—a shot that might spin or tumble end-over-end through the air, perhaps unexpectedly changing direction when it hits the ice.

Despite these demands, or perhaps because of them, Richter, who first skated at

Kyle Richter has a perfect set of teeth—and has perfected the art of defending the goal.



Photograph by Fred Field

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