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Introduction to Special Issue: The Practice, Politics and Possibilities for Globally Engaged Experiential Learning in Diverse Contexts

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Keywords: globally engaged experiential learning; transnational service learning; global citizenship; critical scholarship

ABSTRACT: This introduction to the special issue outlines the key debates in literature about globally-engaged learning. Through this analysis of the literature and related terms, we argue that the term "transnational service learning" offers a new way of: 1. framing the diverse forms of learning and volunteering at home and abroad and 2. building relations and learning between people across difference for those who seek to recognize and ameliorate global asymmetries. This special issue provides papers from a range of perspectives that highlight the complexities and possibilities of programs that centre global engagement and action.

Introduction

This special issue features eight articles all exploring globally engaged experiential learning opportunities available to youth and/or students in diverse contexts such as transnational learning/volunteer abroad programs and locally-based global engagement. The collection brings together academics and practitioners to consider the efficacy, assumptions and stakes of the rise of volunteer abroad programming, as well as the implications for student learning outcomes.

Universities and colleges are increasingly offering opportunities for students to participate in internationalization strategies including study abroad, international
experiential learning, community service learning and work-integrated learning. Universities Canada estimates that 11% of students at Canadian post-secondary institutions participate in what they call “international mobility” programs including exchanges, internships, co-op placements and volunteer opportunities over the course of their degrees. Efforts to increase the number of opportunities and the number of students engaged in these international options are central to internationalization efforts on campuses (Universities Canada, 2014; Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012). While many students in programs such as International Development Studies are required to have international experience, volunteer abroad programs also appeal to a wide array of students interested in travelling, volunteering and boosting their resumes. Increasingly, students arrive at university having already participated in “international mobility” through their high schools, mission trips or programs such as Me to We.

As the practice of international mobility and experiences for students grow, so too does the associated academic literature documenting the challenges and opportunities of these initiatives. This literature comes from a range of disciplines—from Sociology to Education to International Development. Additionally, scholarship is produced both by those who take international experiences as their main research focus, and those who participate in and facilitate these experiences—what we might think of as a theory/practice divide (although in practice this is much murkier than a simplistic divide, as this collection demonstrates). Finally, for increasing complication, the literature ranges in the foci of examination. That is, even when looking only to those programs that include service, some programs analyzed include small medical teams that travel abroad for a short time, often to develop professional skills (Huish, 2014). Other programs last for one or two weeks at most with young people who do not have technical skills; still others, such as CUSO, are longer-term projects that involve volunteers with specific skills (Heron, 2007).

**Diverse forms of Global-engaged Experiential Learning**

Students taking part in learning/volunteer abroad programs are motivated largely by desires for cross-cultural understanding, skills development, testing a career choice and a desire to offer (small forms) of assistance or help (Tiessen, 2018). Post-secondary education programs offer diverse forms of student international mobility with specific pedagogical outcomes in mind and with a particular emphasis on the education and learning experience of the students. The rationale for these learning/volunteer abroad programs is generally framed under the guise of improved cross-cultural competency and the creation of global citizens, a focus of many post-secondary institutional international strategies and mandates (Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012). The paper by Grantham explores the nature and content of these internationalization strategies in greater detail in this collection.

In addition to faculty-led international mobility options (or field schools), private companies are actively involved in providing educational experiences for students in the Global South (Crabtree, 1998). Students may feel significant pressure to participate in forms of globally engaged experiential learning as part of their formative education and for
meeting basic qualifications when applying for jobs, highlighting the nature of demand for such programs. The large range of options available to students wishing to go abroad means that students are increasingly able to shop for an experience, indicating preferences for length of time abroad, location and nature of volunteer/practicum work. As such, the market-driven nature of these programs means the focus is nearly exclusively centered on the students’ desires rather than the needs or requests from host communities.

With such a large suite of options available to students, it can also be very difficult to know which programs are reputable. This has led to the creation of a Standards of Practice guide (Duarte, 2015); however, this guide remains insufficient for tackling the pro-active and sometimes aggressive marketing strategies employed by for-profit, short-term learning/volunteer abroad programs. Furthermore, the proliferation of learning/volunteer abroad programs has resulted in the creation of associations and organizations, such as the International Volunteer Program Association, which recognizes leading organizations in the field and offers a list of best practices to aid these organizations.¹

Volunteer abroad programs are often celebrated for the ways in which they build skills and empathy in Northern youth and for the contributions that they make in communities (McGehee, 2005; Wearing, Deville, & Lyons, 2008). As Heron (forthcoming) shows, these volunteer abroad programs are increasingly tied to discourses of global citizenship and are seen as a rite of passage. Many of the organizations are developing ways to make these (often expensive) experiences more accessible to those who are unable to afford them. This push for accessibility demonstrates that programs are conceptualized as something all Northerners should have access to, while rarely bringing people “the other way.” Other scholarship has been critical of the ways in which volunteering abroad secures privileged identities and obfuscates inequality (Heron, 2007; Mathers, 2010; Vrasti, 2012; Mostafenezhad, 2014) or is premised on altruistic motivations in spite of highly egocentric rationales for participation (Tiessen, 2012). This important body of scholarship provides the backdrop for an essential analysis of the benefits (and for whom), assumptions and challenges of volunteer abroad programs. These programs are also facing increasing scrutiny in public forums—from blog posts about Instagramming Africa (Humanitarians of Tinder, Humanitarian Barbie, Who wants to be a Volunteer, etc.), to the controversy surrounding the delayed airing of documentary Volunteers Unleashed on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). These important evaluations lend support for improved understanding and engaged scholarship about the assumptions, efficacy and stakes of volunteer abroad programs. These programs are also facing increasing scrutiny in public forums—

¹ http://volunteerinternational.org/
link these programs to local community engagement and thereby to bridge international cross-cultural understanding with intercultural competence ‘at home’.

Some youth are now making decisions about going abroad with these criticisms in mind. For youth who identify as global citizens and/or as individuals actively engaged in global issues, learning/volunteer abroad may not be on their radar. Thoughtful consideration of neocolonial continuities in service learning abroad programs, combined with self-awareness of limited skills to offer to host communities is generating a growing cohort of global citizens who have (at least for now) decided not to go abroad as part of their experiential/educational plans. For those youth, there is a demand for globally engaged experiential learning ‘at home’ where the interests and commitments to global understanding, intercultural competence and critical analysis of global issues can be translated into other means of developing skills, networking, experiential learning and (perhaps to a lesser extent), activism.

As these types of programs have increased in popularity, they have shifted from talking about their work as “development work” to framing volunteering abroad as a self-making pedagogical project (Simpson, 2004). Some of the reasons articulated for participation on the part of students include “finding themselves,” “building their resume” or “getting international experience.” In her research, Tiessen (2018) found that volunteers were likely to report reasons of self-making as motivating them to volunteer abroad. The impetus of much of this literature on service experiences is to discern the motivations of participants, perceived impacts and implications of their contributions abroad. For example, drawing on research in Ghana and Guatemala, Vrasti (2012) suggests that volunteer abroad is both a neoliberal and a colonial-type project that affirms volunteers’ neocolonial identity and does so on the backs of hosts in the Global South. Similarly, Mathers’ (2010) study of volunteers in South Africa argues that volunteers “become American” in Africa. In this context, she illustrates how encounters secure for volunteers an imperial American identity. This critical body of literature sheds light on some of the structural challenges inherent in North-South programs, pointing to many of the problematic practices and outcomes of volunteer abroad. The critical scholarship is also largely focused on Northern scholars’ analyses and interpretations of international volunteering. More recently scholars have begun to ask about the experiences of partner organizations and host communities. These include Mostafenzhad (2014), Tiessen and Heron (2012), MacDonald and Vorstermans (2015) and a new anthology edited by Marianne Larson (2015) on hosts’ experiences of international service learning. Many of the insights from these collections include the need for a deeper inclusion of hosts in the process of service learning, more learning for students before they depart and longer placements that include longer term relationships between universities and organizations that are sending people to their communities. Studies documenting the experiences of hosting international volunteers from the perspective of partner organizations highlight important additional insights including agency-oriented analyses of the value and contributions of international volunteering from the perspective of communities receiving volunteers (Tiessen, Lough, & Cheung, 2018; Lough & Tiessen, 2017)
Thus, there are diverse frames of analysis to be employed in the study of international experiential learning and volunteer abroad programs and no one theoretical frame captures the varied models and programs of transnational learning/volunteering opportunities.

The collection in this Special Issue adds to this growing body of literature on transnational service, volunteering and globally engaged learning by bringing in diverse case studies and analyses, drawing on examples of varied practices and employing different theoretical frames. What the papers have in common is their emphasis on the need for greater contextual understanding of programming models and impacts, with a particular lens on the ethical implications of problematic practices.

**A Note on Terminology**

Working across boundaries (disciplinary, theoretical and professional) creates difficulties in language. Indeed, terms are often used to encapsulate a variety of programming and a brief summary of the key differences in the terms employed to describe diverse transnational experiential learning or globally engaged activities is provided here.

International volunteering is a broad and encompassing term that includes a range of options for participating in unremunerated work. Students may participate in international volunteering as part of their studies or work-integrated learning (examples include Students without Borders, Engineers without Borders, Canada World Youth, etc.) for which they may receive academic credit upon completion of course materials, readings and assignments. Others pursue volunteer abroad options as an extension of their academic learning to prepare themselves for securing employment by acquiring practical skills linked to their program of study. Voluntourism options (short-term volunteer opportunities combined with a vacation or cultural immersion lasting approximately one-to-two weeks) are increasingly popular options for youth who wish to gain international experience during short time frames abroad.

Programs more closely linked to academic credits are often referred to as service learning – a learning model often traced to the work of Paulo Freire (1970), John Dewey (1910, 1938) and David Kolb (1984). These three educational theorists argued for the connection between education, the student and the world around them. For Freire (1970) this was primarily understood as a pedagogical practice dedicated to social justice—his work was with Brazilian peasants and literacy brigades where the social world becomes the text from which learning emerges. For Dewey (1938), learning is an exchange between the learner and the environment outside of traditional classroom dynamics and particularly occurs with experiential learning and reflection. Kolb (1984) built on the work of Dewey to examine the role and responsibilities of students in their own learning through observation, reflection and analysis.

However, as many have pointed out, this history of service learning elides the roots of service learning in ethnic studies programs, black colleges and universities and the leadership of people of colour (Stevens, 2003; Garcia, 2007; Evans, Taylor, Dunlop, &
Miller, 2009; Yeh, 2010). Bocci (2015) demonstrates how histories of service learning replicate white normativity, maintaining the imagery that service learning students and faculty are, and have been, white people “doing service” for people of colour. This assumption is heightened as service learning moves across borders—white students from the Western world are pictured volunteering and living with people of colour somewhere in the Global South.

Importantly, “white” here is understood as a social category rather than biological fact. Although race is not a biological fact, it does result in “objective, measurable differences in the life circumstances of different racial groups” (Lewis, 2003, p.6). Following critical race theorists and scholarship on whiteness, we understand “white” not only as an identity category but also as “a collection of everyday strategies characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy and other similar evasions (Leonardo, 2002, p. 32). Whiteness is thus a process that is (re)made through interactions between people, systems and structures that perpetuate white supremacy.

In service learning literature, International Service Learning (ISL) has been used to indicate learning through service as it moves across national borders. ISL has been defined by Hatcher (2011) as:

A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experiences in such a way as to gain a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, globally (p. 19).

Global Service Learning (GSL) has been more recently adopted as a term to resist the focus on nations in the ISL framework and to instead highlight a focus on interconnections around the globe. Steams (2009) argues for the use of the term “global” in that it additionally involves an “appreciation of the kinds of forces that bear on societies around the world—including the United States, and how these forces have emerged” (p.15). Garcia and Longo (2013) argue for a global ecology of education which would recognize that “education takes place in multiple, interconnected settings” (p. 115). For Garcia and Longo, this ecology extends global thinking to both local and international placements.

What is lost in these formulations of service learning is a critical interrogation of positionality and relationality. As Butin (2006), Mitchell, Donahue and Young-Law (2012), and Bocci (2015) argue, the framing and practice of service learning is a white enterprise—what Butin suggests could be the “Whitest of the White” (p. 482). Important to understanding this reproduction of whiteness is an understanding of the ways in which whiteness is not simply about the racial identity of participants, but is also coded into the very framing of service learning. As Bocci (2015) points out, service-learning documents
refer to minorities (often code for people of colour) as the recipients of service learning, rather than founders, practitioners or students. While little research has been done on the experiences of racialized participants, recent scholarship suggest that the whiteness of service learning make it an uneasy fit for many participants of colour (Angod, 2015; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009).

Critiques of the term “global” often center on the ways in which specificities of experience are lost and that difference (which has real, material impacts on people’s lives) is ignored in favour of highlighting shared humanity. This is emphasized in global service learning where outcomes include understanding “interconnectedness of the world,” a grandiose idea that is also generalized (Garcia & Longo, 2013, p. 118). The emphasis on the need to see the world as interconnected also imagines a white, middle-class student for whom these connections have supposedly not been apparent, reinforcing the white normativity of service learning. The competencies imagined as gained (for example experiences in cross-cultural living) are competencies that many students of colour may already have. Even the assumption that travel will be easy during service-learning sojourns assumes the ease with which Canadian or American passports permit entry into other countries.

As Mitchell, Donahue and Young-Law (2012) argue, service learning can be imagined as a pedagogy of whiteness. They describe this as “strategies of instruction that consciously or unconsciously reinforce norms and privileges developed by, and for the benefit of, white people in the United States” (p. 613). This has been emphasized in much of the critical literature in service learning for the ways in which host communities are left out of programming (MacDonald & Vorstermans, 2015), racialized students are made to do more service in the classroom than in placement (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009), and in the reproduction of leadership skills in the white student rather than within communities receiving volunteers (Vrasti 2012). White supremacy operates in ways that create spaces unwilling to discuss racism or to see racism as a systemic process rather than the acts of abhorrent individuals (Frankenberg, 1993; Tatum, 2008). It is not that service learning is inherently a pedagogy of whiteness, but rather that through the focus on the global, sameness and shared humanity, difference is lost. This difference, which often feels divisive for white people, is a difference that has material effects on lives, livelihoods and survival.

It is here that we suggest the adoption of “transnational service learning.” Drawing from the work of feminist scholars, the transnational is used to signal the interconnections between the lives of others, conversations about difference and an attention to social justice (Mohanty, 1984; Lazreg, 1988; Trinh, 1989; Fernandes, 2013). Emerging as a pushback against ideas of “global sisterhood” where women around the world are imagined to have a shared experience of oppression and thus be in solidarity with one another, transnational feminism employs an intersectional lens to inequalities and the connections between sites, what Mohanty (2003) calls “co-implication.”
The use of the word transnational is neither to reify the nation-state, nor to stop at simply an articulation of difference, but rather to attend to the “asymmetries of globalization” (Nagar & Swarr, 2010, p.3). In the adoption of the word “transnational” to describe the approaches to programming in this collection, we signal the attention authors have paid to the unequal effects of globalization, the assumptions embedded in service learning as a practice and the necessity of reflection in service learning that takes serious positionality, inequality and how all participants are imbricated in these processes. The uniqueness of this collection is the attention paid to the ways in which service learning, in its many forms, can be transnational in scope. This does not require the movement of bodies across borders (in fact, it may resist this movement), but does involve participants engaging in an analysis of not only inequity, but also their role in it and how their lives are linked to the lives of others. We suggest that this collection begins to articulate how a practice of transnational service learning may look that takes seriously the relationality of those involved, and the move towards coalition.

In a time of increased attention—both scholarly and popular—to transnational service learning and globally engaged ‘at home’, this collection brings together a group of experienced and engaged writers to consider the practice, politics and possibilities for improving options for globally engaged experiential learning.

The Collection

Through a wide disciplinary engagement, this issue engages in a thoughtful analysis of transnational service learning and globally engaged experiential learning by bringing together authors who have been examining this topic across a range of fields and experiences. Each contributor has been involved in student-centered learning in multiple ways—as professors, facilitators, researchers, critics and participants—and thus the engagement is informed by hands-on experience in the field.

The contributions all have in common an interest in facilitating learning across difference. The included pieces range from re-thinking what international service learning could look like such as Robert Huish’s article on a course that didn’t “go” international to “facilitate” international service learning, to Jessica Vorsterman’s article that considers international service learning through a lens of critical disability studies (a much needed intervention in the literature), to a gendered political economy of host families by Ashley Rerrie and Xochilt Fernandez. Each paper, although written in different voices in different contexts, using different methodologies, and engaging with different theories and frameworks, shares a commitment to the need for a more just world and a consideration of how globally engaged experiential learning helps to achieve these ends.

This collection offers a wide-ranging conversation on diverse forms of transnational service learning and innovative insights into key considerations for examining and improving global engagement. It is our hope that these articles will further our understanding and practice of globally engaged experiential learning, to consider the opportunities and challenges of international experiences and the possibilities afforded through locally engaged global activism; thereby opening up new conversations and questions for improving student learning outcomes.
This collection opens by providing an overview of the post-secondary institutional context in which global citizenship and North-South student mobility are promoted through strategic commitments and internationalization strategies prepared by Canadian universities and colleges. Grantham argues through her textual analysis of strategic plans that the commitments to providing international opportunities to students are often instrumental and articulated without clear measures or goals. The second paper by Cameron, Langdon and Ageyomah is a reflection on the practice of trying to create a critical international service learning opportunity at a Canadian university. This paper includes a critical engagement with the politics, possibilities and limitations of having international service learning through an institution such as a university.

While the first section of papers considers the creation and ethics of international service learning, the second section engages with understanding what experiences are produced in these programs and what happens on the ground. Vorsterman’s paper provides an important contribution to the literature in the textual analysis of a volunteer sending organization that engages in the field of disability. Through this analysis of the website, information about the organization and past participant testimonials, Vorsterman’s argues that programs which focus on the field of disability do so in ways which close off the possibilities for engaging in an analysis of the production of impairment and disability, limiting the analysis offered to volunteers for understanding disability not as a natural or unfortunate condition. Smaller and O’Sullivan’s research in Nicaragua draws on interviews with local coordinators and communities to understand their experiences of international service learning. They conclude that there is a need for the inclusion of history of both the place of learning and the place from which volunteers have come to engage through the use of Althusser’s idea of an epistemological rupture. It is this rupture, they suggest informed by their participants, that is important—to challenge what volunteers might understand as “common sense” views. This article is followed by a critical engagement with host families in Nicaragua to consider the gendered relations of service learning, particularly through the work of the host mother. Hernandez and Rerrie suggest that the labour of the host mother is imagined as care labour assumed to be done by women acting as mothers to the volunteers living with them. Larkin’s analysis of fair trade learning considers the erasure of systems of inequality. These systems, under global capitalism, seek to commoditize volunteer programs rather than to engage with them as alternative modes of organizing and promoting recognition of the connection between the lives of volunteers and those with whom they volunteer.

The ethical issues identified in the above papers serve as part of the core issues that require careful analysis and attention in all transnational service and globally engaged learning programs. In the paper by Tiessen, Roy, Karim-Haji and Gough, the authors highlight ten main ethical considerations that need to be identified and then addressed to ensure programs minimize harm and improve meaningful partnership-formation between institutions and communities involved in international service learning. The authors analyze the international service learning literature, programming materials and interviews to consider the best ways to build partnership across difference. These ethical challenges are understood in the context of international development literature including considerations of dependency, agency and power. Finally, the collection closes with an
example of globally engaged learning at home—with Huish’s reflections on a course he taught which engaged students in learning about North Korea, and through that learning take up activism and advocacy on a global issue. Huish suggests that activist pedagogies may be what are needed as a critical intervention into international service learning.

Together, these papers bring a variety of important dimensions and frames of analysis to our understanding of the complex, sometimes problematic, nature of diverse transnational service/globally engaged experiential learning options available to students in post-secondary institutions. The papers highlight original research, emerging questions, new and problematic practices, and a comprehensive framework of the ethical considerations requiring greater attention for ensuring transnational service/globally-engaged experiential learning to do less harm and promote informed learning in line with critical analysis of difference and inequality and spaces for solidarity.
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Author Biographies

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Expanding Our Understanding of Ethical Considerations in North-South Student Mobility Programs: Insights for Improved Institutional Practice

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Keywords: ethical considerations; reciprocity; capacity building; problematic practices; reflexivity

ABSTRACT: North-South student mobility programs (including internships as part of academic studies, education abroad, cooperative education and field schools) offer immense opportunities for fostering cross-cultural understanding, mutual learning and capacity building for students and partners. Drawing on diverse bodies of literature, we examine perspectives of host institutions and organizations in the Global South and the breadth of ethical considerations to be analyzed in North-South student mobility programs, offering considerations for improved institutional practice.
Introduction

International student mobility programs and global education for post-secondary students can provide the next generation of leaders with an important set of skills for working in a rapidly changing world (Study Group on Global Education, 2017). These 21st-century skills identified by educators, governments, employers and researchers include higher-order and complex thinking skills, deeper learning outcomes and communication skills (Scott, 2015). Additionally, universities recognize the importance of learning abroad for preparing the next generation of leaders for working in a global world, and opportunities for students to develop these 21st-century skills are often identified in higher education internationalization goals and guiding documents (Grantham, this collection; Jorgenson & Schultz, 2012). Students and recent graduates of post-secondary institutions also consider opportunities abroad as valuable training for future employment, offering opportunities to develop skills and/or test a career choice (Tiessen, 2012).

Student mobility programs often take many forms, such as study abroad, cooperative education, field school and so on. The focus of this study is on North-South student mobility, with a particular emphasis on practicum/ volunteer/ internship placements in development organizations or with community groups in the Global South. North-South student mobility is defined here as Northern-based students travelling to the “Global South” for a range of educational opportunities to study and/or learn practical work and leadership skills through volunteering, experiential learning, cooperative education or “field school” courses. We problematize the terminology North-South as an imperfect framework, as the “the South” is generally understood as a region or part of the world often associated with poverty and/or inequality—countries with low overall Gross National Products (GNP) or ranked in the Human Development Index (HDI) as low-income nations where human development indicators are weak, and rates of poverty, inequality and insecurity are high (Tiessen & Grantham, 2016). The Global South communities that host Northern-based students play an important role in this learning-based model, yet “host communities” and their experiences in North-South mobility programs remain poorly evaluated and understood. Scholarship on international student mobility has focused predominantly on the experiences of the students and the potential skills and competencies learned through this model. In this paper, we examine the growing body of scholarship that has focused on the voices of partners in the Global South who have experience with Northern-based students, interns and volunteers who participate in North-South mobility programs, and their views on ethical practices.

As we learn more about the experiences of hosting northern-based students in North-South student mobility programs, it is clear that experiences vary from one individual or organization/institution to the next. However, several themes emerge from the literature reviewed to date and these themes can be divided into positive or problematic practices. We briefly highlight some of these practices below and the corresponding ethical considerations more fully, particularly in relation to the themes of non-reciprocity, invisible walls, learning as transaction, exclusion in decision-making and the burden of resources and time. In so doing, this study offers a comprehensive assessment of the literature on ethical considerations in North-South student mobility programs and also a set of considerations for applying these findings to improved institutional practice.
Literature Review

Research and scholarship on ethical issues in international mobility includes numerous empirical studies on the experiences of students who travel abroad to the Global South. Previously, this scholarship focused on the perceived ethical considerations from the perspective, primarily, of Northern scholars’ writing on these programs. Less attention, however, has focused on the now growing body of literature from the perspective of the host communities and partner organizations in the Global South. In this section, we review the existing relevant scholarship and highlight core arguments pertaining to the ethical implications of North-South student mobility programs.

An important starting point in the analysis of the possible benefits of North-South student mobility programs is the finding that partner organizations in the Global South generally appreciate the fresh perspectives and energy that students bring to their organizations, as well as skills transfer, capacity building and relationship building. These benefits are not, however, guaranteed, and critical analysis from several studies highlights important issues that may arise when institutional oversight is weak, students are poorly prepared, pre-departure training is insufficient and/or problematic practices undergirds the program, relationship or educational experience.

Perceived Outcomes

When North-South student mobility is instituted well, several outcomes result. These are summarized below as fostering meaningful connections and capacity building between the Northern institution/student and the host organization/community, writ large.

Creating Meaningful Connections

Heron (2011), for example, lists the benefits of new ideas and knowledge, fresh insights, skills (particularly information technology) and capacity building. Other benefits identified by host partners include opportunities for cross-cultural exchange, learning with and from people with different experiences, access to resources, and reputational benefits and credibility that arise from having foreigners working alongside them.

Similarly, Ortiz Loaiza (2018) argues that the benefits of hosting international volunteers, interns and students include the opportunity to challenge and end stereotypes of Western superiority, thereby diminishing “colonial stereotypes about Europeans as superior to Guatemalans” (p. 26), and also increasing opportunities for connecting with people around the world through social media. Davis (2018) highlights how students, interns and volunteers in Peru can forge deep relationships and foster strong emotional connections with partner staff. Viquez (2018) summarizes the experiences of host organization staff in line with fostering deeper connections that can strengthen communities. These elements of relationship building are important to underscore, as the intangible effects brought through cross-cultural connections are difficult to measure and can be overlooked in impact assessments. These insights also reinforce the collection of papers presented by Butcher and Einolf (2017), who highlight the impact of international volunteers in promoting solidarity and collective spirit.
Capacity Building

Capacity building is also an important feature of the perceived benefits accorded to international volunteers and students engaged in practicum placements. Capacity building is most commonly referenced in relation to computer skills, information technology (Ortiz Loaiza, 2018) and financial skills transfer (Thuo, 2018). Volunteers, interns and students can fill important resource gaps in organizations, as Baxter (2018) highlights in Jamaica, providing an example of how volunteers used their knowledge to develop curricula to be used in schools throughout the country. Nyirenda (2018) and Nalungwe (2018) document examples of capacity building experiences in Malawi and Zambia respectively with references to skills transfer by way of communications, technology training and organizational management. The South African case study by Dullisear (2018) suggests that marketing skills transferred are an important component of the capacity building facilitated by international volunteers and students completing practicum placements abroad.

Connections to social media and online presence in general are seen as skills that students bring to their practicum placements. Thuo (2018) notes that the benefits extend beyond facility with social media and computer applications to the benefits afforded when an "increased online presence brings economic benefits to VROs (Volunteer Receiving Organizations) too, by increasing international awareness and exposure for their organization, thereby generating new sources of funding" (p. 77). The exposure that international volunteers and foreign students bring to India, for instance, are perceived as important for contributing to organizations’ international recognition that can result in improved funding opportunities (Rajashree, 2018).

These findings resonate with research on International Volunteer Service in southern Africa that found that volunteers brought new ideas, human resources and credibility that shaped new perspectives, allowing host organizations to see their work through new eyes (Graham et al., 2011).

Problematic Practices

The literature on North-South student mobility has also identified a range of ethically problematic practices. There are five prominent themes that span much of the scholarship: non-reciprocity, invisible walls, learning as transaction, exclusion in decision-making and the burden of resources and time. We address each of these themes below.

Non-Reciprocity

Important contributions to the broader study of international volunteer impacts frequently refer to the aspirations of reciprocity in North-South volunteer programs (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017). Indeed, there are often mutual benefits arising from the relationships formed between student interns/volunteers and host organizations through some models of North-South student mobility. However, the idea of reciprocity evokes shared privileges, which is rarely the case in North-South student mobility programs where differences in privilege vary considerably. Reciprocity must remain the goal of student mobility programs. To fully explore the ethical limitations and challenges, it is important to begin with the appropriate analytical framing of North-South student mobility programs. The literature documenting the experiences of partners in the Global South highlights non-reciprocity in detailing inequality of opportunity (Graham et al., 2011; Perold et al., 2013; Tiessen, 2018).
In her assessment of international service learning, Larkin raises questions about the way North-South student mobility programs can dehistoricize their political impact on host communities and thereby reproduce unequal relationships (Larkin, 2015). The arrival of a group of students to undertake a community project can reinforce the perception that the recipient communities are needy, have no assets and require assistance from ‘abroad’, all of which can have a disabling effect on community members and can foster resentment (Epprecht, 2004; Sharpe & Dear, 2013; Tiessen & Heron, 2012a).

Programs that operate on Western ideas of justice can also be problematic in contexts that consider justice through a community lens (Larkin, 2015). Uncritical approaches to one form of North-South student mobility—international service learning—frequently determine assumed needs of communities as service projects, unwittingly reinforcing paternalism as they work to position the Global North as a site of knowledge (Larkin, 2015). As such, education abroad or international experiential learning programs work in a way that often maintains asymmetrical power dynamics, reifying colonial ideas of host communities as “others” in need of saving (Sharpe, 2015). These experiences of inequality can be understood through the lens of power and privilege accorded to those coming from the Global North. Nonetheless, without an explicit focus on solidarity, the power dynamics remain intact.

Northern universities and their partners must therefore find ways to mitigate the most significant barrier between North-South student mobility participation (the learners and the community partners): the one-sided power and privilege experienced by Global North participants (Buscher, 2014). If not carefully managed, some placements may also perpetuate harmful stereotypes of host cultures, reinforcing binaries that “other” the host communities (Simpson, 2004; Larkin, 2015; Sharpe, 2015). Unequal relations are harmful to both the volunteer and the host organization/community because they compromise student learning opportunities, educational outcomes, mutual impacts and program effectiveness. We argue that programs should be designed and delivered with reciprocity and mutuality of benefits between institutions in mind, a point to which we return later in this paper.

**Invisible Walls**

A second critical insight examined in the review of literature pertains to the invisible walls constructed between students abroad and the communities they observe and/or engage with. This analysis arises from critical scholarship pointing to the way North-South student mobility programs can serve to objectify host communities in the Global South by way of, for example, students who adopt a tourist gaze and who are given spaces of retreat from the reality of the host country (Sharpe, 2015). In Sharpe’s analysis of an education abroad class she co-instructed during 2010 in Cuba, she notes that her class was able to experience familiar comforts such as enjoying buffets, televisions, email, a high frequency of showers—all non-Cuban spaces—that were made available to students. These comforts operated to distance Sharpe and the students from Cuba, to study about the country, thereby reinforcing Cuba as an object (2015). Ogden (2008) offers a similar assessment of international education from an anthropological perspective. He employed the term “colonial student” to describe one that seldom ventures far from the safe space of the veranda when engaged in education abroad and therefore limits their potential for
intercultural learning while abroad. The tourist gaze serves to reinforce unethical relations of inequality in which international students see themselves as apart from the society in which they are meant to integrate. Rather than building cross-cultural skills and learning from and with each other, groups of students that travel abroad together rarely venture outside their bubbles of similarity; instead they experience the host country through the eyes and interpretations of other North-South mobility students in their quest to understand “the other” (Tiessen, 2018).

Furthermore, while students may have good intentions, referred to as “ethical desires,” they can become disrupted by culturally specific manifestations of difference (Larkin, 2015) if care is not taken to understand the context. Larkin recounts her observations of international service-learning students in Tanzania who began to withdraw from their host communities upon experiencing discomfort from racialized difference. These students became increasingly stressed by the local community members who referred to them as mzungus, an ambiguous term steeped in complex histories of colonialism. This was further compounded when youth from the school where the international service-learning students were placed began to ask for material goods like iPhones and cameras, as well as trips to national parks. Instead of becoming reflexive and approaching these difficulties with honesty, the students became resentful and withdrawn. Students who are under-or-ill-prepared for placements, who lack critical consciousness about their privilege and who disengage when moments of discomfort arise, miss opportunities for personal growth and opportunities to forge more ethical relationships with their host communities (Larkin, 2015).

Learning as Transaction

Education abroad has been criticized as being consumer-driven (Sharpe, 2015) and may function to amplify the student-as-consumer ideology, a theme that is echoed in the volunteer-abroad literature (Georgeou & Engel, 2011). Universities also play a role in this global commerce, especially as institutional leaders are increasingly called upon to internationalize their campuses through study abroad. With the shift to student-as-consumer perspectives of higher education, the benefits of student mobility programs may rest squarely in the interests of the Canadian (or more broadly, Northern) students, contributing to the one-directional benefits accrued through these programs. In order to achieve more ethically based North-South student mobility programs, partnerships between organizations in the North and South should strive to be mutually beneficial (Ouma & Dimaras, 2013). For instance, in the case study of Daisy’s Eye Cancer Fund in Kenya examined by Ouma & Dimaras (2013), sustained research connections between several faculty members at the University of Toronto and the NGO allowed for impact and accountability beyond the scope of individual student placements at the organization.

The culture of transaction must also be understood in the context of pre-formed impressions of the kind of experience anticipated by Global North participants and preconceived ideas about other cultures that are often based on an amalgamation of past exposures. Martha Johnson (2009) writes that the search for “authentic” or “real” experiences unintentionally often conflates with ideas of the “Indigenous,” to problematic effect (p. 184). Such assumptions can be productively addressed through opportunities for structured reflection and dialogue, while failing to reflect could result in isolation or an
inability to successfully process the international service learning abroad (Johnson, 2009). It is imperative to help students participating in North-South mobility programs to identify and address their attitude of "student as consumer" because it provides a learning opportunity to interrogate their power, privilege and entitlement (Larkin, 2015) and the institutionalization of such reflective processes is crucial. Direct supervision, ongoing supervisor-student contact and guided reflective learning opportunities are valued options for this form of transformative learning (Lough, 2009).

Furthermore, students can experience cognitive dissonance when the realities on the ground do not match their expectations—i.e. having paid to access a certain type of experience, students can sometimes act more like “clients” and behave like consumers of services (Heron, 2011), perpetuating the neoliberal logic of many North-South student mobility programs. The learning-as-transaction analysis helps us understand the consumption of opportunity, or experience as an exchange, resulting from views of entitlement of students when fees for participation are paid.

Exclusion in Decision Making

The design of programs, length of stay or selection of participants in North-South student mobility programs rarely, if ever, rest with the host communities in the Global South. Screening and vetting takes place in the Global North, if screening is done at all. Lack of the host community’s or partner organization’s involvement in participant selection reinforces the inequitable relationship between North and South and raises questions of how to establish the right “fit” between student and host institution. Indeed, finding the right individual is central to North-South student mobility success.

As research on the views of host organizations shows, students may not be adequately screened and/or prepared for their time abroad. Much of the literature on North-South student mobility highlights the importance of careful student selection (Ouma & Dimaras, 2013; Sherraden, Lough, & McBride, 2008; Comhlamh, 2008). The selection and preparation must be carried out by the sending-institutions and the receiving-institutions and organizations (Ouma & Dimaras, 2013). Receiving institutions and organizations may not always have equal power in deciding who their participants will be (Sherraden et al., 2008) and host organizations may have little control over which students are accepted into their programs or practicum placements (Baxter, 2018; Dullisear, 2018; Ortiz Loaiza, 2018; Perold et al., 2013). This has the potential to characterize the student mobility industry as mostly driven by supply (Perold et al., 2013; Waldorf, 2001). The impact for host organizations might include agreeing to facilitate practicum or volunteer placements without considering the cost of human—and in some cases financial—resources necessary to manage the volunteers (Perold et al., 2013). The reality that host communities and partner organizations rarely participate in selection of student candidates exemplifies the failure to enact principles of active engagement, participation and ownership of the process.

Burden of Resources and Time

Hosting students through North-South mobility programs can be resource intensive and time consuming. Often, Southern partners have an unequal responsibility to allocate substantial resources for transportation, accommodation, translation, security and supervision of short-term volunteers (Heron, 2011), which could divert resources away
from the organization carrying out their services and negatively impact their reputation with local communities (Sherraden et al., 2008). Longer stays could potentially balance out these negative effects (Heron, 2011) while greater efforts to avoid the inefficiencies of unskilled volunteers (Waldorf, 2001) could improve the experiences of the host communities.

Additionally, the presence of Northern students that need to be supported during their integration into the organization and into the community, and who often need to be protected and entertained, can be a drain on community resources (Heron, 2011). In other words, the responsibilities of the host country partners include finding and placing students in appropriate accommodations, providing in-country orientation sessions for cultural and personal transition and adjustments, identifying the mandate of the interns/volunteers/students and supervising and supporting them (AUCC, 2014). Vande Berg (2009) demonstrates the importance of individual support during the overseas stay to help the students make sense of their experience. With the responsibility of fulfilling all of those requirements, the arrival of a group of students in a small community can thus require the contribution of several community members and represent a drain on scarce resources (Sharpe & Dear, 2013). The community also has to invest at an emotional level to get to know the students, and there are monetary costs associated with the constant flow of students coming into the community for short-term placements.

The above ethical issues identify specific challenges, particularly relevant when North-South student mobility programs are not effectively executed. Naming the ethical issues in relation to the problematic practices allows the discourse to focus on lived experiences—a necessary first step before engaging in aspirational thinking of what “could be” in terms of goals of reciprocity. These problematic practices aptly demonstrate the need for improved programming, the adequate preparation of participants and the importance of relationship and partnership building.

The ethical challenges that correspond to these problematic practices noted above can be minimized or exacerbated through existing institutional arrangements. The higher education sector needs to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of these unequal power relations between the Northern and Southern partners and the communities that host students. Failure to acknowledge and pay attention to the ways to mitigate potentially harmful impacts can result in negative outcomes for all partners and parties involved (Epprecht, 2004).

If student mobility programs ignore contextual forces, which include unfamiliar worldviews and the tendency to homogenize host communities according to students’ understanding of justice, they will become problematic. Students may furthermore remain resistant to difference (Larkin, 2015). Along these lines, Perold et al. (2013) found that volunteers who are ignorant of the complexities of global issues affecting socioeconomic realities in the countries they serve can further reinforce ideas of inequality, concluding that the relationship between volunteers and host partners could be improved through better dialogue between partner institutions, as well as through better pre-departure preparation, a finding that is confirmed by research conducted by other scholars (Drolet,
2014; Desrosiers & Thomson, 2014; Dean & Jendzurski, 2013; MacDonald, 2014; Lough, 2009; Tiessen, 2018; Tiessen, Lough, & Cheung, 2018; Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014; and Travers, 2014, to name a few). Similar conclusions can be drawn in the examination of North-South student mobility programs where improved institutional partnerships, dialogue, pre-departure and ongoing reflection processes can reduce some of the ethical challenges cited above. The importance of effective and comprehensive ethics-oriented pre-departure training has been addressed in a large and growing body of literature. Intensive pre-departure training is necessary for advanced intercultural communication and deep reflection during the student’s international experience.

**Building Ethical Partnerships with Host Communities in the Global South: The Role of Global North Post-Secondary Institutions**

To build more ethically based North-South student mobility programs and to better prepare students for learning abroad programs in order to mitigate some of the challenges identified above, post-secondary institutions could consider improved partnerships and communications around the learning experience. Developing a process by which both the sending institution and the host community/partner organization work together to develop the pre-departure sessions, the immersive experience and the re-entry debriefing programs can play an important role in addressing ethical issues. Karim-Haji (2016), in her work on The Aga Khan University’s International Internship Programme, observes that jointly planning and developing inclusive materials and practices and having a seat at the table around planning of internship opportunities has opened up a channel of communication between receiving communities and sending universities, which has not only helped address many ethical issues up front but has also improved the overall experience of all parties involved. In piloting this new model of partnership, host communities and sending institutions are not only able to better prepare and engage students, but also able to have a better understanding of the realities on the ground including ethical dilemmas, key challenges and potential opportunities, not to mention developing an enabling environment (see Karim-Haji, 2016).

Karim-Haji, Roy, and Gough (2016) in their report Building Ethical Global Engagement with Host Communities: North-South Collaborations for Mutual Learning and Benefit summarize the many considerations for improving ethical practice in North-South student mobility. Some of the core strategies identified in this report include improving parameters for the program and sending institution as well as fostering students’ awareness and mindfulness so as to facilitate their receptivity and openness to learning in new ways. Other strategies include encouraging students to engage from a position of solidarity and to employ a model of “authentic allies” (Thomas & Chandrasekara, 2014), as well as instilling a commitment among students to actively pursue pathways of change when they return home. Through these processes, students begin to understand complicity and the implications of their privilege without speaking on behalf of their counterparts (Kapoor, 2004). Finally, the ongoing self-reflexive process—for both the host community/partner
organization and the university, at all stages of the mobility program—is essential (Karim-Haji, Roy, & Gough, 2016; Tiessen, 2018).

Appropriate behaviour—including a range of practical ethical guidelines, such as dressing appropriately for work, acting respectfully and being sensitive to different cultural norms and expectations—are important starting points for improved ethical preparation and excellent entry points for deeper discussions of cultural sensitivity. For example, discussions about proper attire provide opportunities to consider the significance of organizational reputation and how the reputation of the organization or community is tied to colonial continuities.

Improved pre-departure training, combined with comprehensive supervision and direction throughout the program and comprehensive reflective exercises upon return (see Tiessen & Kumar, 2013), facilitate deeper critical reflection of the student’s positionality and privilege as well as more careful scrutiny of impact on the host community.

Post-secondary institutions can also consider the way that North-South student mobility programs are advertised and marketed. Many stereotypes are created and reinforced through specific kinds of imagery and the language used to promote North-South mobility programs. The implications of simplifying Africa through images of wildlife or black children fosters simplistic or paternalistic ideas about the communities where students may be placed, the people they will meet and the work they may do. Such discourse and imagery reduces the Global South to tropes of poverty and helplessness and perpetuates perceptions of a monolithic Africa, wiping away the great diversity of its peoples and cultures. It is important that notions of “general poverty” be repoliticized to the understanding that many problems and failures of the “monolithic” Africa only serves to blame the struggles of colonization on the colonized (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Yet, universities struggle to find images that are appropriate while equally attractive and effective for recruiting participants. At the very least, universities can collaborate with communities to select images that best reflects on the content and context of the educational opportunity, and pre-departure training can begin with the deconstruction of these images as a starting point for creating realistic expectations of programs.

Relatedly, post-secondary institutions might consider the organizations they partner with in North-South student mobility programs. By way of example, if universities are interested in working with service providers to expand their program offerings, they ought to be certain that the service provider does not employ problematic images and messages to recruit participants. Universities should have an obligation to work with these service providers to ensure appropriate pre-departure training, thereby decreasing the burden of orientation on partner organizations and host communities. Several guides can be used to ensure ethical practices in deciding which organizations are considered appropriate partner organizations (see for example Karim-Haji et al., 2016; Duarte, 2015; Hartman, 2016).

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2 For more information about characteristics of ethical practice see: http://international.uwo.ca/pdf/Ethical%20Engagement%E2%80%93Guide_2016.pdf
A third area of consideration stems from the limited preparation and guidance provided to students engaged in research projects in the Global South. Mindfulness of the potential for exploitation of host communities through the extraction of data adds another dimension to the institutional responsibility of universities to ensure students engage in ethical practices beyond the completion of the research ethics board application. Broader ethical issues of power and inequality also factor into the research process. Post-secondary institutions can foster increasingly reciprocal partnership arrangements with institutions in the Global South to facilitate research opportunities focused on research with rather than research on communities in the Global South, facilitating two-way research collaborations that build on the locally based needs of the host communities. Other learning opportunities may include online courses whereby students from the Global South are able to learn and solve problems collaboratively through e-classrooms with their peers in the Global North.

Charting a Course Forward: Improved Institutional Support for North-South Student Mobility Programs

How do these findings inform our analysis of North-South student mobility programs and the potential for harm or unintended consequences by Northern-based institutions? What requires re-consideration and what must be taken more seriously by post-secondary institutions and sending organizations in Canada? The following core recommendations speak to the range of ethical considerations and appropriate strategies required to ensure mutually reciprocal, ethically based North-South student mobility. Many of these considerations require greater depth and analysis at the institutional level and in pre-departure training, ongoing reflection and debriefing sessions with students. Some of these strategies also require a re-orientation of the nature of the partnership arrangements between institutions in the Global North and organizations and communities in the Global South.

The ethical considerations presented in this paper highlighted the large and growing scholarship on the nature of inequality of opportunity and systemic disequilibrium between the Global North and Global South. Recognizing the (usually) free movement of Global North students is an important starting point. For many international students who may wish to study in Canada or partner organizations that wish to collaborate in Canada, the opportunities to obtain visas and resources for a reciprocal arrangement are scarce (Mau, Gulzau, Laube, & Zaun, 2015). The two-way flow of students and staff through partnership agreements is often limited to the independent resources that individual students and institutions have, favouring those from the Global North, resulting in unidirectional knowledge transfer and the reinforcement of hegemonic ethnocentrism (Andreotti, 2014). Several prominent themes emerged from the review of the literature and we organized these critiques as: non-reciprocity, invisible walls, learning as transaction, exclusion in decision-making and the burden of resources and time. These themes offer a necessary backdrop from which to consider alternative approaches and to reflect on the role of post-secondary institutions in charting the course for ethical global engagement by way of institutional partnerships, programmatically and for individual students.
There are many ways to ensure that gains, benefits and positive outcomes are experienced by the students who go abroad and by the host organization staff and communities who receive them. A first step in this process is providing opportunities for the host organization(s), and their respective personnel and community members, to express their desires for mutuality of benefits. These benefits, for example, may take the form of collaboration on writing projects and grant applications, English language mentorship for youth in the community, social media and other technology support, and so on. Other learning outcomes that can contribute to improved cross-cultural understanding, solidarity and social justice can involve working with local communities to fight for justice at home and abroad (see Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014).

Concentrating explicitly on skills and career-related outcomes puts the focus of student mobility exclusively on the benefits acquired by students from the Global North, with little regard for host community needs and aspirations. Local expertise from the Global South should be leveraged to enhance the educational aspect of international experiential learning to improve mutual benefit and enhance the partnership. Other ways to shift the overemphasis of career development in North-South student mobility programs may include intentionally partnering students from the Global North with students from the Global South for research or project work, requiring students from the Global North to raise funds to contribute to the project without burdening the local community, and ensuring that projects goals are defined by the host organization.

Addressing power relations—along the lines of alternative strategies that involve greater participation of partners and mutuality of benefits—provides all parties with an opportunity to explore the possible asymmetry that may exist in the partnership. In the process of achieving loftier goals, there are also practical strategies that can be implemented in the short term, such as listening deeply to the needs of the community during the development of the mobility program, sharing and co-creating pre-departure training workshops and debriefing sessions, invoking local gatekeepers to serve as cultural informants during the mobility program and compensating them for their time appropriately (see also value-add propositions for host communities in Karim-Haji et al., 2016).

Improved pre-departure training, ongoing direction and support during the program and return orientation debriefing sessions are practical strategies that can address some of the ethical considerations examined in this paper. These opportunities for critical reflection and deep analysis enable students to reflect on practical ethical questions of gift-giving, for instance, as well as deeper ethical issues about privilege and the historical, political, social and economic circumstances that facilitate opportunities for those with privilege. Students require opportunities to reflect on their privilege of resources, access to bursaries, education, time and flexibility, freedom from responsibilities to family, etc. as core to the nature of their opportunity abroad. The reflection process encourages students to think outside of simplistic notions of being “lucky” to be born Canadian (or in the Global North) to understanding how privilege is rooted in—and reproduced through—systemic and structural inequalities, historical processes such as colonization, and neocolonialism.
Students may encounter ethical challenges for which they are inadequately prepared, and they may have limited opportunities for an in-depth learning experience where they can critically reflect on their experiences in light of ethical issues. The purpose of this paper was to synthesize existing scholarship and to bring in the experiences of host communities and partner organizations from the Global South to more fully explore the ethical considerations central to improving student participation, as well as to enhancing institutional partnerships.

The ethical issues identified in this paper thereby lay the foundation for better preparation of students and could form the basis of pre-departure training, on-site learning and development and re-entry programming, with implications for advertising and promotional materials used in the marketing of North-South student mobility programs. Institutions may negatively perpetuate some of the ethical issues noted above by reinforcing problematic and stereotyped images or language (for example, images may perpetuate tropes of white, Western “saviours” aiding poor, black children, thereby denying agency and capacity of locally-based individuals dedicated to development and social justice in their own communities). Institutions can also invest in stronger collaborative relations with partner institutions to ensure greater mutuality, strengthened research collaborations and shared learning.

Ethical issues arise not only in student interactions with host communities but are also central to reciprocal and mutual relationships between sending institutions and host communities. The recognition of asymmetrical power dynamics, respect for local knowledge and ways of knowing, mutual accountability and the approach that all members of the team are learning, serves to counter the traditional approach of focusing on the Global North and the needs of the students from these respective countries. Strong local leadership addresses unethical representation and exploitation as research participants, and directly engages the views and voice of the host community. Just as hyper self-reflexivity (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014) is required of students, sending institutions must also develop ongoing self-reflexive practices to engender more equitable partnerships in the quest for reciprocity and mutual benefit.
References


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International Service Learning: Decolonizing Possibilities?

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**Keywords:** international service learning; Nicaragua; decolonizing; development; learn; service; knowledge-power; impact

**ABSTRACT:** International Service Learning (ISL) programs are now ubiquitous, and the concept seems immutable: well-meaning young people from the North visiting “host” communities in the South in order to provide “service” and “to learn.” The adulatory literature is replete with the purported benefits of these programs, both to those participating from the North and to the communities in the South. By comparison, more critical follow-up of participants from the North suggest otherwise—that they serve mainly to reinforce values of charity for the “other” and do little to aid in understanding the reasons for the unequal relations of “underdevelopment.” Similarly, a number of more recent studies have raised questions about the impact of these programs on communities in the South, and the extent to which they may serve to (re)instill neocolonial economic and/or cultural relations.

This paper presents and discusses findings from a multi-year study in a number of rural communities in Nicaragua that have hosted ISL programs, undertaken with the express purpose of exploring the modes and effects of the interactions between the visitors and the community residents. Through field observation, interviews and focus groups, a complex picture emerges of community engagement with, and reaction to, these Northern visitors, and the impact they effect on their Southern hosts. Of particular interest, we examine the possibilities these programs may have for interrupting traditional knowledge-power relations and understandings on both sides.
Introduction

International Service Learning (ISL) programs are now ubiquitous, and the concept seems immutable: young people from the North visit “host” communities in the South in order to provide “service” and “to learn.” As described in more detail below, the literature that uncritically supports ISL argues on behalf of the purported benefits of such programs both to those participating from the North and to the host communities in the South. By comparison, a more critical literature suggests otherwise—that these excursions serve mainly to reinforce values of charity for the “other” and do little to explain reasons for the unequal relations of “underdevelopment.” Similarly, a number of more recent studies have raised questions about the impact of these programs on communities in the South, and the extent to which they may serve to (re)instill neocolonial economic and/or cultural relations.

This chapter presents and discusses findings from a multi-year study of the impact of ISL programs on four rural communities in Nicaragua that have hosted such projects. We conducted multiple interviews with village residents and NGO officials, along with field observations before, during and after ISL participants’ visits. Among other research questions, we explore the possible effects of these programs on either maintaining or disrupting traditional North–South (neo)colonial relations. Our interest in this research stems partly from some understanding of the history of colonization of the South by the North. In that regard, it is our hope that international experiential education (IEE) programs, including ISL programs, could lead to deeper understandings of the unequal power relations—evident at all levels of interaction, individual to national—that underpin colonization in both historical and contemporary contexts.

Interestingly, our study was considerably enriched when we ascertained that one of the four villages under consideration had explicitly decided to discontinue hosting these Northern groups after years of hosting ISL programs, for reasons very similar to those enunciated by Vanessa Andreotti’s (2016) political framework. These will be explored in detail in our analysis following our overall findings.

In brief, our findings and analysis portrayed a complex picture resulting from these North–South interactions. Organized thematically into major areas of impact, we found that relations of affection featured significantly, perhaps even more powerfully than the import of material support provided by the Northerners. In addition, enhancement of cross-cultural understandings was often noted by interviewees. At the same time, there is no question that the presence of Northern groups within traditional villages in the South significantly interrupted the daily routines and underlying social relations among the residents, often in negative ways. We conclude our report with some discussion of the possible significance of our findings—both in relation to current debates on ISL as well as how these programs might better promote anticolonial North–South relations.
Every year thousands of secondary and post-secondary students from the Global North travel to countries in the Global South in one or another form of IEE (Intolubbe-Chmil, Spreen, & Swap, 2012; Kolb, 1984; Pagano & Roselle, 2009; Tiessen & Huish, 2014a). For Tiessen and Huish (2014b), IEE involves programming that “generally takes place in the Global South” and many, albeit not all participants, are encouraged to focus on “an improved understanding of inequality, poverty, and global justice” (p. 5). The methodology to achieve such an outcome is attributed to the work of Kolb and Fry (1974) who wrote about a process of close observation of and reflection on the experience, coming to understand through such reflection the concepts arising from the experience and then drawing conclusions and repeating the process (as cited in Tiessen & Huish, 2014b). This methodological approach is closely associated with best pedagogical practices of all forms of IEE.

Included within the IEE framework are study abroad programs (Lewin, 2009), internships (Engstrom & Loring, 2007; Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009), and international service learning (Borland & Adams, 2013; Crabtree, 2008; Ellis, 2016; Kiely, 2002; Larsen, 2016). ISL is the form of IEE that is the focus of this chapter. Crabtree (2008) defines ISL as a combination of “academic instruction and community-based service in an international context. Objectives of linking international travel, education, and community service include increasing participants’ global awareness, building intercultural understanding, and enhancing civic mindedness and skills” (p. 18). Typically, students who participate in ISL programs spend anywhere from a week to several months, often living in rural villages with host families and engaging in some form of volunteer work (e.g., playing with children in preschool programs, building schools or other community structures, working on environmental projects or assisting with farming activities). Such programs are increasingly popular with educational institutions in the Global North, with continuing calls by universities and both government and nongovernment agencies to increase participation in various forms of IEE ranging from very short-term, tourist-oriented voluntourism (Elliot, 2013; Van Deusen, 2014; Wearing & McGehee, 2013) to both short- and long-term ISL and study abroad programs (Lewin, 2009). Not surprisingly, there has been a parallel rise in research in the area that celebrates the value of these experiences for the visiting students and host communities alike (e.g., Keilberger & Keilberger, 2009) and a literature that, for the most part, does not reject ISL outright but instead raises critical issues about current practices (see, for example, Jackson, 2011; Jefferess, 2012; Pashby, 2011; Tarc, 2013; Tiessen, 2013; Tiessen & Huish, 2014a). The rise in the amount of literature on the topic is reflected in a rise in the number of international conferences that provide the opportunity to disseminate and critique this research.

The literature provides evidence that at least some of the participants from the North have undergone “transformative” experiences (Mezirow, 2000; O’Sullivan, 1999) in relation to their understandings of North–South power relations and the underlying causes of underdevelopment in the South (Cameron, 2014; Crabtree, 2008; Heron, 2011; Jackson, 2011; Kiely, 2002); however, the literature also points out that many ISL
programs fail to be transformative, whatever their intentions, and for many participants these trips serve mainly to assuage their own guilt, their beliefs in a “poor but happy” syndrome and/or the need for more charity (Epprecht, 2004; Thomas & Chandrasekera, 2014; Van Deusen, 2014). This is particularly true for those that fall into the category of voluntourism, characterized as visits to the Global South where participants spend a very limited time in a village (often only a day or two), with the rest of the travel time spent visiting local tourist sites (see Elliot, 2013; Van Deusen, 2014). San Ignatius (see below) is an example of a host organization in a village that took the decision against hosting more trips because of their concerns about the visiting students’ motivations and attitudes.

Some research has suggested that host villages and villagers benefit in various ways from these programs (see, for example, Smedley, 2016). Certainly, as we report in detail below, many residents spoke very favourably about them; however, significant questions also have been raised in the literature about the longer-term effects of these visits. Some suggest that they serve as instruments of neocolonialism (economic or cultural) and/or instil new dependency relations (see, for example, Jefferess, 2012; Pashby, 2011). Others view the emotional connections established (usually) between host mothers and visitors as having the effect of reinforcing neocolonial ties (see, for example, Angod, 2015), the argument being that affection blinds the participants, be they host community members or visitors, to the unequal power relations inherent in these exchanges.

By comparison, Andreotti (2011) among others notes that postcolonialism challenges “the ability to naturalize and normalize Western/European perspectives globally”—a condition which is directly “related to European colonialism” (p. 3). This pedagogical challenge involves being able to “imagine the world differently” (Andreotti, 2016, p. 1) in order to challenge the traditional “production of knowledge about the Other and the (Western/European) self” (p. 3), one which “champions a form of solidarity enacted as an ethical imperative toward the Other” (Spivak, 2008, as cited in Andreotti, 2011, p. 3). In relation to spelling out a pedagogical regime which both describes contemporary approaches to formulating ISL programs and spells out what a “postcolonial” approach might look like, Andreotti (2016) posits a four-stage schemata of “audience orientation” ranging from a “surface-level overview of the issues that can inspire people to get involved in basic initiatives often related to charity or awareness raising” through to an orientation which is “very seldom addressed in educational work,” one which is:

- driven by a critique of ontological hegemony geared towards the uncertain exploration of different possibilities of existence beyond the modern subject, modern institutions (including the modern nation state) and of global capitalism—beyond the modern onto-epistemic grammar and the (contested, but enduring) modern/colonial imaginary. (p. 106)

In undertaking our exploration of the realities and alternative possibilities of ISL programs, we are certainly influenced by Andreotti’s (2011) considerations in this regard, “to expand their imagination, to rearrange their desires, to establish a more nuanced relationship of solidarity, and to pluralize the future of all communities” (p. 8).
Methodology

As noted above, the purpose of this research has been to explore the impact of ISL programs and their North American youth participants, on the host villages and in Nicaragua where these programs take place. In formulating our methodology, we believe that this impact can be understood in a variety of ways. Examining the economic or developmental impact leads us to question whether the projects invariably associated with ISL visits contribute to the enhanced well-being of the community; examining the interpersonal impact raises the issue of the nature of the relationships established between host families (particularly the host mothers) and their Global North visitors; and examining the impact with respect to cross-cultural issues leads us to ask if there is a transfer of cultural knowledge between the hosts and their visitors and to what extent that transfer is simply one-way (invariably to the benefit of the visitors), or one which also allows host residents to enhance their understanding of the life and culture in the home country of the visitors.

Finally, what are the political implications of these programs? This latter aspect is complex and can include, broadly speaking, at least two fundamental sets of relationships, namely those: (a) within the village between what Toomey (2008) calls the power rich and the power poor residents of the village (i.e., those who are involved in decision-making and those who are marginal to, or entirely absent from, local decision-making); and (b) between the host community organization and the Nicaraguan (or Nicaraguan-based) facilitating organization and/or the foreign sending organization.

In the final analysis, we seek to develop an understanding of the actual or potential transformative impact of ISL visits on the host villages and their inhabitants. In short, is it possible to envision that the villagers will have a transformative experience that many sending organizations, at least rhetorically, hope their Northern participants/clients may have? Or, are the villagers merely providing to their visitors a quasi-touristic service, which is invariably monetized? Finally, if it is not a transformative experience for the host communities, do ISL visits and the attendant projects contribute to or reinforce a neocolonial mentality and dependency?

Typically, the ISL programs in our study involved groups of about 10-15 senior high school students who, accompanied by their teachers, spend about 7-10 days in Nicaragua, including 5-7 days in a rural village. During the community visits the visitors stayed in local residents' homes, assisted in some sort of “service” project (e.g., building/repairing a school, working in a daycare centre) and engaged in a number of additional “learning” activities (e.g., meetings with local residents and officials, visits to social-support centres of interest).

Our research in this area began in 2013 and at that time involved interviews and focus groups in five rural communities in Nicaragua which had hosted ISL groups, along with interviews with a dozen ISL program coordinators located in Nicaragua (for a detailed description of this study, see O’Sullivan and Smaller, 2016). Our more recent research, for which the fieldwork took place in 2015-2016, allowed us to deepen our 2013 initiative.
and was carried out by a research team made up of the two authors, along with Xochilt Hernández—a Nicaraguan anthropologist who conducted the interviews in the communities—and Ashley Rerrie, a Canadian graduate student in international development studies.

Four Nicaraguan villages were selected for this research phase, only one of which had been included in the 2013 study. Villages were selected based on the authors' long-standing involvement in solidarity and ISL programs in Nicaragua and in consultation with local informants. In each case, prior arrangements were made through village contacts and community meetings were held to allow Hernández to explain the purpose and methodology of the research. Typically, Hernández visited the communities three times—once for the preliminary meeting to explain the purpose of the research and twice to conduct interviews—and spent approximately five days in each host village. These visits occurred before and after the ISL visits, and on two occasions she was also in the village during the student visits. She conducted interviews with over 100 residents in the four villages and made extensive field notes. The interviews followed a semi-structured protocol, based on questions relating to the project objectives. Of particular interest were questions sounding out residents' reasons for being involved in the project (or not, as an effort was made to interview villagers who were not involved with the visits) and why the host mothers agreed to having student visitors stay in their homes. The host mothers were asked about their impressions of the students with whom they came into such close contact, and all of the respondents, including those not directly involved with the visits, were asked to express their opinion of the ISL programs' advantages and disadvantages for the community. Standard ethical research procedures were followed and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed and downloaded on NVivo.

In addition, during January/February 2016, the authors and Rerrie (the Canadian research assistant) conducted individual interviews with 10 Nicaraguan residents, located mainly in Managua, who were directly involved in developing and coordinating programs in Nicaragua for Canadian and U.S. students. About half were native Nicaraguans; the other half were American expats, all of whom had lived in Nicaragua for periods ranging from six to 30 years. All had significant Nicaraguan community field experience, working directly in rural villages with local residents on community development and/or ISL projects. In each case, these individuals were involved with education/development organizations—some faith-based, some non-profit. Interviews were generally held in the homes or workplaces of these interviewees and ranged from 45 to 75 minutes in length. In the text below, these individuals are referred to as coordinators. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

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3 Three of the four villages discussed here have received ISL groups through Casa Canadiense, a Canadian NGO founded in the early 1990s that promotes and supports ISL programs. Both authors of this chapter have a long-standing association with Casa; Smaller is a co-founder of the organization and until recently served as a member of its Board of Directors while O’Sullivan is currently a board member.
The data analysis was treated as an ongoing process. Transcribing the interviews served as a preliminary exploratory analysis (Creswell, 2013), which allowed us to acquire a general sense of the data. Then, an inductive approach was used going from detailed data to the general codes and themes. Before coding the data, a list of priori codes for the two sets of participants was created based on the research objectives and research questions. The list of codes was expanded as new emerging themes were identified. After all transcripts were coded using NVivo, a final list of codes was prepared and grouped to a more manageable number of themes. Diverse strategies were used throughout the process of data collection and analysis to determine trustworthiness of interpretations and findings.

One significant limitation to this mode of inquiry relates to the understandable concern of community respondents not wishing to say anything critical about a program that they deemed beneficial to their communities—this in spite of the interviewer’s attempt to assure them of anonymity, and that the research was intended solely to help improve the programs, not to downgrade or eliminate them. Similarly, it is certainly possible that the comments and reflections of the program coordinators themselves might well have been shaded, however unintentionally, by their own structural connections to these programs.

Descriptions of the Research Sites

All four villages in which we conducted field work during 2015-2016 were located in rural areas in the western half of Nicaragua, and all generally shared similar economic modes—small individual family plots for subsistence farming, supplemented by seasonal day labour undertaken for larger farmers in the area, and in some cases, by remittances from family members working elsewhere either seasonally or full-time (e.g., on a coffee plantation or working in one of Nicaragua’s larger cities, or abroad in Costa Rica or elsewhere). In other ways, however, they were quite different from one another, which allowed for useful comparisons in relation to their respective responses to ISL programs in their communities.

First, the geographic location of the communities ranged considerably. San Ignatius is located within 15 kilometres on good roads to two large urban areas (Jinotega and Matagalpa) and is serviced by local buses. Santa Clara is located about 40 minutes by car (far longer by public transportation) south of Nicaragua’s capital, Managua. It is approximately five kilometres from the main road. The village is not served by public transit and trekking to the highway where the secondary school and some stores are located or to catch a bus to Managua involves a long and steep walk for those who do not have a vehicle (almost everyone in the community). Los Sureños, too, is located several kilometres from the nearest bus route, requiring the inhabitants, none of whom had a vehicle, to walk the distance. Pueblo Arriba was by far the most isolated of the four villages studied. It is located more than 100 kilometres north of Managua. The final leg of the trip from the capital involves travelling from the regional administrative centre which is the municipality closest to the village where public transportation and most services are located. This approximately 12-kilometre trip on very poorly maintained roads through the

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4 All names are pseudonyms.
mountains can take as much as two hours in a four-wheel drive vehicle. Pueblo Arriba is composed of four self-identifying entities that are spread over a large, mountainous area with individual homes that can be as much as 30 to 40 minutes walking distance apart. Pueblo Arriba is the most geographically dispersed and isolated of the four communities surveyed in the 2015-2016 study.

Secondly, while three of the villages consisted mainly of mestizo-identified populations (dominant Spanish colonial background), the people of Pueblo Arriba self-identified as Indigenous and considered themselves a part of a much larger regional municipality, which is coordinated/governed by a regional Indigenous organization. Thirdly, while all four of the villages surveyed were each part of larger formal regional political/administrative structures that involved electing representatives to municipal councils, these centralized structures were routinely viewed as not meeting the basic needs of the rural communities outside of the municipal centre. In practice, the internal decision-making structures and processes—both formal and informal—seemed to vary considerably from village to village. As noted above, in Pueblo Arriba much of the decision-making (certainly related to the ISL program) was undertaken by officials of the regional Indigenous organization with headquarters located at a considerable distance from the village itself. An example of this centralized decision-making is reflected in the fact that in the case of their first two ISL groups, the host village was informed about the visits only after the sending organization had negotiated the logistics of the visit with the leaders of the Indigenous organization.

Decision-making in the other villages for the most part took place “closer to home” but still involved diverse modes of interaction, particularly as it pertained to accommodating the ISL programs. For example, decisions about hosting ISL groups in Santa Clara were made by a small group of women who led a formal village-level co-operative organization. In Los Sureños, where all the families were related, decisions were made in meetings to which all of the adult population was invited. In San Ignatius, the host organization was a Solidarity Committee, established in 1996, that coordinated the visits to the community in collaboration with host families and other community organizations. The work of this Solidarity Committee will be described in more detail below.

Findings

This section will report on the results of our data collection that encompassed the 100 interviews undertaken in the four identified villages, and the interviews held with the ten NGO coordinators in Managua. Overall, we found considerable congruence between the comments of the two groups; however, as will be noted, in some cases there were differences—some simply in nuance, while others reflected considerable divergence.
Three Villages

We begin with a survey of our findings in three of the four villages (San Ignatius will be dealt with separately, given its significant differences). The residents we interviewed in these three villages, including those who were marginal to the program, were unanimous in their opinion that the programs were very positive, benefited the community and everyone involved and that they should be continued.

Reasons for the interviewees’ strong views seemed to fall into three categories. First, many spoke of the ways in which they saw the visiting students benefiting from their experiences in a very different cultural setting. As one host mother expressed it, “They like to share and they like to learn, learn from our experiences.” Another younger woman stated, “[They come] for an intercultural experience and also to do service in the community. ... We want their support and to share with them about our community, what we do here and to find out what they do in Canada, as well.” Many recognized the importance, for visitors and residents alike, of the interactive nature of the program, which does suggest the concept of working in solidarity. As one father put it, “Well, the young people came, I think, with the objective of seeing and knowing how campesinos live and to know of our necessities and our difficulties that we have. They come to learn certain things and this taught us certain things as well.”

Related to this were the ways in which residents commented on their own enhancement of cross-cultural understandings. This benefit was often defined in terms of spending time and sharing with their guests, enhancing cross-cultural understandings about their respective life situations and experiences. Typical comments included:

“We put them up because they come to collaborate with us; to teach us things; to help move us forward, so we gladly welcome them into our homes.”

“We almost never leave the community and all we see are each other. We want to see people, both from Nicaragua and elsewhere, other countries. It is good to have this opportunity and to make new friendships.”

“To learn about other aspects of life because at night they talk to us about their lives—it’s not at all comparable with what we have here.”

“We spent lovely moments with them. They taught us and we learned from them as we taught them. Sometimes language was a problem but we’d write notes and come to understand ... it was lovely to be with them.”

Affective relations also figured strongly in interviewees’ comments, in spite of what seems like quite short-lived encounters. In the words of one mother, “They play soccer with our kids...it’s a happy week, we are distracted and it is sad when they go; sharing time with them, walking with them...they bring love and affection during their stay.” A
second mother noted, poignantly, “I cry because of the affection I develop. I see empty rooms after they leave.” As yet another mother expressed, “It is a well-organized community and they feel very happy here, and us too, we are happy when they come here; the entire community is united and when they leave some even cry because we miss them.” One author of this paper, in attendance at a despedida (farewell party) for a group of Canadian students on a separate occasion, observed that the delegated spokesperson for the village, a very elderly woman, was unable to say more than a few words before she broke out in tears.

Finally, the topic of material contributions that visitors provided to the community was central in the interviewees’ analysis. In all cases, the community project work which the visitors undertook—building needed schools, community centres, latrines, preparing seed gardens and so forth—was highly praised. In addition, a number of comments were made about materials that the students brought with them, including funds to purchase building materials and equipment for the community project, school and medical supplies, and sports equipment for the community to distribute. While respondents did express gratitude for the material benefits associated with the ISL visits, these were invariably mentioned within the context of how much they appreciated the social interaction with their young visitors. Appreciation for the material benefits struck us as being less important to the villagers than the emotional and social ties that occurred during the visits.

For the most part, the NGO officials’ comments echoed what we heard from village residents themselves. These coordinators saw villagers benefiting significantly in all three core findings noted above: affective relations, intercultural exchange and the benefits of material contributions. Coordinators strongly believed that community residents (particularly women) very much appreciated the intrinsic value of these programs, and the ways in which residents personally and communally benefited socially from students living in their homes and engaging in their communities. As well, a number of comments were made that these visits seemed to enhance not only residents’ personal global understandings and perspectives but also their belief that these exchanges raised the status of their communities (and perhaps country). In addition, at the personal level, some coordinators related that residents had told them that merely interrelating with these foreigners helped them become more confident in working with their visitors. One coordinator spoke about a resident who described her experiences in attempting to converse with students who could not speak Spanish. Initially, this made the resident very anxious and nervous; however, recognizing that students were also having trouble expressing themselves, she soon realized that “now I feel I’m just like them; I feel we’re just the same, we’re just people.”

Other community benefits were also cited by individual coordinators. Two separate interviewees expressed the belief that village youth having direct contact with others their own age but with very different cultural backgrounds might also widen their perceptions of life’s possibilities (notwithstanding material and cultural realities). A third coordinator speculated on the value of these visits in simply providing a kind of “entertainment” for local residents—an appreciated divergence from what the coordinator described as “an otherwise mundane day-to-day village existence, particularly in areas with no television or even electricity.”
Did residents voice any concerns about the ISL programs or the visitors associated with these programs in their villages? In fact, village-based interviewees were very reluctant to respond, even after some encouragement by the interviewer, when asked specifically if they had any problems with the program or its visitors. Only a modest number of concerns were eventually raised by individuals. The most common response by far from residents of the three villages was that their visitors should stay for a longer period of time (particularly in cases where students remained only for about a week). Their reasons for requesting that the visits be longer were related to how they saw the demands of their own working lives interfering with the time they had to spend with their visitors. As one man noted, “They should stay longer; we aren’t even in the house until 4:00 [p.m.] because we are working.” Similarly, a host mother speaking on behalf of the resident youth of the village noted, “The [local] boys work … [and] they haven’t got a lot of time to spend with the students to teach them local dances; there isn’t time to teach them that.”

Language differences understandably made it difficult for many to engage in the level of conversation they desired, although some did note that basic communication through hand signals, body language and notes helped somewhat. Furthermore, two facilitators who provided assistance with translation accompanied each group. In certain villages, concerns were raised by some mothers about the availability of what they perceived to be appropriate food for their visitors. As one mother noted, “We give what we can, what we have, but at the same time we want to give some salad, those who are vegetarians want their salad, their vegetables.” A few respondents commented that occasionally it was difficult to provide these “extras” given the level of per diem payments they received for hosting and feeding visiting students.

By comparison, a number of coordinators did raise concerns about some aspects of ISL programs in villages, many of which were not voiced (for whatever reasons) by village residents themselves. More that one coordinator believed that the “home stay” aspects of these ISL programs raised divisions within communities, particularly the matter of host families being seen by other community residents as receiving disproportionate advantage (material or otherwise). In addition, some coordinators reflected on the potential divisiveness of procedures used in assigning homes for this purpose; as one put it, “You end up having competition in the community.” Directly related to this issue was the matter of the per diem amount paid by the NGOs; in the case of the villages we observed, initially US$10.00 per day was allotted for room and board, which was raised to US$15.00 partway through our study as a result of concerns raised by some village residents. To be sure, in relative terms, US$15.00 per day (doubled in the frequent case of assigning two students to a house) does seem disproportionate to the average daily salary of a rural farm worker (reported as being approximately US$5.00 per day), which may well explain the reported tensions in the community between families who are assigned students and those who are not.

Whether or not host residents are “overpaid” for their efforts, one Nicaraguan coordinator who was very experienced with and sensitive to rural community life described
the ways that she believed ISL-program hosting took a toll on local residents, whether or not the latter ever mentioned let alone complained about these situations:

I noticed that for the community that received the group, it was very hard. It was like a burden for them because many people have to work. I mean the community had to change their life during those days. They have to stop doing many things...it was more work for people here and it was really tiring; they were supposed to come here because they wanted to help, but it was the opposite.

When probed as to why the community put up with this, the same coordinator explained:

The people didn’t want to make them feel bad, they would say yes or they would do all kind of things to make things happen and organize things, because they didn’t want to make people feel bad. They wanted to welcome them and in spite of the work, yes.

As one village resident confirmed, “One thing, if a house isn’t clean I’ve noticed that people get worried and tidied things up, keep the house clean so it looks good—that I have noticed. They tidy up in the street near the house.”

Interestingly, while these concerns about extra work were not raised by many respondents, a number of villagers and coordinators emphasized the perceived importance of offering hospitality to visitors (from near or far), insisting it very much reflected a national value. In the words of one leader, “The sense of hospitality is very embedded into the culture.” In that context, it is perhaps understandable why the work involved is very much overshadowed by this national mandate, and it too may explain its highly gendered nature. It also might help explain host residents’ interest in feeding their guest as well as possible, although there was also indication that, for some groups at least, NGO officials also promoted the “need” for “proper” nutrition among the village residents.

Another issue of considerable concern, voiced by most coordinators, was the bringing of gifts to families and individuals (in spite of strong prohibitions leveled by the NGO program organizers), which again was something that raised jealousies within the village.

San Ignatius

As compared to the other three villages examined, San Ignatius, or certainly the Solidarity Committee (the host organization), had a very different perspective on ISL programs and the expectations they had of their visitors. Based on the interviews with residents of San Ignatius (some of whom are active Steering Committee members, while others are less closely involved), the village had initially welcomed ISL groups and had appreciated their commitment to the host organization’s stated interests in promoting mutual respect, understanding and solidarity. A number of respondents expressed the same kinds of positive experiences as noted above by their counterparts in the other three villages. Those interviewed were also very clear regarding what they wanted out of these ISL programs and participants: “What we wanted was for the visitors to integrate
themselves into the work of the community and relate to the people in their host family and in the community." In the words of another, “The most important thing for us is your presence, the work you are doing and the friendship that we have.” As a third resident noted, “If groups wanted to come, they would be welcome, not only to stay with a family but to involve themselves in the work of the community.”

However, over the years, the members of the Solidarity Committee discerned a dramatic shift in the philosophy and values both of the sending organizations as well as of the participants from the North. Several specific issues were noted. First, in the words of one resident, “We were concerned with the attitude of the visitors.” Further, another noted, with considerable regret, that they began to experience:

A loss of culture in the community because the youth here became accustomed to the life that they brought—they brought other customs and our youth lost their sense of where they came from, their customs, their roots and all that.

This change of attitude was characterized for a number of our informants by the insistence of some of the visiting groups to engage in practices clearly in opposition to village values (e.g., visitors bringing their own bottled water and food to the village ranked high in villagers’ minds). As one resident expressed, “As for the food, some were vegetarians and didn’t eat what we eat and others simply didn’t like the food. Others wouldn’t drink the water. What kind of world is this?” Another resident explained, Then they wanted to bring food. No, we said, no food; you will eat what we eat in the village. The other thing was the containers of water. We did not want them to bring containers of water to the community because we have water.

Delegations also began demanding their own hosting/sleeping arrangements in the village homes. The Steering Committee insisted that only one visitor stay with each family, arguing that this ensured a closer relationship between the students and their host family members. As one resident expressed, “For example, they were afraid to stay alone in a house and they said if the problem was lack of beds, they’d bring a hammock. We said no.” Bringing unrequested and undesired gifts also became an unresolved and contentious issue—“We didn’t want people giving things to the hosts either upon arrival or departure…The gift-giving gave rise to conflict, bad interpretations, and the loss of friendship”—as was visitors’ demands for changes to traditional visitor accommodation routines. Another concern was that some visitors engaged in amorous relations with local young people.

Even more problematic for the Steering Committee were the responses of the sending organizations to their expressions of concern, and their attempts to discuss possible changes to the routines:

At first we couldn’t say anything but there came a point where we sat down and said that there was something happening that we couldn’t ignore and we had to discuss it with the [sending] organization. We said
that there were things that we didn’t like and if you accept what we want, keep coming, but if not, we cannot continue working in this way. We did this with several delegations but there were no reactions; they just listened to us, which bothered us. For example, the issue of [the visitors] dating [local young people]—they observed that too—they didn’t say anything [to their people], they just drew apart from us.

As a result, the Solidarity Committee terminated their participation in this ISL program. As far as the leaders of the Steering Committee are concerned, groups are still fully welcome to continue coming, but on the terms that they have established. As one expressed it, “It was the delegations that had to solve the problems. We just received them and share with them but the biggest responsibility comes from them. We came through with what we offered.”

Understandably, these stark differences between San Ignatius and the other three villages required us to think deeply about what they meant.

**Discussion: Decolonizing Possibilities? For Whom?**

Intercultural exchanges do not happen in some neutral, ahistorical space, but are enacted on a landscape formed by past historical relations, from ongoing dependencies and, sometimes, from out-and-out exploitation. (Tarc, 2013, p. 15)

These global encounters ... may not be consciously present in the minds of the actual participants in the exchange or encounter, [however] they are there epistemologically in the inherited paradigms of unequal language and meaning-making which constitute the interlocutors on both sides of the encounter. (Menezes de Souza, as cited in Tarc, 2013, p. vii)

Among the many findings in this study, perhaps one of the most intriguing relates to the seemingly contradictory reports from village residents on the one hand, and the NGO coordinators on the other, as to the overall value and impact of ISL programs. Every resident interviewed in three of the four villages thought the programs were very worthwhile, with the only significant concern being that the visits were too short in length. In comparison, a number of concerns were raised by coordinators and the residents of the fourth village: assigning of host families and gift-giving raised jealousies and animosities in the community; increased community dependency on Northern largesse; increased labour for village women; and the detrimental influence of Northern cultural practices among the village youth. At the same time, many coordinators did laud positive benefits which accrued: enhancing material conditions in the village; provision of new contacts with foreigners, thus enhancing cross-cultural perspectives; and the affective nature of the relationships between visitors and villagers.
Based on her study of a Costa Rican village, Smedley (2016) argues that some host families have, in effect, converted their homes into informal lodging for foreign visitors. Several of our informants indicated their desire to attract eco-tourists to their villages; one man even told us that based on his experience with the first-ever ISL visit to his community, he wanted to train to become a professional eco-tourist guide. The hosting of ISL programs has become a direct strategy for economic and material gain (whether realized by the entire village or disproportionately by specific individuals within it), and these actions should be understood, if not lauded, on that basis. Therefore, it is perhaps understandable why village residents might downplay or refuse to divulge any perceived negative aspects of these programs to enquiring foreigners (or, in our case, to a local research assistant working for such people).

However, other researchers (Andreotti, 2006; Jefferess, 2008; Zemach-Bersin, 2008), along with at least some of the NGO coordinators interviewed, argue that many of ISL programs, especially those demonstrating little interest in exploring critical aspects of traditional North-South contexts, generally do little more than reinforce dependency and neocolonial relations. In this regard, our discussions with residents of San Ignatius did much to strengthen our understanding of such concerns. As they found, even ISL groups that espoused objectives of solidarity in their discourse often seem to display, intentionally or otherwise, the more traditional relations of inequality in undertaking their programs in host villages. This was perhaps most pronounced (or at least most noticeable) with regards to issues of food, water and housing arrangements and the activities undertaken by the visiting participants. Even some of the most “well-meaning” organizations (those with progressive-sounding claims of purpose) seem to request or perhaps even demand conformity by the community to “Northern expectations” in this regard. As we found during our visits with the other three villages, these arrangements are usually agreed to by residents and can be seen as reinforcing the dominance of the Northern partners to the relationship.

The issue of ISL programs creating economic dependencies and furthering traditional colonial relations did evoke differential comments from various respondents in our study. A San Ignatius resident spoke strongly in support of the village’s ban on programs, arguing that:

We do not seek financial resources from away. Resources are important but it is the communities themselves that have to seek alternatives…we have to demand from the authorities that which we need. ...In the long run if [hosting ISL visitors] becomes a project, but if the students cease to come, what is going to happen? The family will be accustomed that they come, they pay me, and I’m happy. If we remain accustomed to live as we do and share what we have, it is more beneficial for the families because in that way we will seek survival mechanisms within our own community.
However, we were certainly cautioned by at least one informant (a program coordinator) about not “victimizing” residents and their purported inability and/or powerlessness to understand or change underlying power relations between themselves and ISL participants. He reminded us of the traditional culture and material conditions in which they lived, and the need to take these into consideration in understanding both the reasons for stasis and the possibilities for change:

But that kind of frank dialogue between the organization and the community is very well needed. It is difficult to have because the community...they have a need, yet they know this is a way to also promote community development and getting some income for the families. But people are a little bit afraid to be frank about issues that might arise because they might think that they can lose the income. So that’s the part that I think takes time.

Finally, while not the central focus of our present research, it is clear from earlier research we have undertaken (O’Sullivan & Smaller, 2013) along with many other studies, that these programs have very limited or no effect on “decolonizing” the values and beliefs of participants from the North (Jefferess, 2008, 2012; Tarc, 2013; Zemach-Bersin, 2008). To be sure, there are some reports of a minority of students returning home having been “transformed” in their beliefs—as evidenced by their changed discourse, their subsequent community activities in relation to solidarity and/or their changed educational and career plans (Gough, 2013; King, 2004; O’Sullivan & Smaller, 2013). For the most part, however, the evidence seems to suggest reinforced (and even enhanced) beliefs in the superiority of the North and the legitimacy of the “poor but happy” syndrome, as well as the “need” to help and/or save the “poor”.

In sum, as noted by several San Ignatius residents, we are left with the thought that these programs—at least the short-term stays that we have observed—seem to cause more harm than good, both for the participating students as well as the host villages.

Conclusions

Clearly, the example of San Ignatius’s eschewing of traditional ISL programs, as part of their overall determination to disrupt traditional North–South (neo)colonial relations, is to be lauded. However, to our knowledge, this is the only community in Nicaragua to take these steps; in fact, many others are not only continuing but also actively promoting increased ISL activity in this area. Given the current economic realities and the presumed right of individuals and communities—particularly in rural areas—to make their own

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5 One complex issue, raised by residents of San Ignatius and other villages, is the matter of Northerners insisting on bringing their own water and/or food, and/or insisting on food being provided other than that which village residents normally consume, and/or insisting that more than one student be housed with each host family. This certainly intersects with colonial continuities around perceived safety, health and expectations of the “dangerous other,” and remains an issue for ISL programs to grapple with.

6 Clearly, a much more complete story about this community is necessary in order to explore in depth and evaluate the historical and contemporary conditions and relations that have led to the actions which they have taken in relation to ISL programs. The authors are presently engaged in further research in this regard.
(hopefully informed, free) decisions about matters such as these, it could be suggested that if there is to be significant change in the effects of ISL programs (both on their participants and host villages), then such change will have to be contemplated and initiated by the ISL programs themselves. But how might this happen?

In short, it would involve these ISL programs seeking to promote an epistemological rupture (Althusser, 1965, 2006) among its participants—first by interrogating their own motivational claims in the light of their activities to date, then revising all components of their overall program (before, during and after the village visit), and then seeking to establish relationships with communities that can help (or as with San Ignatius, insist on helping) the visitors to experience an alternative world view. Pedagogically, this would involve ISL officials and coordinators taking seriously Andreotti’s (2016) schema (outlined in the literature review above) for provision of a program that serves to “rupture” these traditional understandings and beliefs.

Very briefly, it would be important that the pre-trip activities involve a serious exploration of the historical realities of North–South relations and their contemporary effects on life in the South, particularly for rural villagers, and the ways in which these relations of dependency and power imbalance are maintained through contemporary political, economic and cultural regimes in the North. Whether or not village visits would involve a “service” component, much more emphasis should be placed on “learning.” Our own experience with ISL programs has shown us that most receiving organizations and communities are quite willing to introduce an explicit content that would draw upon their lived experiences to expose their visitors to something much more than simply seeing how their hosts live from day to day. Attention should also be paid to ensuring participants’ continued engagement post-trip—in reaching out to others to challenge much of the existing beliefs and ideologies about the reasons for the historical and contemporary conditions in the South and the role which the North has played, and continues to play, in maintaining these circumstances.

In this way, it is hoped that these re-envisioned ISL programs might actually assist in significantly altering North–South relations in the North at the individual, community and even national level; in short, “decolonizing” relations for all concerned.
References


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Assessing International Student Mobility in Canadian University Strategic Plans: Instrumentalist versus Transformational Approaches in Higher Education

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Keywords: international student mobility; university internationalization strategies; student accessibility; transformational learning

ABSTRACT: This paper examines the strategic commitments made by Canadian universities around international student mobility, and evaluates whether these commitments provide an appropriate foundation for delivering strong mobility programs adopting “transformational” approaches. Through a content analysis of university strategic plans, I examine the nature of international student mobility discourse, ideas and objectives in Canadian higher education. This locus of examination is important because the strategic plan sets the tone and commitments for the university, and has significant power to influence decision-making at the program and department levels. This analysis also helps us to see the ways that university administration understands the purpose of international student mobility, and where gaps exist. The findings demonstrate that current conceptualizations of student mobility in the Canadian university context are: 1) Instrumentalist in the sense that they are near-exclusively designed to promote the university, and 2) Do not lay the foundation for strong international mobility programs.

Introduction

International student mobility programs involving Canadian students travelling to other countries (frequently in the Global South) for educational purposes is a growing trend. A greater number of Canadian post-secondary students are enrolled in international exchanges, volunteer positions, internships and service learning courses than ever before (Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Turner & Robson, 2008), and

7 The term “Global South” is used, not unproblematically, to refer to countries that are characterized by the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) as possessing low composite levels of income, life expectancy and educational attainment rates.
97 percent of universities in Canada now offer international experiences to their students (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), 2014, p. 4-5). Calls to increase the number of university students taking part in mobility programs are also widespread, including, for instance, proposals to grow student participation rates from 11 percent to 25 percent over the next ten years (Study Group on Global Education, 2017), or a tripling of those going abroad by 2020 and again by 2025 (Centre for International Policy Studies, 2015). These calls are supported by research and news media reports linking mobility programs to Canada's own economic wellbeing, the production of globally minded leaders and improved intercultural competency and job-preparedness for students (Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), 2014 & 2016; Fortier, 2016; Mulroney, 2016; Study Group on Global Education, 2017; University Affairs, 2016; Universities Canada, 2014).

Private, for-profit sending organizations are important players in marketing and selling these types of opportunities to students, who are increasingly treated like consumers of overseas experiences (Georgeou & Engel, 2011). Universities are also important players in this field. More and more, universities advertise international mobility programs as opportunities for students to develop marketable skills and to access real world job training for the globalized economy of the 21st century. They promote international mobility options by way of program delivery, course requirements, travel scholarships and bursaries, among other means. Ultimately, however, these programs fall under broader strategic commitments made by all levels of university governance—commitments that are laid out most definitively in university strategic plans.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the strategic commitments made by Canadian universities, and to evaluate whether these commitments provide an appropriate foundation for delivering strong international mobility programs adopting “transformational” approaches. By this, I am referring to institutional and pedagogical models for student mobility characterized by sustainability, reciprocity and the pursuit of global social justice. Through a content analysis of 33 university strategic plans, I examine the nature of international student mobility discourse, ideas and objectives in Canadian higher education. This locus of examination is important because the strategic plan sets the tone and commitments for the university. Drafted by the highest levels of university administration, the strategic plan has significant power to influence decision-making (around funding allocation, course offerings, etc.) at the program and department levels. This analysis also helps us to see the ways in which university administration understands the purpose of international student mobility, and where gaps exist. In other words, strategic plans can help us to understand whether universities are “on track” to do international mobility well. The findings of this analysis demonstrate that current conceptualizations of student mobility in the Canadian university context are 1) Instrumentalist in the sense that they are near-exclusively designed to promote the university, and 2) Do not lay the foundation for strong international mobility programs. In light of these findings, I advocate that universities adopt more transformational approaches for higher education and for student mobility in particular.
What the Literature on University Internationalization and Student Mobility Tells Us

A growing number of scholars point to economic motivations as the driving force behind universities’ shift towards internationalization (see the edited collection by Molesworth, Nixon & Scullion, 2010, for example). In their research examining university mission statements in the United Kingdom, Sauntson and Morrish (2010) document a predominantly neoliberal discourse, in which marketization, commodification and globalization of the university landscape play key roles, thereby helping to construct students as consumers of university education. Corroborating this idea, Sharpe (2015) writes:

Critics have drawn attention to the entrepreneurial and consumer-oriented flavor of contemporary education abroad [EA] and have suggested that although EA programs claim to promote global citizenship, they seem to be more highly valued as a marketing strategy to attract top-level students (Breen, 2012; Ogden, 2007) and as a way for universities to generate additional revenue from students who pay a premium to participate in EA programs (Lewin, 2009). (p. 228)

Critical scholarship published by Sharpe and others illuminates the prevalence of instrumentalist approaches to higher education, which are concerned primarily with generating increased student enrollment and revenue. When applied to commitments around student mobility, instrumental approaches contribute to poorly designed and executed programs that prioritize institutional benefits over the goals of sustainability, reciprocity and global social justice.

Given the growing focus on students as consumers of post-secondary education, it is not surprising to learn that students are frequently motivated to participate in mobility programs for the personal benefits they offer—benefits like cross-cultural learning, improved language skills, job training and enhanced employability (Rothwell & Charleston, 2013; Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Tiessen & Huish, 2014). Other commonly cited reasons for participation include adventure and travel opportunities and the desire to “help” others or “make a difference” (Cook, 2008; Heron, 2007; Sharpe, 2015, p. 228). These motivations correspond with the perceived benefits of participation in non-academic volunteer abroad programs (see McBride, Lough & Sherraden, 2012). Critical development scholars and educators have criticized student motivations based on personal benefit for being misguided or self-serving at best, and at worst, borderline neocolonialist (Palacios, 2010; Sharpe, 2015).

The literature also tells us there are important considerations for international student mobility in the university context; chief among them are matters pertaining to program accessibility, ethics and evaluation. If universities want to do student mobility well, then they need to understand and address these issues.
Accessibility

Existing research acknowledges numerous barriers that prevent students from participating in international mobility programs. The Institute for the International Education of Students (Institute for the International Education of Students (IES), 2014) has categorized these barriers as the “three Cs”: cost, curriculum and culture. Of these, cost is consistently the main issue raised by students, followed by curriculum demands and an institutional cultural that does not adequately support international opportunities. Others have added a fourth “C” to this list. For instance, Martin (2015) asserts that “circumstances” having to do with health, family or work obligations can prevent students from having the opportunity to travel for long periods of time. Alternatively, Goodman (2014) proposes that universities need “champions” on campus to get students interested in mobility opportunities and to support them at every stage of their international experience.

Issues of accessibility are also connected to the participation rates of diversity groups. It is known that students experience barriers to participation unevenly, with male students, students of colour, student with disabilities, LGBT students, single parents, mature students, first generation students and Indigenous students disproportionately less likely to participate in mobility programs (CBIE, 2009; IES Abroad, 2014; Universities Canada, 2016a). Few studies have assessed the causes for limited participation rates of diversity groups, be it financial, cultural, and attitudinal privilege or discrimination based. Greater awareness and data collection on the part of universities is required in order to understand and close the gaps in student participation rates.

Ethical Issues

The rapid growth of international mobility programs in universities has raised questions regarding whether this growth may in fact be driven by less than ethical motivations (Sharpe, 2015, p. 227). Responding to such concerns, Karim-Haji, Roy and Gough (2016) recently published a resource guide for achieving improved ethical practice in international experiential learning programs in the Canadian university context. This guide offers critical perspectives on a range of issues such as unequal power relationships, exploitation of host communities, unethical advertising and marketing of programs, among others. It offers a starting point for universities to consider the ethical implications of their mobility programming. Publications like this one reinforce the idea that universities have a responsibility to act ethically, to work with other local and global institutions to address the social, economic and political issues of our time (Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012, p. 12), and to not act in ways that reinforce existing inequalities.

When designing international student mobility programs, universities have an ethical responsibility to promote responsible forms of global engagement, sometimes termed “thick” global citizenship (Andreotti, 2006; Dobson, 2006). A thick conception of global citizenship, according to Cameron (2015) involves more than just compassion for the vulnerable—that deeply problematic “helping imperative” common among post-secondary students interested in international mobility programs in Global South countries. Instead, a thick global citizenship attempts to actively influence the structural conditions faced by
vulnerable groups by first understanding individuals in the Global North as implicated (often as beneficiaries) in those very structures. Students must then operationalize their learning and undertake informed political action aimed at ending the suffering of others in which they are implicated (Cameron, 2014, p. 33). Cameron (2014) explains that thick conceptions of global citizenship are actually quite difficult to implement in practice:

One of the practical implications of “thick” conceptions of global citizenship is that, by emphasizing complicity in the suffering of others and moral obligations to fulfill negative duties not to contribute or to benefit from that suffering in addition to positive duties, the range of actions that qualify as global citizenship is significantly reduced. (p. 32)

Fostering thick conceptions of global citizenship in the context of international student mobility programs requires a long-term commitment and a deliberate political undertaking by university students, professors and administrators alike.

The ethical principles underpinning thick global citizenship are jeopardized when the benefits of mobility programs are felt exclusively or primarily by Global North students. For universities wanting to develop strong mobility programs, strategies must be employed to teach students about the moral obligations that follow from international cooperation, to build ethical engagements with Global South partners and host communities, and to ensure that mutual learning and benefit results.

Program Evaluation

Several scholars have called for more rigorous evaluation of Canadian university mobility programs (Bennett, 2009; Grantham, 2016; Rathburn & Lexier, 2016, p. 18; Tiessen & Epprecht, 2012). Universities Canada (2016b) recently published an issue brief listing the core challenges that prevent universities from properly measuring and evaluating their mobility programs. One issue raised in the brief is the inconsistent and insufficient collection of information by universities. According to Universities Canada, “most, if not all, universities in Canada keep track of the program and year of study for students taking part in mobility programs. Some also keep data on trip-related information (country destinations and length of stay)" (p. 2). However, very few universities collect more detailed information, such as demographic data on students travelling abroad, the quality of student experiences or the impacts of programs for host partners and communities. As a result, very little is currently known in Canada beyond the number and destinations of students going abroad.

A second core challenge to program evaluation has to do with the difficulty of classifying an ever-growing amount of diverse student mobility options, including anything from field research, to practicum placements and field courses, to voluntourism and study abroad, among others (Universities Canada, 2016b). Across the country, universities employ their own language and definitions too. Agreeing to nationally recognized typologies of mobility programs is an important first step for enabling consistent data entry and evaluation. CBIE’s (2015) “Education Abroad Lexicon” represents a positive step towards creating a comprehensive and authoritative vocabulary for student mobility. The adoption of this vocabulary by universities in Canada is intended to “promote consistency
in statistical reporting and understanding of the types of education abroad activities Canadian students are undertaking” (CBIE, 2015). Without clear definitions in place it is impossible for Canadian universities to identify, let alone evaluate, the benefits and limitations of different mobility program types.

Evaluating student mobility also poses numerous conceptual challenges due to the complexity of defining and measuring program outcomes. Concerns have been raised regarding the lack of clarity around the meaning of terms frequently associated with student mobility, such as “global citizenship,” “intercultural competence,” “self-awareness” and “personal growth,” to name a few (Bennett, 2009; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Rathburn & Lexier, 2016; Sharpe, 2015). This raises ethical questions about the kinds of ideas, values and understandings student mobility programs are contributing to (Cameron, 2014, p. 25). In a practical sense, it begs the question of what exactly we might measure when evaluating mobility program outcomes. Research conducted by Nelson and Child (2016) in South India documents the added difficulty posed when different partners involved in running mobility programs have conflicting ideas about which outcomes are most important to evaluate, and how they are best defined and measured.

If Canadian universities want to do international student mobility ethically and effectively then they need to understand and address these issues highlighted within the literature. Strategic plans offer a useful entry point for examining universities’ commitments to addressing these issues, and for identifying areas where gaps exist.

**Research Approach and Methods**

Existing literature tells us about the formative role played by university strategic plans, sometimes drawing links to globalization and the internationalization of higher education. In their research examining trends for global citizenship education in North America, Jorgensen and Shultz (2012) maintain that strategic plans serve a didactic function for universities. According to the authors, as the content of strategic plans is adapted to reflect the goals of internationalization, “members of the academic staff are encouraged to reexamine their curricula to identify ways in which departments can incorporate a focus on global issues and global thinking in the classroom” (p. 7). In this way, strategic plans are framed as being instructive documents, used to guide the actions of university faculty, staff members and students and bring them in line with broader institutional mandates. Other literature that documents the formative function of university strategic plans includes that by Larsen (2015), Morphew and Hartley (2006), and Shultz and Viczko (2016).

Feminist geographers like McDowell (1999) and Massey (2009) contend that all space—including policy space and global space—is relational, and reflective of existing power relationships. Their research maps the hidden power dynamics embedded within specific discursive practices, including university strategic planning. Matus and Talburt (2009), for instance, argue that strategic plans serve a performative function, through which universities portray themselves as secondary actors responding to broader economic and political shifts taking place under globalization. The authors characterize university strategic plans as dynamic spaces that not only guide action and report progress toward institutional missions, but also serve to constitute an institutional identity through the use of select practices and discourses (p. 519). As a result of this framing, “institutions’
constitution of space and place in the context of internationalization becomes an incontestable discourse or way of doing that makes invisible universities’ complicity in the reproduction of the instrumental logic of economic globalization” (p. 516). Universities can justify their international policies and programs as necessary for adapting to globalization, while at the same time avoiding scrutiny for any potential negative impacts of said activities.

In order to determine whether the strategic commitments made by Canadian universities provide an appropriate foundation for delivering strong student mobility programs, I analyzed all Canadian university strategic plans available online. Included in this study are universities with strategic plans renewed as of 2013 or later, a timeframe chosen to correspond generally with the mainstream surge in interest around student mobility within the Canadian academic community. Of the 98 universities in Canada, 33 met the criteria for inclusion in this research (see Appendix A for a list of university strategic plans included in this study). This includes universities from nine different provinces and territories in Canada, and three francophone institutions.

All of the strategic plan documents analyzed include either a mission or vision statement, often both. The majority of plans also include a list of strategic directions, values, priorities or goals, and about half identify indicators for tracking their progress or achievement over time. The level of detailed information provided in the documents varies significantly, with plans ranging anywhere from two pages in length in the case of Nipissing University, to 52 pages in the case of Mount Royal University. Most plans are between 10-25 pages long. As previously stated, all of the strategic plans included in the study are dated 2013 or later, covering periods as far into the future as 2023. Results are current as of April 2016.

Using quantitative and qualitative analysis of selected key terms, I assess current approaches and commitments to international student mobility by Canadian universities. The terms selected for use in the study were chosen based on a review of common keywords listed in journal articles published on the topic of student mobility. They include (alphabetically):

- Global citizen / global citizenship
- Global engagement
- Internationalization
- International experiential learning / international exchange / international internship
- Mobility / student mobility / international mobility
- Study abroad / learning abroad / activities abroad

This content analysis sheds light on how Canadian universities frame discussions about international student mobility for the purpose of program and policy development, as well as public relations. Ultimately, it serves to elucidate the principles and priorities that guide Canadian universities on this issue.
Findings

The findings from this analysis underscore three key trends pertaining to the nature of student mobility discourse, ideas and objectives in Canadian higher education. These trends are summarized as: what is included, what is excluded and what is obscured within Canadian university strategic plans.

The first trend to emerge from the content analysis regards what is “included” in the strategic plans, namely, the use and frequency of certain key terms. Key terms are present a total of 151 times in the 33 strategic plan documents reviewed for the study, and 85 percent of the plans reference at least one key term. Key terms appear in the plans in the following order of frequency:

- Internationalization (n=39 references)
- Global citizen / global citizenship (n=39)
- International experiential learning / international exchange / international internship (n=38)
- Study abroad / learning abroad / activities abroad (n=15)
- Global engagement (n=12)
- Mobility / student mobility / international mobility (n=8)

Numerous versions of the “world as your classroom” metaphor are also employed across the strategic plans. In particular, the language of extending students’ learning “outside of” or “beyond” the classroom is used in 20 (or 61 percent) of the strategic plans reviewed. Other non-key terms used repeatedly include: service learning or service-based learning, global opportunities, international educational experiences and international fieldwork or field schools.

The use and frequency of key terms tends to vary according to universities’ wider institutional mandate or priorities. Universities with the greatest number of references to selected key terms typically have established and sometimes highly centralized international offices on campus devoted to providing students and faculty with support for international activities. This includes the University of Waterloo (n = 16 references to key terms), the University of Regina (n=14), Western University (n=14) and the University of Ottawa (n=13). Having an international office on campus suggests that internationalization is already an established priority for these institutions. Apart from the University of Regina, these universities are all large institutions with enrollments of at least 25,000 full-time undergraduate students and significant funds to devote to international activities (Universities Canada, 2015).

Conversely, universities possessing a distinct cultural mandate or mission tend to use fewer key terms in their strategic plans, sometimes none at all. For instance, First Nations University of Canada and Université Sainte Anne make no reference to student mobility objectives in their strategic plans, possibly because of their institutional prioritization of objectives related to the preservation of Indigenous and Francophone culture, respectively. There are also differences in the language adopted by different types of institutions. Universities with a religious affiliation—such as St. Jerome’s University and Trinity College—tend to use different terminology, framing discussions about student mobility in the context of “service” or “service-based learning,” in keeping with religious virtues around service to others.
The relatively high number of references to “global citizen(ship)” and “internationalization” (39 references each) are not surprising. Their growing usage has been documented elsewhere (see Jorgensen & Shultz, 2012, or Rathburn & Lexier, 2016) and is reflective of broader trends in academia resulting from the increasingly globalized and competitive neoliberal environment of higher education. In today’s information economy, branding a university as “international” can also serve to indicate cutting-edge education and enhance a university’s brand (Garson, 2012, p. 3; Swanson, 2011). The analysis finds that universities use key terms in their strategic plans mainly for branding or image-creating purposes.

The second key trend to emerge has to do with what is “excluded” from the strategic plans. The use of language denoting thick conceptions of global citizenship are notably and problematically absent from discussions around student mobility, as is language framing student mobility as an ethical pursuit. No reference is made in the plans to the goals of global social justice, solidarity or human rights. Instead the purpose of offering more mobility options is framed as being pedagogically innovative and as a vehicle for meeting the evolving expectations of students and their future employers. Consider the following strategic plan excerpts, for example:

Today’s students seek to round out their degrees by applying their acquired knowledge and skills in hands-on, real-world settings. Students and employers alike expect to do this through such learning activities as: participation in internships, co-op, and job shadowing programs with industry partners; service-learning projects with non-profit community groups; study-abroad and academic exchange programs. (Western University, 2014, p. 12, emphasis added)

We believe that there is no substitute for face-to-face instruction in a classroom setting, and this will remain our predominant method of delivering a high quality educational experience. We must also adapt to the signals in our environment and develop a response by incorporating technology and experiential learning in ways that enhance learning. (University of Winnipeg, 2015, p. 20, emphasis added)

The strategic deployment of mobility opportunities as a tool for meeting the expectations of students and employers, and for generating institutional revenue and prestige is evident across the strategic plans. This suggests that discussions around the ethics of student mobility are at best a secondary priority for Canadian university administrators. It also demonstrates that there is a neoliberal focus on the development of Canadian students through international experiences to be good, competent citizens and workers.

This finding coheres with the results of a national survey conducted by Universities Canada in 2014 identifying the main reasons why Canadian universities promote internationalization. The top five reasons reported include: (1) to prepare students to be internationally and interculturally competent; (2) for the potential revenue generated; (3) to build strategic partnerships with other universities around the world; (4) to
internationalize their campus; and (5) to increase the university’s global profile (2014, p. 12). Evidently, universities’ interest in international mobility is geared mainly toward generating benefits for students and for universities themselves, with little attention paid to the impacts (positive or negative) for host partners and communities. This is not due to a belief among administrators that ethical issues are outside the scope of the strategic plan; commitments around social justice and social equity are raised in 22 (or 67 percent) of the strategic plans, but not once in the context of discussing international student mobility options.

In terms of other notable exclusions, the strategic plans make no reference to the accessibility of mobility programs for diverse groups of students. Gender, class or race-related considerations are never acknowledged in relation to student interest and participation in mobility programs. This is true for virtually all universities included in the study, except for St. Thomas More College, where, in relation to the strategic priority of “Indigenous Engagement,” the strategic plan includes goals to engage Indigenous students more directly in service-learning programs, develop more service-learning opportunities and provide foundations for Indigenous student to have international experiences (St. Thomas More College, 2015, p. 8). No other strategic plan specifies current demographic trends or future goals to increase the participation rates of diversity groups.

Related to the above, questions about student motivations for participating in international opportunities are entirely absent from the strategic plan documents. This is despite the fact that, as previously explained, student motivations have been the subject of much scrutiny in the academic literature on international student mobility (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Chan & Dimmock, 2008; Tiessen & Heron, 2012). This raises questions about whether universities are concerned with student motivations in practice, how student motivations are assessed, and what impact (if any) demonstrating the “wrong” motivations has on students’ ability to partake in international opportunities. In an institutional setting where the expectations of students and employers are prioritized above all else, it is unlikely that mobility program administrators screen students thoroughly to ensure they possess virtuous motivations. Yet, in order to avoid reproducing exploitative colonial relationships, it is imperative that individuals driven by self-interest are not accepted for international mobility placements, particularly those located in socially and economically vulnerable communities in the Global South.

The third and final key trend has to do with what is “obscured” about student mobility within the strategic plans, specifically, the content and impacts of such programs. When key terms relating to student mobility options (i.e. “international internship”, “international exchange”, “study abroad” or “learn abroad”) appear in the strategic plans they are never defined outright and sometimes used interchangeably. Key terms relating to student mobility are also frequently used elusively and not tied to learning outcomes or broader institutional rationales, giving them the appearance of buzzwords (as Cornwall, 2007, might characterize them). Yet universities need to be clear on the implications of their work in this area, “given the wide range of intentions and practices that this discourse may convey” (Jorgensen & Shultz, 2012, p. 2). It is important to clarify what is meant by the
use of terms like internationalization, global engagement and global citizen(ship) in the strategic plans, as well as the philosophical, pedagogical and practical issues associated with implementing them on campus (Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Shultz, 2007). Defining student mobility programs and objectives concretely is a vital first step to developing strong policies and program models.

Numerical and statistical goals for increasing the number of students participating in international experiential learning, internships and exchanges are the only metrics present in the strategic plans for measuring international student mobility objectives. Mount Royal University, University of Ottawa and University of Regina all cite specific numerical targets for increasing the number of students travelling abroad. For instance, the University of Ottawa states its aspiration to “double the number of students taking part in mobility programs (to 1,000 a year)” by 2020 (University of Ottawa, 2014, p. 8). In other cases, such as Huron University College and University of Prince Edward Island, the simple goal of providing “more” or “increased” opportunities for student mobility is the sole indicator offered (University of Prince Edward Island, 2013, p. 18; Huron University College, 2013, p. 8).

The tendency for universities to use key terms related to international student mobility elusively and without tying them to learning outcomes or broader institutional rationales for increasing student mobility is partly the result of their conceptual ambiguity (which has been documented elsewhere by Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012, and Rathburn & Lexier, 2016, for example). It also points to an underlying assumption held by university administrators that the goal of increasing international opportunities for students is inherently good. Authors, many from critical development studies, challenge the presumed goodness of international mobility programs and question whether Canadian students’ involvement with vulnerable communities can ever be justified as learning opportunities (Andreotti, 2016; Sharpe, 2015; Tiessen & Heron, 2012). At minimum, the notion that student mobility is inherently good is rendered suspect by the lack of institutional evaluation of mobility programs.

Analysis: Instrumental Versus Transformational Approaches to Higher Education

What is significant about these findings is, first, that current approaches are shown to be highly instrumentalist, used mainly by universities for strategic purposes to enhance branding and generate increased student enrollment and revenue. Second, current approaches do not lay the foundations for creating strong mobility programs, characterized by sustainable and reciprocal agreements with host country partners and “through which students are led towards developing a more globally aware and justice-oriented worldview” (Sharpe, 2015, p. 227)—what I term “transformational” approaches to higher education. Yet opportunities for transformational approaches exist, and post-secondary institutions could build on such examples in order meet broader educational and ethical guidelines. Exemplars of institutional commitment to transformational approaches to student mobility include the growing prevalence of online mobility courses involving students enrolled at multiple institutions internationally, and that stress collaboration and
reciprocity of opportunity. Innovative experiential learning programs offering local placements for students and South-North mobility options are also being offered in pockets at universities across the country.

There are limitations to this study, since programs may do much more than the university strategic plan lays out. Indeed, the above-mentioned examples of innovative programs are not documented in the strategic plans of the universities that run them. This may indicate that one of the limitations is that strategic plans tell us about what is important for strategic framing of a university more than practice on the ground. This is why stronger data collection and documentation of what is taking place across individual universities is needed. Further clarification, elaboration and discussion of the issues assessed here may also be present in other university documents, policies and publications. But as I have argued, strategic plans are important for their role and function in laying a foundation and establishing institutional commitments for doing international student mobility well. Based on this analysis, current approaches are shown to be highly instrumentalist and therefore limited in their ability to meet the broader educational and ethical standards that underpin transformational approaches to higher education.

One final observation to come out of the content analysis concerns how the strategic plans position universities as higher education institutions in relation to globalization. Corroborating the findings of Matus and Talburt (2009), universities included in the study frequently portray themselves as merely “responding to” or “accommodating” globalization, as opposed to actively shaping its processes. The plans reference "dramatic changes in higher education related to the intensification of globalization" (Matus and Talburt, 2009, p. 515), and the resulting need to provide students with international skills and knowledge to help them manage their new global environment. This type of wording came up in ten (or one-third) of the strategic plans. For example:

New graduate programs must continue to be developed and to flourish in response to the multi-dimensional needs of an increasingly complex surrounding society. At the same time, new teaching and learning modes and strategies must be developed and implemented in response to the needs of our students as citizens of an increasingly global and interactive world. (Brock University, 2014, p. 2)

Our graduates in humanities and journalism are thoughtful, critical thinkers who have learned to flourish in community and are well prepared to become fully engaged local and global citizens. In short, we seek to prepare students to be “fit for life” in all its facets. (University of King’s College, 2013, p. 4)

In today’s knowledge-based global economy, the demand for individuals who can create new knowledge or who can critically assess and apply new knowledge continues to rise. Our society also needs people who can provide leadership in recognizing, defining, and engaging the world’s increasingly complex challenges… We will achieve this goal by providing the educational programming, research training and experiences that develop the talent of our undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, medical residents and fellows so that
Western graduates are well prepared to be leaders in their chosen endeavours on the global stage. (Western University, 2014, p. 8-9).

In this context, internationalization activities (including student mobility opportunities) are framed in the strategic plans as being necessary for universities’ evolution and relevance; indeed, for their very survival. Within this logic of “globalization-as-cause and internationalization-as-effect” (Matus & Taiburt 2009, p. 515), conversations about student mobility are overwhelmingly instrumentalist in their conceptualization, while the possibility, let alone the necessity, for more transformational approaches is eclipsed.

**Conclusion: Why Strategic Plans are Important for Student Mobility**

Universities are by no means “outside of” or “disconnected from” globalization; they in fact possess a great deal of autonomy and more than a limited number of options for ways to engage with and enter new global spaces. Numerous innovative student mobility programs exist in Canada. I have documented a few examples of such programs here. Unfortunately, small pockets of innovative or promising programs are insufficient for meeting broader educational and ethical standards outlined within existing scholarship on student mobility. Even the most innovative and well-designed student mobility programs can only prove effective in the sense of offering transformational experiences when they are accompanied by an institution-wide commitment to addressing the issues associated with student mobility—issues of accessibility, ethics and program evaluation. This is why strategic plans are a crucial part of the conversation around student mobility; they are a uniquely deliberate and public space where institutional commitments and agendas are forged, and where discourse and policy-making is reified.
References


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### Appendix A – University Strategic Plans Included in the Study

<table>
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Author Biography

Kate Grantham is a Research Associate with McGill University’s Institute for the Study of International Development and Managing Editor of the GrOW Research Series on women’s economic empowerment and economic growth in low-income countries. Kate Grantham obtained her PhD from The University of Western Ontario in 2016, and in 2017 completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship with the School of International Development and Global Studies at the University of Ottawa.
Where are the host mothers? How gendered relations shape the International Experiential Learning program experience for women in the South.

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Keywords: international experiential learning; gender; host mother; labour; feminism; neoliberalism; feminized labour; patriarchy; development; mothering

ABSTRACT: Host communities are becoming a new subject of interest in the research surrounding International Experiential Learning (IEL), but there is a dearth of knowledge surrounding the impact of IEL programs on host families, and on women in host communities in particular. This article contributes to this body of knowledge by examining the impact of IEL programs on host mothers in a rural community in Nicaragua that receives foreign students annually. Hernandez and Rerrie argue that the burden of labour of hosting students falls on women in host communities, who are expected to perform stereotypically feminine roles in order to be seen as ‘good’ mothers and access the benefits that come from the student visits. This care labour is feminized, unpaid or underpaid, and seen as a natural extension of their roles in the community in a patriarchal society. IEL programs rely on the social dynamics in communities that are shaped by patriarchy and global neoliberal systems that have added ‘development’ and ‘community work’ to women’s roles in the community. Rather than empowering women, IEL programs also have a cost because of the highly gendered nature of the work involved for women in host communities.

Introduction

Host communities are becoming a new subject of interest in the growing field of research on International Experiential Learning (IEL), with most scholarship focusing on the impacts of IEL programs on “host communities” (see for example Larsen, 2015). These studies focus on the identification and analysis of such impacts, often through a normative
framework that assesses whether these are positive or negative for host communities. While some studies have explored the experiences of host families and called for IEL programs to base their relationship with them on the premise of mutuality (MacDonald & Vorstermans, 2016), others look into the experiences of host organizations, often highlighting the work that the local staff invest into “caring” for the volunteers, which included “keeping them busy at work” (Heron, 2016, p. 87). Most literature refers to “hosts” either as families, communities or organizations. However, the figure of the “host mother” is frequently referred to without further analysis of her role in the social structure that sustains IEL programs. In order to host IEL delegations, communities and organizations need to ensure that students are well taken care of while they participate in these programs. It should not be a surprise that this role of caring for student volunteers is often performed by women, often referred to as “host mothers.”

This chapter aims at contributing to the ongoing critical assessment of IEL programs by considering hosting as a gendered practice embedded in neoliberal and even neocolonial processes. Specifically, we address the following questions: Why are women often the “hosts”? What does it mean to “host” foreign students? And what are the implications of “hosting” them? We use feminist analysis to explore how women in the south engage with IEL programs and how such engagement shapes and is shaped by wider social dynamics. By doing so, we align with Cynthia Enloe’s (2014) plea to “follow diverse women to places that are usually dismissed by conventional foreign affairs experts as merely ‘private’, ‘domestic’, ‘local’ or ‘trivial’” (p. 3). The host home in IEL programs is one such place.

In what follows, we explore the specific experience of a group of women in Santa María, a rural community in Nicaragua that has hosted delegations of Canadian high school students for almost a decade. First, we discuss the methodology used to conduct this research and the circumstances that inspire the use of a feminist analysis. Then we provide a brief discussion of “gender” from both a feminist standpoint and in light of a wider international political economy analysis of feminized labour. Second, we present our findings regarding how the act of hosting is feminized and regulated by ideas of what constitutes a “good host,” the rewards that host mothers receive from hosting, and the gender-specific costs of those rewards. Lastly, we argue that the act of hosting is a gendered practice that might reproduce neoliberal and neocolonial dynamics in the larger political economy of gendered labour. Thus, the particular ways in which rural women conceptualize and perform their role as host mothers for international student volunteers limit the possibilities for IEL programs to contribute to the empowerment of women in the Global South, and in some cases, work against women’s empowerment by adding to the unpaid labour performed by host mothers.

Research Methods

The data discussed in this chapter was gathered as part of a larger research project undertaken from 2014-2016 by Harry Smaller of York University and Michael O’Sullivan from Brock University, with the authors, Xochilt Hernández and Ashley Rerrie, acting as research assistants. The main objective of this research was to explore the impact of IEL on host communities in Nicaragua. The main research questions were: (a) in what ways,
both positive and negative, are host communities in the Global South impacted by IEL initiatives, (b) how are IEL participants from the Global North perceived by the host communities, and (c) what kinds of knowledge, skills and understandings develop amongst host community members through IEL initiatives?

The connection with the Canadian IEL program in question was established based on the previous involvement of the lead researchers. Given the critical scope of the research, it was agreed upon to maintain the anonymity of the program. A meeting was arranged with community leaders in Santa María to present the research proposal, solicit their consent and negotiate the conditions for participatory observation to take place. Hernández was the primary field researcher, responsible for taking field notes and conducting semi-structured interviews with host community members over a period of six months. While the researchers sought a diversified pool of interviewees, host mothers became the main informants given their direct involvement with the student volunteers. Standard ethical protocols were followed. All participants provided oral consent prior to conducting interviews and all names have been changed to keep the confidentiality of interviewees and communities. Interviews were then transcribed and coded using NVivo software. Field notes from participant observation occurring before, during and after the Canadian student visits were also analyzed.

Gender was identified as a possible theme arising from the interview data. Observations recorded during volunteer visits further showed that disparities between women and men’s participation were integral to the structure of IEL programs. After analyzing the participant observation and interview data, Hernández and Rerrie began to identify a consistent narrative in the accounts of host mothers in relation to their role as host. This narrative featured women’s views on the differential engagement of women and men, and the perceived personal benefits related to their “ability to host,” which also demanded specific costs on their time and energy. Thus, we decided to explore the experiences and accounts of these women from a feminist lens in order to understand how their work, emotions and expectations make them active participants in the learning process of international volunteers, and actors in the global political economy of IEL programs. This paper follows from that line of investigation.

**Literature Review**

International Service Learning, as a form of IEL (Tiessen & Huish, 2014), is characterized by an explicit and structured educational objective which students achieve through involvement in service activities in an international setting (Crabtree, 2008). The “recipients” of such service are often described as either grassroots organizations or communities, and more often than not, the relationship is said to be built on the principles of “social justice” and/or “solidarity” (Larsen, 2015).

The fact that most IEL programs usually feature volunteers from the Global North travelling to communities in the Global South has raised many concerns. For instance, researchers ask whether these programs constitute a new form of colonial relations between the affluent north and the impoverished south (Perold et al., 2013), or a naturalization of such relations (Crabtree, 2013). Moreover, several researchers have
discussed how IEL programs are built on a system of privilege (Macdonald, 2014), or “taken-for-granted global geographies of inequality” (Smith & Laurie, 2011), reproducing, instead of critically assessing, the global structures that perpetuate unequal relations. Despite this rising interest in the impact of IEL on host communities, they continue to be treated as a homogeneous unit of analysis, which assumes that the “hosting” experience is the same for every community member. Notably, most research that considers the experience and perceptions of volunteer “hosts” feature host mothers among their main informants (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Clark, 2015; Smedley, 2016). However, these studies tend to merge host mothers’ accounts into a single and undifferentiated “community” voice. Indeed, a feminist exploration of host mothers’ experiences is overdue, especially given the apparent weight that gender has in determining their experiences.

How does gender define the experience and perspective of women and men in host communities? To answer this question, it is worth revisiting the concept of gender as it will be used in our analysis. Gender is a central concept in analyses of the unequal social structures and power relations that define women’s lives, said to be built on a binary “relation of complementary difference” that is socially produced (Budgeon, 2014, p. 318). Such a notion moves beyond individual sex-based binary roles (men vs. women) to focus more on relations that are structured by a gender ideology differentiating norms, possibilities, perceptions and expectations for men and women (Manfre & Rubin, 2012).

Working from a post-structuralist perspective, feminist scholar Judith Butler (2004) defines gender as a regulatory apparatus that produces and normalizes certain notions of femininity and masculinity for a given society. Its regulatory nature implies that a person will not only be expected to behave according to what has been socially accepted as normal for his or her gender, but will also self-regulate to ensure their behaviour fits into that normalized notion. Therefore, “gender is performative” (Butler, 1990), as it is embodied in the emotions, thoughts and actions of a person. Since gender is socially constructed, gender norms and expectation vary across time and space. Therefore context determines how norms of femininity are embodied in the activities expected to be performed by host mothers in the context of IEL programs.

Despite the growing body of research on host communities, very little research explores the ways in which gender shapes the social relations of hosts and volunteers in IEL programs. Studies that do consider the role of gender in IEL programs have mainly analyzed the experience of student volunteers (Grusky, 2000; Kiely, 2004; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). Other studies recognize the role of host mothers in the development of IEL programs (Clark, 2015; Hernández, 2015; Smedley, 2016). However, apart from generating a few mentions as key informants, host mothers’ experiences and perspectives are typically merged with the wider “host community,” and their specific gendered experiences remain unexplored.

This is not an isolated issue. In fact, as Bedford and Rai (2010) remind us, “gendered questions at the heart of International Political Economy (IPE) continue to be neglected” (p. 2), and IEL is not the exception. Discussions on how people in the Global North relate to people in the Global South and participate in global economic and political systems continues to be divorced from inquiries on how gender configures those relations. Indeed,
the centrality of gender for analyzing international relations continues to be tangential (Peterson, 2005). Therefore, to address our concern about gender in the context of IEL programs, it is worth looking into the contributions of feminist scholars to the study of gender in the international political economy and international development contexts.

Studies on the intersection between gender relations and global capitalism have contributed to understanding how women increase their participation in world labour markets as a result of particular gendered codes (Barker & Feiner, 2010; Bergeron, 2001; Floro & Willoughby, 2016). They do so while still contributing to national and international care economies, defined as “the set of activities and practices necessary for the daily survival of a group of people in the society in which they live in” (Rodriguez, 2015, p. 36). Unpaid care work performed by women continues to be constitutive of the feminine domestic role. Other scholars point to the particular gendered codes that make women more suitable to perform deregulated, flexible and unsecure labour fostered by neoliberal economic policies (Richer, 2012). As a result, the new configuration of the global labour markets has deepened the need for women to perform a certain form of neoliberal femininity in order for them to make a living.

Research in international development has long recognized gender as a fundamental factor defining how women and men participate in and are affected by development processes. For instance, the "Women In Development" (WID) approach, popular throughout the 1970s and 1980s, recognized the unequal and exclusionary conditions in which women lived. According to the WID school of thought, women needed to be brought into the economic and political spheres of society in order to contribute to and benefit from economic growth, ultimately leading to their empowerment. In the 1990s, some feminist scholars dissatisfied with the WID approach formulated the Women and Development (WAD) approach, in which the empowerment of women came along with challenging the unequal capitalist economic system that created and perpetuated poverty. Finally, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach was introduced following a critique of "women" as universal category, introducing instead gender as a category referring to "complex power relations shaping peoples’ lives" (Davids, Van Driel & Parren, 2014, p. 398). As a result, gender mainstreaming was implemented as a policy to promote women’s participation in development processes and gender equality by government departments, NGOs and multilateral agencies alike (Tiessen, 2005, p. 705).

However, as Neumann (2013) points out, gender mainstreaming in the context of neoliberal economic reform meant that the engagement of women in development processes “generated additional burdens for women and reinforce[d] the traditional sexual division of labour” (p. 4). Therefore, despite the increased efforts in development projects to explicitly promote women’s empowerment and emancipation, “gender inequalities in work burdens appear to be intensified” as women’s domestic roles became instrumental for the new globalized neoliberal economy (Kabeer, 2005, p. 20). The women of Santa María are formally organized through a community women’s agricultural cooperative, comprised of twenty women who work together to produce coffee and vegetables, host IEL delegations and coordinate community development projects through various sources of international cooperation. However, despite the unique circumstances and level of organization that the cooperative structure provides, the experiences of the women in Santa María do not escape the gendered structures created in the aforementioned globalized neoliberal economy.
The IEL Program in Santa María

The community of Santa María became involved with IEL programs through their participation in community development projects with a small Canadian solidarity-based development and education organization called Students for Nicaragua (SFN). Their IEL program is linked with institutional and financial support provided for grassroots organizations to conduct community development projects where Canadian high school students volunteer for anywhere from five to 15 days providing non-technical physical labour. Some community development projects have involved Canadian students helping to build schools and community centres, or raise livestock. Women in this community have hosted many delegations of students, and through repeated visits, have become accustomed to welcoming visitors and sharing their experiences. SFN’s IEL delegations are usually comprised of 15 to 20 students ranging from 15 to 18 years old, usually accompanied by three or four teachers. The students fundraise a significant donation that goes to the community development project fund and pays a stipend to host families.

The relationship between Santa María and the IEL organization was originally initiated based on a pre-existing relationship between a SFN coordinator and a female community leader. According to an interview with the community leader, these two individuals first met in an informal setting and talked about the possibility of Santa María hosting Canadian delegations while working in partnership with the organization to finance small projects. After consulting with other community leaders, the first SFN student delegation arrived in 2008. Although the leaders do not recall the details of this consultation process, they all reported this first experience as positive and the almost ten years of partnership indicate their ongoing interest in continuing the collaboration.

The women of Santa María continue to host Canadian delegations of high school students annually. The logistics are negotiated by the IEL program coordinators and the leaders in the women’s cooperative, who are responsible for determining who will be a host and who will not. The selection criteria, according to interviews with the cooperative leaders, depends both on the social engagement of the host family in the community work as well as their housing conditions, as their main interest is to ensure the students’ comfort. Host mothers receive $15 USD stipend per night, per student that they host. In general, the act of hosting the Canadian student delegation is seen as a privilege and is only accessible to those who perform their caring duties well. As will be discussed further on, the narrative of what constitute a “good host” is highly gendered.

Findings

Hosting IEL Students is Rewarding for Women

In addition to other community members from Santa María, a total of 11 host mothers from Santa María were interviewed throughout the research process, with some of the women being interviewed multiple times: an introductory interview, a second interview before the IEL delegation arrived and a final interview after IEL students left the community. These interviews were conducted between September 2015 and February 2016. Interviews were coded according to the five general themes (Context, Motivations,
Benefits, Negative Impacts, Decision Making) as part of the general analysis in the original research project design, in which gendered experiences of host mothers, specifically those related to emotional and care labour were generated inductively as part of the fourth theme. We will now elaborate on these themes.

All host mothers, without exception, described the experience of hosting students as rewarding and important for their community. When asked about the benefits that came from hosting delegations, most of them made reference to the collective material benefits that the IEL program provides for their communities, like the building of a school, latrines, water wheels and agricultural utensils. In addition, the stipend that host mothers receive to take care of students was also mentioned as an economic benefit. One host mother reported:

“When they come, it is very joyful for me because they bring and pay for their food, so I am able to save my money for that week, because they bring the food and share it for me and the kid, my son.”

As reported by other host mothers, the money saved from the stipend is often used to cover preparatory expenses involved in hosting students, such as buying plastic sheets to improve the conditions of bathrooms and showers, buying blankets and bedding, and purchasing food that normally would not be accessible to families, such as meat, poultry or fish. However, as this account illustrates, the daily stipend also helps cover the costs of these items that otherwise would not be affordable.

Host mothers also mention opportunities for intercultural exchange that arise from hosting international volunteers, which gives them the opportunity to learn about new cultures. For one host mother, hosting two male students was “a beautiful experience because I learned from them and they learned from us … every night we talked about the situation in Nicaragua, the water crisis.” This host mother also talked about the opportunity to learn English from the visiting students, stating: “I have learned a few words in English, to tell them how they’re going to bathe, to eat… I tell them ‘lunch!’ and they say yes!” The ability to learn basic words in English is seen as a major benefit according to host mothers.

Research has likewise shown that one of the major difficulties of hosting international volunteers is the language barrier (Smaller & O’Sullivan, 2016). Therefore, being able to maintain interactions with volunteers despite such language barriers is usually seen as a particular skill or ability that women develop through their experiences with students. Women affirm they have learned to understand volunteers, to anticipate what they need and require. The specialized knowledge that the host mothers gain as part of the hosting experience is seen as a benefit. The women of Santa María claim to know how to properly host their international volunteers, saying that the labour that goes into hosting the IEL delegations is not excessive because they are now well-accustomed to the visits.

On a personal level, some host mothers report having developed more self-confidence as a result of hosting delegations. Such confidence is empowering for women. For instance, one younger host mother explained that the experience and interaction of hosting gave her the opportunity to overcome her shyness:
"When I came to the community, I was a very, very, shy girl. I didn’t like to go out, I was embarrassed […] when people asked me to say something I wouldn’t say a word, I was too embarrassed! But not now. Now I have so many experiences I have had with the delegations that now no one can stop me, I love to talk, and talk and talk."

Likewise, many other women in Santa María attribute their increased self-confidence to their experience hosting volunteers, as the program provides them the space to interact with new people. Therefore, in their view, hosting provides an opportunity to develop social skills that otherwise would be very difficult or impossible to acquire.

**Hosting as a Women’s Practice**

As mentioned, the IEL logistics and activities in Santa María are led by the members of the community women’s agricultural cooperative. They are the main contact with the IEL program coordinators and the ones who decide the details of hosting, which range from assigning host families to organizing special activities that involve the entire community. During participant observation for the study, it was evident that these women were the ones in charge of hosting the students. These women usually spent anywhere from two to three days preparing for their arrival, for instance cleaning, buying groceries and cooking. When the delegation arrives, it is the “mothers,” as they call themselves, who have first and last contact with the volunteers. For instance, during one field visit, the host mothers woke up very early in the morning the day the delegation arrived, and they waited at the drop-off point for hours in order to greet the students. Only a few brought their children and the absence of men was evident; however, as one community leader pointed out, this is the norm. When the bus got there, all the women waited to greet their assigned students and take them to their home.

One host mother proudly described this role of greeting new students: “When they come, the women are in charge of doing something. We’re the ones who cook, who care [for students], the ones who work, who work in the field [with them]”. In her view, cooking and caring for the students are key components of the IEL program and sources of significant responsibility for the women. Indeed, these types of domestic activities are expected of women and often go unnoticed. One host mother explained this gendered division of hosting labour as probably rooted in the cultural attitudes that prevent men from doing domestic chores or engaging in activities seen as feminine:

"In general it’s women [who are with the students], because the men sometimes are machistas or are busy working, so the women as housewives have to work with students."

In this account, hosting the students is an activity tied to the domestic roles that women routinely perform in their homes. Men do not engage in such chores, either due to machismo attitudes or not having time for it. The caregiving role that women play is the reason they are at the forefront of the IEL program in terms of hosting responsibilities. However, as one host father pointed out, women’s tendency to look after the needs of international volunteers’ is rooted in their caregiving nature, which is an extension of their role in the community:
“I call this community the ‘Amazonian community’ because it is women who rule here...we [men] do not have their charisma, we’re rather disinterested and passive. Here the ones interested in the community’s well-being and progress have been women.”

For him, the women’s ability to host students is not only tied to their performance of household chores, but is also linked to innate personality features such as charisma and selflessness that the women of Santa María possess, but lacking in the community’s men. This point highlights how the “caring” abilities attributed to women, both in the household and wider community, set women up to play the role of host mother for IEL students. As described by one host mother and cooperative member, “the mothers, we the mothers are the ones in charge of them [students], meaning those among coop members." She then elaborated on the fact that women in the coop are usually very coordinated and organized. Indeed, the acknowledgement of being in charge also refers to a sense of responsibility towards the program which will be explained further on.

**Hosting as Time-Consuming Domestic Labour**

As previously described, the accounts of host mothers and one host father identify “hosting” as an activity performed exclusively by women, and usually by the members of the women’s cooperative in the case of Santa María. As one former host mother describes:

“They [the coop leaders] select the people who will host according to the conditions of their houses, but mostly depending if they are caring or not, if they don’t leave their house and the students unattended.”

This account once again illustrates that the ability to “care for” is understood as fundamental in order to host students, and that includes the ability to commit large amounts of time and energy to the activities involved in hosting. Indeed, hosting requires a lot of preparation time, which intensifies a few days before the students arrive. One host mother mentioned some of the activities she performs in order to prepare for the students:

“Well, I prepare their beds, I clean the sheets very carefully. They [the coordinators] give us the money beforehand, some days before [...] so we go buy whatever they will drink and eat, so the day they arrive we have the dinner ready to feed them.”

These activities can take most of the day, and they are performed on top of the normal caregiving duties that women complete for their own family. In addition, once the students arrive, host mothers have to adjust their schedule in order to fulfill all their domestic duties and still have time to spend with the students during their volunteer activities. One host mother explained that, normally, they leave the project site about an hour before lunch and run to their respective kitchens to have food prepared for the students:

“Yes, we go with them to the project in the morning, after everyone has had breakfast, and at 11 all of us mothers will come to our houses.
running [to make lunch] and if there is someone that is not hosting students they stay working [in the field]."

Therefore, hosting is effectively a full-time job to which women are committed. It demands that all meals be ready on schedule, and given that women also go with their guest students to the project site, they must rush to ensure everything is done on time and they can fulfill all the caring duties they are responsible for. While their testimonies indicate that most host mothers are aware of the extra work load that the students create, they often made it very clear that it was not a burden for them and even took pride in how well they performed these duties.

**Hosting as a Specialized Practice**

Host mother’s responsibilities take the form not just of cooking and cleaning during the visits, but also of ensuring that volunteers stay healthy and safe during their time in the community. The concern for students’ safety is a constant theme in host mother’s testimonies, and the ability to guarantee volunteers’ safety was referred to as the number one criteria for any host. For instance, when asked if only cooperative members could host volunteers, one of the main coop leaders commented: “No, we have two or three families who are not part of the cooperative that we have assigned to host students, but they already know how to take care of a foreigner.” Following up on the question, she elaborated on what special knowledge was necessary to “take care of a foreigner”:

“They have to know that everything needs to be cleaned with purified water, they [the women] know. If they [the students] want to drink coffee, it has to be with that water and the vegetables need to be cleaned with that water. We all want them to be healthy and if someone gets sick, we know we have to cook boiled food for them and they get healthy.”

The water she is referring to is purified, sealed bottled water which is brought to the community by the IEL program.

There are special requirements to host that are related to the notion of “appropriate” care. Only women who know how to “do it right” can host volunteers. This notion of appropriateness suggest that the needs of Nicaraguan and foreign guests are different. Indeed, the fact that the Canadian students are not familiar with the environment of a rural community in Nicaragua means they require extra care and attention to ensure their health and safety. In this regard, one host mother commented on students’ vulnerability in the new environment, referring to potential risky situations that they, as a cooperative, try to avoid, especially in regards to students getting sick:

“Yes, because you cannot assign them anywhere where they will not be taken care of, or where someone will not cook the right way and risk them getting sick, because some of those students are very delicate, especially from their stomachs.”
The notion of “delicate” students was also mentioned by another host mother, who was not a cooperative member, making special reference to what she was told by cooperative members and IEL program coordinators:

“They tell us that some of them are very delicate, so we have to buy sealed oil, sealed rice, everything sealed because we cannot buy the unsealed things that are sold in the streets […] because we have to take care of them so they don’t get sick.”

As these two accounts suggest, the appropriate care needed by international volunteers is mostly related to how food is purchased and prepared. The risk of getting sick has to be avoided as much as possible, and only women who fulfill their roles and take those extra precautions are able to overcome that risk. These responsibilities also involve extra costs for women and households. Although the stipend given to host mothers means that extra money is coming into the household, the women often spent more money on food than they normally would, and many women said that they tried to use all of the extra income on making the students’ stay more comfortable. The stipend seems to not be enough. Most of the times, host mothers cover their own transportation costs to buy supplies. One mother expressed that she budgeted the stipend provided by the program and accommodated the costs to not go over it, but sometimes that was not possible and she had to cover her transportation costs:

“That is the only thing, I tell you, if we start falling short [with money] I accommodate few things to run smoothly and other times I have to cover my transportation costs; but as things are getting more expensive, maybe [they could] increase more [the stipend] because now everything is more expensive.”

Another host mother also mentioned that the constant increase of general food prices, which were more significant in the particular type of foods they purchased for the students.

In addition, the notion of “appropriate care” requires “appropriate supplies” which sometimes require mothers to travel further than they would to buy their own groceries. One host mother bought her groceries from a supermarket rather than her regular market:

“They give us the money beforehand so that we can go buy what the students are going to eat and drink … To take care of them better, so that they don’t get sick, I buy things in the supermarket.”

Therefore, all the precautionary measures and the risks involved make hosting an activity that involves a high degree of responsibility which is exacerbated by the host mothers’ impressions of the accountability involved. For instance, one host mother, who is not a member of the cooperative, mentioned:

“The organization [referring to the women’s coop] has to choose the places where the students will be well taken care of, where they will not get sick so that whoever hosts them is accountable to their embassy or the house they stay with in Managua [referring to the IEL program].”
In her view, given the students’ nationality and the fact that they are volunteering in the community as part of a formal international program, hosting the students also involves responsibilities with distant and powerful institutional third parties. Such a notion elevates the level of complexity in which the practice of hosting takes place, as the hosts are conscious that the students’ status in the country is mediated by wider international processes. These implications will be discussed further in the next section.

**Discussion**

According to the host mothers interviewed, participation in and engagement with IEL programs provided benefits for the community as a whole, as well as new opportunities for individual women who host students. The student visits provide a sense of recognition that increases women’s self-esteem and legitimizes their local and personal struggles. IEL programs also provide spaces for women to develop leadership and intercultural skills such as public speaking, effective communication (including nonverbal) and wider perspective about other cultures. However, the findings of this research show that these opportunities and benefits also come with a cost for host mothers.

Accounts of host mothers and the observed dynamics that take place during the facilitation of IEL students suggest that the practice of hosting students constitutes a specific performance of a particular gendered role. The additional labour that host mothers perform can be understood as feminized care work, where their emotional and physical labour is largely monetarily uncompensated and not socially valued. As women perform the specific activities required to assist students with their basic needs in a completely new environment, they are able to engage in social relations with the students and access to the rewards such relations allow. However, this performance is bounded in the particular context of ISL as they take on more reproductive duties in their homes and commit to fulfilling the requirements set to be selected as a host. As mentioned above, women first have to demonstrate that they have the skills to cook, clean and keep home to an acceptable level to host students, with women priding themselves on being able to cook in a way that prevents students from getting sick. This feminized labour is an unrecognized or “natural” extension of the women’s roles in a patriarchal society.

The interviews illustrate that these domestic activities involve a certain kind of specialized knowledge to be performed properly and host the students well. This “specialized knowledge” is demanded as the international nature of the guests poses special risks for them and their relationship with the IEL program. Therefore, hosting is gendered not only because it is performed by women, but also as it is shaped by certain regulatory expectations of how that practice should be performed. Namely, only women who demonstrate that they have the skills to be a “good” mother are given foreign students to host, where parameters for “good hosting” and appropriateness of care are determined by the IEL program and patriarchal standards of performing domestic work. The skills that women are able to develop are functional in the IEL context as they prepare the host mothers for other international hosting experiences in the future.
It should be noted that the need to possess such skills responds to a wider trend of labour market shifts that correspond to neoliberal processes (Larner & Craig, 2005), which coincidentally demand social and emotional skills which are often feminized. This way, the context in which the IEL social relations are embedded produce the gendered self-regulating subject (Katz, 2005) of the host mothers, who, in order to ensure benefits for the community and themselves comply with the specific care that the foreigners require. Furthermore, the fact that host mothers sustain what they see as the appropriate caring standards for the international student volunteers, often using their stipend to cover those costs and even compensating additional expenses, reproduces the precarious conditions in which women perform their domestic roles. As Larner and Craig (2005) note, “the re-embedding economic and social activities after “more market” oriented forms of neoliberalism” (p. 419) set the social conditions for keeping the unpaid and underpaid labour in the feminized and domestic realm.

These implications also echo some of the criticism of the Women in Development approach. The experience in Santa María suggests that host mothers replicate certain subjectivities as a result of the context in which they engage with IEL delegations. As Neumann (2013) writes, “involvement in these programs shapes women’s subjectivities in particular ways, leading them to take pride in their capacity to cope with their own adversities” (p. 2). Thus, while women may feel more confident in their abilities to take care of foreigners or to advocate for the needs of their communities, their way to engage in the program is inevitably influenced by neoliberal politics, as these rely “on the assumption that there is ‘no alternative’” (Larner & Craig, 2005, p. 631). This can result in the further detriment of their personal conditions in order to access opportunities that have been denied to them as part of larger systems of inequality.

Such conditions produce a micro caring economy (Rodriguez, 2015), in which host mothers engage in unpaid domestic and care labour in order to maintain their relationship with the program, as a way to guarantee a wider development opportunity for their community. Indeed, the leaders in the Santa María exercise their agency in a very constrained global structure of inequality, when working, with genuine desire and drive, to ensure that their community has options for their development. However, these options have been shaped by the current neoliberal economy in which international volunteer groups fulfill basic community needs that are left unaddressed by the Nicaraguan government.

Therefore, IEL programs are an arena of international politics where international actors engage with one another, and also constitute an arena of international politics where women from the South engage in particular ways. On one hand, the work that these women invest under the argument of "working for their community" subsidizes costs for the Canadian state to ensure international education options for its citizens, while on the other hand subsidizing costs for the Nicaraguan government to cover basic need for education and health infrastructure in the community. What would otherwise cost thousands of dollars is provided for free, saving both nations significant amounts of capital at the expense of women’s unpaid time and energy.
Conclusion

The host mothers of Santa María express their enjoyment for hosting delegations of Canadian students. They take pride in their knowledge of how to take care of foreigners and defend the collective benefits that their community has access to as a result of their participation in IEL programs. However, as our data indicates, the act of hosting and the particular ways in which women perform the role of ‘host mother’ is highly gendered, as the standards and restrictions that women conform to in order to be seen as a ‘good’ host mother are extensions of the unpaid care labour that women already perform to run their homes and communities.

This performance has particular implications for women in the Global South, as it translates into higher demands on their already exhaustive domestic roles. In addition, we have clearly identified how the gendered nature of the act of hosting is shaped by wider social dynamics embedded in the global neoliberal economic system that reproduce the inequalities in which these women live. IEL programs can perpetuate the ‘gendered burden of development’ in Nicaraguan communities much like other NGO-led development programs: “By exploiting women’s unpaid and underpaid labour, these programs entrench established gender roles and responsibilities” (Neumann, 2013, p. 2). The global neoliberal system also defines the particular social relations women can engage with in an IEL context. Such relations are not produced in a vacuum. They constitute a reflection of the wider North-South international relations that continue to foster inequality between the wealthy North, benefitting from their participation in and propagation of neoliberalism and neocolonialism, and the structurally impoverished South, exploited by those same global systems.

Could this mean that hosting foreign students is a form of feminized care labour embedded in the particular relations produced in the IEL context? The particular notions of host mothers in regards to how they perform their role with foreign students suggest so. However, as we lack more accounts of how hosting is performed in other circumstances, we can only conclude that this could be the case for this particular Nicaraguan context.

This is not to say that this IEL program, nor any other program, intentionally creates the dynamics that produce this gendered practice. There is an urgent need for more feminist exploration of how the hosts in the south engage in the particular social relations produced in the IEL setting. More research into this topic is needed, and individuals responsible for developing IEL programs must be aware of the costs to women who perform the unpaid domestic and care labour associated with being a host mother. Only then can we improve programs by compensating women fairly for the labour performed during student visits, breaking down gendered barriers and encouraging men to share the organizational and participatory burden of IEL student visits to their communities.
References


Where are the host mothers?


Author Biographies

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Going Where Nobody Should Go: Experiential Learning without Making the World your Classroom

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Keywords: solidarity; activism; activist pedagogy; locally-based global engagement; political advocacy

ABSTRACT: It raised many questions when students at Dalhousie University were asked, as part of an experiential learning class assignment, to help someone escape North Korea in 2015. When students organized human rights protests, fundraised for a rescue team within China to escort refugees to safety and engaged politicians on North Korean refugee needs, it challenged the norms of experiential learning in a university setting. Is political engagement appropriate for the classroom? Should Canadian students even get involved with such complex human rights and political issues? Most importantly, could this experience still be considered experiential learning if the students never met the North Korean refugee? If they never went there? And if they organized their efforts all entirely in the classroom for credit? In this paper, I argue that actions of solidarity can have an important place in experiential learning. The paper explains the classroom experience of building solidarity with vulnerable populations a world away, and argues that deep values of solidarity can emerge from the classroom, even to places that are impossible to go to.

Introduction

“This semester, not only are we going to explore a complicated and poorly understood human rights crisis, we are going to help someone get out of it”. This was the introduction to a 3rd year International Development Studies class at Dalhousie University in September 2015. The instructor went on to say that the students would have the opportunity to become deeply involved with an important issue, to make real connections, to be engaged, to reflect on their participation and to change the life of one person forever.

“We’re going to get a person out of North Korea and to safety in Seoul”.
Silence.

“Excuse me, professor, did you say that we are going to bust someone out of North Korea? Isn’t that place really screwed up”?

“Yes, that is right. A human rights organization asked us to help build awareness on the issue and to raise funds to help rescue a North Korean refugee from the border, to then go through China into another country and then into a third country before reaching the Republic of Korea embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. This is an optional activity, and anyone who does not want to participate in this exercise is welcome to pursue an alternative curriculum within the course. But if you’ll allow me 40 minutes to explain the issue at hand and our potential role within it, I invite you to then make your decision”.

By the end of the lecture on September 8, 2015, 70 students had signed up for the Camp 14 Project—a student-organized initiative to support the struggles of North Korean refugees. In December 2015, the students supported the rescue of a North Korean refugee who is now safely in Seoul (Camp 14 Project, 2015).

In this article, I discuss the experiences and outcomes of this 3rd year International Development Studies class I offered during the 2015 fall semester at Dalhousie University. I provide this account in order to contribute to ongoing discussions about the place of experiential learning in higher education (Rennick & Desjardins, 2013b; Thobani, 2007; Tiessen & Huish, 2014). Notably, a growing body of literature successfully critiques the ethical challenges of experiential learning, particularly with regard to how, or if, students and communities mutually benefit (Epprecht, 2004; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Thobani, 2007).

This paper contributes to the discussion by asking if these ethical concerns would be resolved if students stayed in their place, rather than travelling the world for learning experiences. Are the ethical challenges of experiential learning just about the movement of people, or is there a deeper concern about how students engage in politics regardless of whether they travel abroad to do it? It also discusses the shortcomings of pursuing what I call “stationary global connectivity,” meaning the forming of relationships with others through methods other than travel, and whether approaches to combine learning with action actually yield completely favourable outcomes. I also discuss the challenges of teaching “activism” as part of experiential learning and global citizenship pedagogy (Huish, 2013). The term “activism” is increasingly more common in global citizenship courses (Forenza & Germak, 2015; Lagos, 2002; Schugurensky & Myers, 2003). As Ratnam (2009) states, there is “considerable interest in global citizenship discourse with claims that grassroots activism founded the global citizenship movement” (p. 71). But, do university administrations really feel comfortable with activism? Or do they merely feel comfortable with the idea of it? The goal of this paper is to argue that while educators continue to struggle with the balance between the ethics of, and the demands for, experiential learning, pedagogies of activism and solidarity may provide important counterpoints for new approaches to this learning. However, as the experience of the
Camp 14 Project demonstrates, activist pedagogy involves a unique set of challenges and ethical concerns to which universities are unaccustomed to dealing with at an institutional level. While there is a rich literature and history of participatory pedagogy in citizenship education and democracy, the focus on this chapter is specifically on the relationship of the experiential learning model to activism, rather than other tried and proven models (Daly, Schugurensky, & Lopes, 2009). The main point of this article is that faculty should worry less about crafting the perfect experiential program to meet a list of demands from students or administrators, and instead focus more on crafting space for critical discussion and active engagement about activism within the classroom.

**Going Beyond “Humanitarians of Tinder”**

In the simplest sense, “experiential learning” implies learning from doing, rather than through didactic lecture settings (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993). This provides a wide berth of learning settings, ranging from “learning on-the-job” co-op placements, to international voluntourism opportunities (Bamber & Hankin, 2011). While experience-gaining co-op placements continue to be popular within higher education, the practice of volunteerism is increasingly associated by university administrations to the idea of global citizenship (Bailie Smith & Laurie, 2011; Nussbaum, 2002). Such international service learning is often positioned by university marketing teams as a means to foster leadership and that volunteer students themselves can solve the world’s problems, even though numerous scholars have successfully debunked these claims (Heron, 2000; Mostafanezhad, 2013; Vrasti, 2013). As Tiessen and Huish (2014) write, “international experiential learning programs therefore provide a valuable opportunity for reflecting on how much we need to learn about the world around us and the importance of global competency for good citizenship. Learning/volunteer abroad programs also provide rich opportunities for understanding the causes of inequality and finding ways to work in solidarity with our partners in the Global South to challenge and circumvent structures of inequality” (p. 4). In this sense, international experiential learning that provides international travel, volunteerism, cross-cultural dialogue and for-credit learning becomes very attractive for university administrators (Bird, 2016; Queen’s University, 2013). Students demand such opportunities, and universities present these experiences as unconditionally positive learning forums for students.

As much as learning outcomes can be incredibly positive for students, a great deal of concern exists regarding the ethics of these programs and their ability to actually encourage more harm than good (Baker-Bosamra, 2006; Reilly & Senders, 2009; Tiessen, 2013). The literature abounds with critiques about the moral shortcomings of international experiential learning. Reilly and Senders (2009) claim that it is troubling to use low-resource communities as teaching settings for affluent students. McGloin and Georgeou (2015) discuss the impacts volunteerism has on communities, and how marginalized settings are transformed into teaching forums. Huish (2012) argues that medical schools are particularly problematic, as serious ethical dilemmas occur when under-qualified and under-confident students are encouraged to go beyond their comfort zones and practice
on patients in low-resources settings. Some cases involved social science students stitching up patients in Honduras—a practice that would result in several criminal charges if done in North America (Bradke, 2009). Quenville’s (2015) documentary Volunteers Unleashed makes an important point about how these volunteer placements are represented, both in terms of university marketing, and how they are represented in social media. The critical blog, "Humanitarians of Tinder" (2016), searches a famous dating app to shame voluntourists who post exploitative field photos in the hopes of finding a romantic partner.

The main concern is that an exploitative factor exists in positioning voluntourism education within resource-poor settings (Rotabi, Roby, & Bunkers, 2015). Voluntourism can be understood as a form of tourism in which travelers dedicate time to community-level volunteering. However, voluntourism usually entails a self-serving consumerist ethics in which the volunteer is consuming the community experience in a similar sort of way that they would consume other activities on holiday. It implies that the experience is catered to the demands of the volunteer/consumer and does not connect to a deeper level of global citizenship. Both the practices of volunteering and the representation of it invite room for exploitative narratives and colonialist representations of the “other” and the “saviour” (Marbach, 2016). This concern is growing in both scholarly and popular literature. Documentaries are even illuminating the real dangers of this educational model (Ruhfus, 2012; Quenville, 2015).

Volunteering for-credit domestically can also present a set of challenges for both volunteers and host organizations. Some organizations complain that receiving volunteers who are “forced” to be there actually puts additional strain on their resources and operations. Likewise, students who feel obligated to volunteer may not experience it as positive a learning experience as those who volunteer by their own choice. Some studies suggest that students from low-resource settings, or students who face learning difficulties and who are required to volunteer for credit, may face additional challenges compared to their more affluent peers (Eby, 1998; Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000). Yet, at the same time, institutions and governments mandate that students volunteer in order to gain real world experience under the assumed notion of "global citizenship" (Sagan, 2015). While critical dialogue on volunteerism is well acknowledged, pressure for service learning opportunities continues unabated. This presents a paradox in that the ethical shortcomings are well acknowledged, but the process of traveling to a community—near or abroad—putting in volunteer hours, and returning to comfortable conditions is not really questioned (Gallini & Moley, 2003). What is more, host communities are rarely involved in this conversation. As a result, the critical dialogue on experiential learning focuses on transforming this narrow approach of self-interested voluntourism to a form of meaningful community outreach. By extension, some programs are even calling for transformative acts, activism and solidarity as part of their outcomes (Brickford & Reynolds, 2002; Cushman, 1999). However, the methodological process of going some place, offering assistance, recording the experience and returning to reflect is not widely challenged (Rennick & Desjardins, 2013a). Those who do critically challenge this process tend to reject the idea of experiential learning as being able to overcome ethical challenges.
Going where nobody should go

(Jefferess, 2012; Mostafanezhad, 2014). As a result, educators who acknowledge the ethical shortcomings, “the limited community impact of service learning” according to Butin (2014), and who want to move the experience from narrow philanthropy to transformative development action, may be limited by not challenging the methodological process itself.

The increasing popularity of approaching experiential learning through activism, action, advocacy and transformative acts clearly shows a disconnect with the self-serving service models. However, solidarity, activism and action are deeply political processes that are not always universally celebrated. In fact, by definition, the process of engaging in activism implies that someone, or something, is a target for change. Likely, the target will be in opposition to the proponents, and could take exception with the class, the faculty and even the institution (Ferguson, 1990). Trepidation of becoming too political is, as Vrasti (2012) states, “a nagging feeling that academics have lost the ability to contribute to real life struggles, and that the university is no longer the birth place of radical thought and action.” Activism is a democratic process of popular power (Shaw, 2001). It has the ability to topple governments, radically change conditions and break down social inequities. In this sense activism is not something to be taken lightly, as popular power through activism can, and often does, intimidate authorities (Zinn, 2007). To encourage experiential learning through activism is to suggest that students and professors will take political sides and pursue an end goal. Depending on the target, such actions could bring about serious consequences. What is more, no matter what political action students and professors take on, there will be others outside of the academy who are more intimately tied to the issue and whose lives are bound by it, sometimes even threatened by it. All pedagogies are political in some way, regardless of whether or not there is an intentional activist component to it. This idea reinforces the argument that the classroom is in itself an inherently political space, regardless of the pedagogy design (Hooks, 2003; Mohanty, 2003).

In sum, for a university program to seriously engage in activism implies a commitment to deep connectivity and solidarity to a community impacted by an issue. It is not to say that it is impossible, as Langdon and Agyeyomah (2014) claim, but that activist pedagogy should be a product of solidarity, not a marketing design by university administrators. This sort of connection may not be achieved through the above-mentioned pedagogical methodology that experiential learning has been traditionally accustomed to.

Perhaps then, the problem with making the world your classroom, is not so much about how students should pursue travel, volunteering, recording and reflection in an ethical manner, but instead how students should really connect with communities who are embroiled in political struggle. What if the university classroom can serve less as pre-departure travel assistance, and more as a laboratory for ethics, communications skills and solidarity? Nolan and Featherstone (2015) argue for the importance of recognizing the different means by which actors seek to contest politics. I suggest that it is possible to engage students as political actors with communities through activism, to connect them to communities—even those on the other side of the world—and to pursue transformative change within those communities by travelling only as far as the classroom itself.
Go Where You Cannot Go

One way to work beyond the consumer-centered ethics of voluntourism is to ask whether or not it is possible to have a connection to places that are ill advised to travel to, or impossible to volunteer in. In this way the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) serves an important function for this discussion. The country is best referred to as a “total control zone,” famous for human rights abuses, structured misery and violations of each and every clause of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (Harden, 2012; Narayan, 2015). North Korea governance is authoritarian, erratic and feudal by design (Lankov, 2014; Kim, 2016). The Kim Regime divides its citizens through the so-called “Songbun” system, a class hierarchy that distinguishes between “loyal, wavering and hostile” members of society, with some 54 sub categories of social ranking (Collins, 2012). A diplomat would be considered loyal, a truck driver for the military in rural areas could be classified as wavering and a peasant farmer near the border of China would be deemed hostile (Hunter, 1999). The some 200,000 prisoners in political labour camps are considered by the regime to be “human garbage” (Harden, 2012).

As much as the country faces crushing poverty, reoccurring famine, human rights abuses, in addition to a wide range of social calamities, it is shockingly ignored by International Development Studies. However, these issues are discussed in Political Science and Security Studies literature (Saaty & Vargas, 2013). The lack of traditional aid into the country coupled with the Orwellian state surveillance and control that goes along with visiting the country partially explain why International Development Scholars have all but ignored North Korea. Occasionally foreign delegations, for religious or sport purposes, visit North Korea, and even then, these groups are strictly limited in who they can engage with and where. Academic exchanges with foreign scholars also occur to some degree. Groups like the Choson Exchange (2016) offer person-to-person academic visits to Pyongyang, where they connect foreign academics to the regime’s elite for seminars in business skills development. However, no “experiential learning” with foreign students can occur in North Korea. Media is occasionally allowed into the country with strict guidelines as to whom they may interact with, but person-to-person contact is limited and strictly observed.

Taken together, North Korea is a no-go zone for experiential leaning for three reasons. First, North Korea is widely viewed by scholars as a security concern rather than as a development issue, which leaves little scholarly foundation to develop any sort of program. Second, visitors to North Korea are carefully screened, monitored and observed, which limits any real ability for person-to-person interaction that is not directly influenced by the regime. Third, no voluntourism exists within the country, so travel and service learning is not an option.

Tourists do travel to North Korea, often paying over €4,000 for a holiday ranging from a week to ten days (Yang, Han, & Ren, 2014). These tours are famous for their careful scripting, manicured presentations, total surveillance and a lack of engagement with locals. Every tourist is assigned a guide to give a well-documented script about the history, culture and politics of the country. If tourists deviate from the set rules or defame the leader they put themselves at risk, along with their handler. Recently, North Korea has made a
habit of detaining foreign tourists in order to gain diplomatic parleys with the governments of their home countries (The Associated Press, 2016). At the time of writing this article, there are 14 foreigners known to be in North Korean Prisons.

The very idea of ever engaging North Korea through experiential voluntourism is impossible. The risk to one’s own safety, and the safety of their handlers is too high and the landscape is an Orwellian veil (Myers, 2011). By not being able to engage with North Korea in this way, researchers and students struggle to build understanding of the country, its governance and its society. For the most part, scholars are left to rely on defector testimony of the accounts of their own lives in North Korea (Baek, 2016). Because North Korea is difficult to access, because information can be skewed and because it is under-explored in development studies, does it mean that it, and the human rights violations occurring within it, should be ignored? How can students in a country like Canada even engage in this tremendously opaque and complicated place?

“Development and Activism,” an undergraduate course at Dalhousie University, attempted to connect students to North Korea studies through various acts of solidarity with North Korean refugees. Over the semester, students built relations with well-known defectors, received human rights organizations for forums and roundtables and worked with a human rights NGO to assist in the rescue of a person out of North Korea. The class did not employ the experiential learning model of traveling, volunteering, recording and reflecting, because such a model would be both problematic to pursue and impossible to execute given the subject matter. Instead the class followed a model along these lines: study, organize, coordinate and engage. What is more, the class sought advice from refugees, communities and activists involved in the North Korean human rights crisis. In particular, the class worked with Liberty in North Korea (LINK), a group that facilitates rescues and works to promote education of the human rights calamities in North Korea.

In 2015, LINK agreed to accept students in the Camp 14 Project as members of a rescue team—a group organizing to support the rescue of a refugee out of North Korea. Working with an NGO itself did not set this class apart from other experiential pedagogies, but it was how the students approached the topic through a path of curiosity and humility as non-experts. The lack of scholarly research on North Korea enables this, but so too does structuring the experience humbly so that students are positioned as allies to those in need, rather than as experts on the issue. Much of the broader critique against voluntourism abroad is that students are empowered to believe that they are already experts and that their personal knowledge, not just their actions, is what will lead to betterment. The Camp 14 Project enabled students to collaborate and work together for a cause without assuming the role of experts and leaders on the issue.

For the students, this experience involved fundraising, awareness building, political lobbying and further studying of the human rights violations taking place in North Korea. With the funds raised and the support to LINK, the efforts translated into bribing border guards, transporting a refugee through China and across the border of two more countries and into Bangkok. Funds were sent to LINK, a registered charity, and LINK organized all details of the rescue. The students did not coordinate the escape; they were only fundraisers and advocates. Some colleagues took exception with the class project saying
that it was unethical to fake documents, cross borders illegally and to transport North Korean refugees through China. These comments came at the same time that Canadian universities showed outpouring of support for Syrian refugees, many of whom cross borders illegally with or without documentation, and require safe transport through hostile territory. It seemed at odds that moral support would not be forthcoming in aiding North Korean refugees. Perhaps this was due to support for Syrian refugees coming from top-level university administration, while assisting a North Korean refugee was viewed as a “for-credit” assignment. Students in the Camp 14 Project were not travelling or volunteering. They were fundraising and organizing.

In addition to raising funds for LINK, mostly through selling samosas on campus, a quick and affordable snack that could be easily sold between classes, students also organized a protest aimed at the “Halifax Security Forum”, a meeting of world leaders and military officials, with the message that human rights in North Korea should be a top priority for foreign policy agendas. Students were evaluated on their ability to critically reflect on their actions and to associate their particular activities with broader concepts in the literature. This is to say that the quality of the action was not up for evaluation. Rather, the entire evaluation process focused on each student’s ability to critically reflect on the experience.

But with this different approach to experiential learning, what are the new ethical concerns that arise? Is it appropriate to sell street food to fund an NGO based in California that is helping people pass through China? Are there other organizations that would benefit from the funds more? Should students be involved with an issue that is this politically complex? And what are the real connections that students make to the issue and to those involved with it? How will students, and the course, navigate the ever-demanding task of representing the narratives of those involved in the issue?

**From Voluntourism to Activism?**

One of the main differences of the Camp 14 Project with other experiential learning classes is that the class engages in activism as organized actions to make political demands for transformative change. In particular, the Camp 14 Project asked that international leaders pay greater attention to the human rights crisis in North Korea (Semansky, 2016), and that countries should seek out possibilities to help with refugee resettlement (Zilio, 2016). The students’ message to the Halifax Security Forum was simply that if governments wanted to discuss security, then human security should also be on the agenda. In a previous year, students in the class mailed copies of the book *Escape from Camp 14* to 70 members of the Canadian Parliament, both Senators and Members of Parliament. Letter writing campaigns to government officials also followed with the demand that the Canadian government could do more to assist in the North Korean refugee crisis either by providing immigration assistance or by opening refugee spaces for defectors coming to Canada.

One media columnist argued that the letter writing, protesting and organizing involved in this class did not require a lot of thought, skill or need for deep reflection (Urback, 2014). As Shaw (2001) states, successful tactical activists dedicate enormous effort to
coordinating strategies and learning from the history of activists before them. This raises questions about what activism is, and what role it has on campus (Huish, 2013). It also challenges the normative process of experiential learning from spending time in service to spending time coordinating and organizing. Universities have a long history of activism, and in many cases student-led activism has the ability to make huge transformations (Zinn, 2007; Huish, 2013). Student-led movements on campuses have toppled governments around the world, from India, to Cuba, to Singapore, to Egypt. It is a powerful social force that can lead to unexpected outcomes. To some, tapping into this knowledge and power is very intimidating. A critical narrative repeatedly heard against campus activism is that as long as politically sensitive topics are discussed in a classroom setting there is no major objection by university administration or the public. But once the message and the learning space goes from the classroom to the streets, regardless of the subject matter, there is almost always some level of backlash, from colleagues, critics, other students or the university administration.

Since its inception, Development and Activism received a great deal of critical response in national newspapers and television (Huish, 2013). In the National Post, a Toronto-based daily newspaper, readers provided feedback in the comments section to an article profiling the course (Boesveld, 2014). Readers wrote, “How dumb must someone be to need to learn how to protest”? Another reader wrote, “Whoever approved this course should be fired immediately”. In the Globe and Mail, another Toronto-based newspaper, readers’ comments included, “I would not hire a student who took this course” and “this is going to end very, very badly” (Bradshaw, 2010). Interestingly enough, most of the critiques focused on the idea of students organizing in the street, rather than the topic itself. In fact, SUN NEWS, a former organ of sensationalist Canadian conservative media, reported, “The students are protesting human rights abuses in North Korea, which is a good topic, but maybe they’ll start protesting on topics about abortion or Israel?” (SUN NEWS, 2015).

The message here is that tactful activism requires knowledge, skills, coordination and reflection. A demand is growing in civil society for students who have these skills, who understand the constitutionality of protest and who have experience in direct engagement. As much as university classrooms can serve as ideal spaces to facilitate the learning of activist skills and tactics, some may claim that the classroom is about the pursuit of knowledge, and not a space to engage power. Such reaction is inherent to protest and activism, and it too serves as a learning opportunity for students to develop skills in knowing how to handle adverse reactions to their actions.

Taken together, this pedagogy can result in students experiencing activism as a process of challenges and moral dilemmas more than as an experience that brings clear answers and solutions to social problems. This goes against many university marketing campaigns that emphasize leaders of tomorrow, and the ability for volunteer experience to solve all problems, and complements Vrasti (2013), Heron (2000), and Mostafenezhad’s (2013) work that experiential learning is a far more complex problem than is often marketed. It also challenges the sometimes-used higher education pitch that an individual who cares a great deal can change the world. Activist pedagogies illuminate how change comes through laborious effort and tedious tasks that require dealing with
with difficult group dynamics of disorganization, conflict, difference of opinions and staunch opposition (Shaw, 2001). Moreover, it can afford students the opportunity to engage on issues in real time and to forge genuine connections with people impacted by the issue. For students in the Camp 14 Project, a well-known North Korean defector named Shin Donghyuk visited the university three times to tell his story of his time in a North Korean labour camp (Semansky, 2014). Students nominated him for an honorary degree, and after controversy broke out about the earnestness of his life story, students worked to give him a public platform to tell his story (Naegelen, 2015). As much as this process afforded students the opportunity to experience advocacy and solidarity, university programs, as Butin (2006) suggests have “institutional limits to experiential learning” and tend to not embrace activist pedagogy.

Let’s Risk It All

University administrators are risk-adverse. Any indication that a university could be liable for student or faculty actions is often met with a stern response that the actions are inappropriate for research or teaching (Haggerty, 2004; Owen, 2004; Stoecker, 2008; Vanden Hoonnaard, 2002). To the chagrin of many university administrators, activism is about taking risks in often untested waters by “unlearning” oppressive normative behaviours in society (hooks, 2003). To be committed to social justice and change is to embrace risk in many forms (Shaw, 2001). There is risk of defeat, and also the greater risk of success—meaning that succeeding demands one to take responsibility for the outcomes. Being committed to change also means practicing solidarity with communities who take well-entrenched political stances (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014). Universities are accustomed to risk analysis based not only on harm reduction but to deflect litigation. For activists set on changing policy and governance, real-time battles of power will occur that no ethics review board would be able to comfortably navigate, or able to anticipate all of the potential liabilities (Owen, 2004; Stoecker, 2008). Ethics boards tend to review research in order to ensure that subject, research and institution are free of harm and risk (Palys & Lowman, 2010). For pedagogy, ethics review can be handled at department or faculty levels, sometimes with meticulous enthusiasm (Huish, 2012).

If classes are to form experiential learning through genuine acts of solidarity, faculty have a narrow window to navigate in order to ensure the authenticity of the action is being informed by and connected to activist partners, but also that risk and harm do not come to those involved. It also means that faculty need to be mindful of the almost certain fact that, regardless of the topic, opponents will challenge the value of the course because it is taking a message into a political space. On a similar line, faculty members need to use caution in becoming too close to an issue, so that their own politics do not necessarily transcend the experiential learning process. Moral stances can quickly escalate into entrenched positions that shape the learning process.

For the Camp 14 Project, students conducted the background research on the subject, coordinated the tactics of protest, crafted their own speeches, music, photography and social media impact. Students coordinated the relationship with LINK for fundraising and organized media engagement. Since the project guidelines insisted that only legal forms of protest would be used, and this included coordinating with police, no risks would occur
from direct action. LINK and their partners handled the rescue of a North Korean refugee, and students were not directly responsible for the coordination of the logistics. In sum, Camp 14 Project offered an experiential learning process that combined advocacy with solidarity without putting students or their partners at any “additional risk” that would satisfy university risk management boards. But also, the project did not risk breaking the bonds of solidarity or exploit vulnerable communities to the advantage of a learning environment for the students. For the refugee who fled North Korea, it is likely that she would have attempted the journey regardless of available support, or, less likely, she would remain in the North and live at risk of persecution. The journey out of North Korea involves tremendous risk, but for students to participate in a process of offering assistance, at a time when the international community largely ignores the issue, is an expression of solidarity and a means of helping to mitigate such risk.

As difficult as it is to coordinate learning opportunities such as this, there is a worrisome concern that many faculty will not pursue innovative curriculum along these lines out of fear of reprisal from their university administrations. At several conferences, many colleagues mentioned that they would be too worried to pursue activist pedagogy out of fear of reprimand. Academics tend to have a wide berth to engage in research, but often more when it comes to pedagogy. Self-regulation is the main element of quality control for higher education, or in team teaching environments, peer-pressure can serve a role as well. Self-regulation can also come with self-censorship out fear of reprimand, or out of fear of losing out of the increasingly rare, and ever-more insecure, academic jobs. While a great deal of poor teaching goes undisciplined, a few stories of classroom tragedies, either from accident or intention, do make national headlines and fan a fear that the authorities are closely watching (Boesveld, 2012). However, self-inflicted fear of being called into the Dean’s Office, or worse, to stand before a committee or Senate hearing to justify your actions can stifle innovation, and actually hold back faculty members from discussing the sort of ethics and risk that universities are prepared to take when it comes to activism, solidarity or even ideas of global citizenship. If universities are unable to openly discuss and pursue activist pedagogies as normative rather than exceptional, then the notion of activism will remain as a timid impression of it on campus, rather than as a genuine commitment to it. By not engaging in dialogue about the intersection of experiential learning and activism would be an opportunity lost for universities to actually having deeper roles in progressive transformations.

Concluding Thoughts

This paper has demonstrated that amid the serious ethical shortcomings of experiential learning, both locally and globally, activist pedagogies may be an important approach to engaging students to address pressing social issues through acts of solidarity. The example of the Camp 14 Project does not serve as a model methodology. Rather, it was a particular opportunity taken to attempt political advocacy and action on an issue that is under-explored by many in the academy. The value of the Camp 14 Project is that it demonstrates that students do not need to travel and serve in order to feel engaged to an issue. Nor do they need to physically experience a place to feel connected. By changing the value of service within the classroom experience to values of solidarity, it connects students to a political sphere with transformative impacts.
The course has received heated feedback from media, from faculty members and from some students. These reactions have less to do with the topic, the evaluation models or even the design of the course, and more to do with the process of taking university subject matter into a political and public space. When educators take experiential learning into a political space, it will invite reaction and retaliation. This makes activist pedagogy painfully difficult to standardize or to pass through an ethics review process. Indeed, perhaps neither should happen. Instead, it may be far more important for faculty to not self-censor if they have an innovative idea, or if they have experience on an issue that they feel passionate about to design a learning program that connects students to the issue.

Activism has always been a part of university campuses—at least dating as far back as The Reformation. Rarely though has the experience been awarded in-class credit. How credit can be awarded, and how lessons can be planned are questions that should not necessarily be answered through standardization. Rather than continuing to remodel experiential learning by burning down and rebuilding the tried pattern of travel, volunteerism and reflection, is it possible to innovate pedagogy in political spaces to the benefit of both students and communities? In an era of seemingly constant protest, there are thousands of marginalized communities, locally and globally, fighting structures of powers for better rights. To make a difference, students do not need to engage in experiential learning that values “saving” as much as “engaging” in learning processes that allow for “doing.” Learning and engagement as “doing” can be about building confidence in processes of activism from rallies, to mail campaigns to formal petitions of government against unjust laws or practice or moral behaviour. Such actions are often considered exceptional, rather than normative. Higher learning has an important opportunity to make such engagement normative. Universities can serve an important role through solidarity with such communities, providing that faculty members have the courage to go beyond making the world a classroom to actually making change from the classroom itself.
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Author Biography

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Fair Trade Learning in an Unfair World

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Keywords: international experiential learning; power; privilege; fair trade learning; neoliberalism; capitalism; encounter; global poverty; evaluation

ABSTRACT: Recent critical research on international experiential or service learning, (IESL), raises questions and reveals challenges for host communities working in partnership with universities to provide community-based learning opportunities for students, primarily from the Global North. The exercise of power, privileges of transnational mobility and the potential reinforcement of a neocolonial relationship between partners, within the context of globalized higher education, are among the barriers to equitable practices facing practitioners. As researchers and practitioners work with host partners to articulate ethical and equitable responses to IESL practices, the model of fair trade standards has recently gained traction in this field as an opportunity to provide an ethical framework, developed by practitioners and host partners, to provide transparency and accountability for the enactment of IESL programs. Fair trade standards, in the context of commodities pricing and labour, have produced some measure of improvement in trade practices; yet in this field too, researchers have identified gaps and inconsistencies that often leave unchanged the benefit to and experience of local partners outside of the Global North. This essay first considers some of the key issues challenging IESL practice and moves to consider the possibilities and/or contradictions of applying a Fair Trade framework for IESL. Finally, the concept of encounter, developed by Ananya Roy and colleagues, emerges as a dynamic pedagogical framework that rather than foreclosing questions of history, power, privilege and ongoing global poverty, seeks to confront these issues at the root sources.

Introduction

How ought we to engage with communities of Others? This question continues to challenge my teaching and research over many years as a practitioner and scholar of
international experiential and service learning, (IESL) in higher education. Currently, IESL programs continue to proliferate on Canadian campuses and beyond as a response to the increasing demand for global learning opportunities (Stein & Andreotti, 2015; Beck, 2012; Peters, 2005). Critical researchers, however, have produced a robust body of research over the past decade that calls attention to the myriad of ways that IESL, as a pedagogy and practice, engages youth in programs that in many ways reinscribes neocolonial relations between privileged youth from predominantly Northern universities. While the expansion of globalization and global mobilities inspire proponents of the practice frame IESL participation on campuses as a practice of global citizenship, critics highlight inequities in power, racial and socioeconomic inequality (Larkin, 2013). Mahrouse (2014) argues that the intentions of specifically white, transnational volunteers or activists may, consciously or not, undermine efforts to build solidarity within communities marginalized by poverty or conflict. In response to critical concerns, many researchers have worked to develop strategies to minimize or ameliorate negative effects from IESL. These are dilemmas that colleagues and I continue to debate and discuss as we seek to work through the historical and political legacies that contextualize IESL practice.

As a researcher and practitioner of IESL at a small Canadian university college, I am troubled by pedagogies that facilitate or normalize the oppression or exclusion of Others, and appreciate the efforts that many IESL practitioners are making to ensure anti-oppressive, equitable and ethical programming. Many practitioners strive to orient programs that will deepen their students’ understanding of how their positions and identities interact with Others in a global context, and to explore the complexities between institutions, including universities and structures that sustain unequal power relations, locally and globally. This means engaging in efforts to map the ways in which the practice of IESL may slip, disavow, or make ambiguous the ways in which we contribute to or are complicit with the production of inequality through participation within the practices of global capitalism. The question that continues to dog IESL practices is aptly framed by Tiessen and Huish’s (2013) title: Globetrotting or global citizenship? It is at this nexus, the privilege of global travel and the role that higher education plays within discourses of neoliberalism, emphasizing individual choice, entrepreneurialism and techno-management strategies that there is a risk for educators to sidestep critical examination of the structural sources of poverty and inequality (Chouliariaki, 2013; Simpson, 2005). Further claims by educators and students to work for solidarity and justice are subject to critique as well. For example, Kapoor (2005), conceptualizes the notion of the “narcissistic Samaritan,” as one who is caught between the desire to work to empower the Other while maintaining a claim for her/his own neutrality. While this label may sound overly critical when applied to those endeavouring to enact generosity and justice, discomfort is a product of the disruption of mainstream narratives that align and affirm, versus challenge or critique, our identities (Stein & Andreotti, 2015).

I am framing this paper as a reflection on the challenges that confront IESL practitioners, who are engaging with critiques of IESL and the challenges they confront in attempting to establish ethical practices. First, I briefly consider the commodification of IESL and youth volunteering and review emerging critical research on current practices. Next, I examine ways in which the demand for IESL programming and diversification of
programs (both public and private) increasingly capitalize on the profitability and attraction of IESL. Several researchers are working on strategies to resist unethical practices and to build just IESL partnerships. At this point, I would like to open a dialogue on the possibilities and limitations of emerging fair trade standards for ethical IESL practice. In response to critical research, Hartman, Paris and Blache-Cohen, (2014) have constructed a detailed framework for fair trade IESL (fair trade learning, here on, FTL), drawing on the experience of fair trade commodities. Building on recent research on fair-trade commodity networks, my concern with the FTL approach arises from the potential for a reliance on a normative set of standards that may neutralize, normalize and/or obscure the historical, and ongoing structural roots of poverty and inequality. Finally, I will consider how engaging a lens of complicity may make visible the myriad ways IESL operates in a space of ambiguity, concluding that it is in this space of encounter and discomfort where we may discover new questions to ask of our practices and our aspirations for social justice.

Engaging Youth in Poverty Alleviation: Consuming Volunteer Experiences

How should we respond to the needs of distant others? Ironically, the desire to help Others perceived to be in need occupies an ambivalent space in the current political moment. At a time when many in Canada remain divided over if any, or how many refugees at all should be welcome to Canada, programs advertising opportunities for youth to get involved in service and global volunteerism all over the world are intensifying in popularity. It is a phenomena with an appealing potential for commodification. It is not surprising that, in an era of easy global mobility for the affluent, it is fairly easy to sell the idea of youth, travelling internationally and independently to help distant others through the image of a mobile, exotic lifestyle (Jefferess, 2012; Tiessen & Huish, 2013). Invitations to “give back to the community” or to “make a difference in the world” are, according to Vrasti (2013) ways to engage the “post-materialist and anti-modemist sensibilities of the Western ethical consumer looking to demonstrate their superior social capital by ‘traveling with a purpose’ (p. 2). These are persuasive appeals and the benefits accrued extend beyond moral personal enrichment. Drawing on Simpson (2005 as cited in Vrasti, 2013), international volunteer experience is now a “standard requirement for higher education and career development” (p. 2).

Glossy photos that depict primarily white youth working in villages tap into a highly mediatized notion of global citizenship, a borderless myth which encourages youth to travel beyond national borders to make a difference in the world. These narratives continue to draw thousands of students to IESL programs, regardless of growing public critique (Vrasti, 2013; Simpson, 2005). This lucrative market was the target of a documentary in 2015 directed by Brad Quenville and produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Company. Volunteers Unleashed, (Quenville, 2015), examines the experience of youth participants in volunteer programs in Africa, who are untrained, unprepared and (often) unwanted locally. The release of this documentary was delayed by objections from the WE Day organization. Daniela Papi’s (2012) popular Tedx talk,
What’s wrong with volunteer travel? is based on her six years as a recent university graduate attempting to build schools and run a volunteer travel program in Cambodia. She critiques the misalignment between volunteers, their skill-sets and the actual needs of host communities. Instructors at the London School of Economics call on universities to sign declarations, committing to stop sending students to work in Global South orphanages. The blog on the university’s website argues that orphanages and the volunteers whose support enables their operation, can lead to human trafficking, further destabilizing families struggling with poverty. The blog, written by David Coles, (Coles, 2017) acknowledges the popularity of volunteering and does not advocate that all volunteer efforts be abandoned; rather, the blog establishes the particular context for IESL in orphanages. Coles argues:

Overseas volunteering is also extremely popular amongst students. Making a difference whilst forming new friendships in an exotic location; who wouldn’t be tempted by that? Volunteer tourism, voluntourism, volunteer travel, or overseas volunteering, call it what you like, has experienced massive growth over the past ten years. It’s seen by many as a rite of passage in modern times.

But with such growth have come problems. Understandably volunteers want to volunteer to make an impact with those that need the help the most. More often than not they are pointed in the direction of vulnerable African or Asian children, particularly those that live in orphanages. Google ‘volunteer overseas’ and the screenshot below shows the image results that appear. Young, mainly white, people teaching, cuddling and playing with children without a local adult in sight perpetuating the dangerous myth that international volunteers are needed ‘to give love’ to these children because they lack the relevant support in their own communities.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of agencies that are prepared to connect well meaning, but unqualified and ill-suited, volunteers from the UK with vulnerable children in the global south. The business model for the sector is for volunteers to pay, sometimes thousands of pounds, for such opportunities. By taking part in such activities we’ve managed to make a commodity of spending time with children. Does that sound like helping?

Unsurprisingly, the power of youth discourses and international aid is not a phenomenon necessarily limited to higher education or the voluntourism industry. A recent update of the Government of Canada, Global Affairs International Development website now briefly included a “youth zone” section: here children 9-12; youth 13-16; and young adults “17+,” can click their way to finding internships and opportunities that help them to understand what Canada is doing in the field of international development. Children can click on apps, games designed to inform them about epidemics, citizenship, famine and environmental disaster. A quick click on the ‘Free rice’ game app tells young players that they can: ‘Play ‘Free Rice’ and feed hungry people. Test your knowledge in languages, math, science and art history. For every correct answer, 10 grains of rice is donated to the
World Food Programme. You can help reduce hunger just by playing!” This oversimplification of development and poverty narratives places youths’ leisure and entertainment interests at the centre of efforts for poverty alleviation. Engaging an entertainment approach to alleviating global inequality masks the deep disconnect between the logic deployed to encourage youth participation in learning about or participating in international volunteering enterprises and the power interests that have historically, and currently, produce poverty.

**Critical Responses to Youth Engagement in Poverty Action**

In contrast to the oversimplified approach to poverty through youth engagement, the past decade of growth in youth volunteering has also inspired a tremendous growth in the field of critical IESL literature, including development studies, (Cameron, 2014; MacDonald, 2014; Heron, 2007); critical pedagogy, (Andreotti, 2016a, 2016b; Roy, Negron-Gonzalez, Opolu-Agyemang & Talwalker, 2016), and critical race studies (Mahrouse, 2014). This work identifies a myriad of contradictions and inconsistencies within IESL pedagogy and philosophy. The field of critical research on IESL analyzes the all-too-often invisible ways that IESL practices normalize and neutralize engagement between affluent youth and marginalized or impoverished communities (Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Andreotti, 2014). Vrasti (2013) argues that youth participation in international volunteering is an exercise of power, and a “well-intentioned attempt” to make “ourselves into moral subjects of our own actions” or to engage in “cultural fantasies that allow some people to affirm their sense of self by taking a detour through other people’s version of everyday life” (p. 3). In my own research, the desire to position oneself as acting as a benevolent agent of social responsibility can devolve into an act of solipsism. The concept of benevolence attached to IESL participation is often at odds with host community partners’ understanding of or reasons for welcoming youth into their communities. From the host perspective, conscience formation of the visiting volunteers, to deepen their understanding of the challenges posed by tourism, off-shoring manufacturing work or degradation of the environment are concepts that they hope will impress upon youth for the need to work for change at home. The superficiality of IESL as a touristic experience, however, renders the institutions and social structures that produce inequality and violence unchanged. In this way, IESL reproduces a set of neocolonial relations, which are complicit in the production of oppression.

It is this neocolonial orientation to education that troubles critical researchers. MacDonald (2014) explains that it is the engagement with and curiosity of the Other that drives the practice of IESL. She qualifies this assertion of the centrality of engagements with Others as the core experience of learning with a caution: that without adequate preparation, or the intellectual tools to understand international experiences, the result for student participants can be disorienting and alienating. In this context, how do we, as practitioners and participants in IESL, engage students in a thorough critique of the dynamics that produce inequalities and the processes that frame Otherness?

There will not be an easy or single strategy to respond to the complexities that drive the production and intensification of inequality through global capitalism; however, critical practitioners work with students/youth to directly confront global inequality as a practice of power. Roy’s (2016) approach to IESL is founded on the notion of an encounter with poverty that “is not only an encounter with ‘poor others’ but direct engagement with the
politics of social systems and institutions that produce poverty. Roy’s (2016) approach calls for IESL practitioners to engage with development as a ‘terrain of politics’ rather than a monolithic apparatus of dominance. It is an approach rooted in the concept of an encounter. To engage in an encounter with poverty is not to participate in static study, rather it is to situate oneself in a world that is fluid and changeable. A pedagogy of encounter addresses poverty and inequality, calling practitioners to engage with difficult, uncomfortable knowledge of the myriad of ways in which we as individuals or members of institutions and states are complicit in the production of oppression (Lawson & Elwood, 2014; Tiessen & Heron, 2012). Roy (2016) argues that an encounter approach to critical poverty studies is essential in the context of a “rearranged world,” one where transnational capital invisibly flows through porous cyber-financialized boundaries and where the presence of poverty is no longer discretely located within communities of the Global South. A pedagogy of encounter decentres the Global North as the sole producer of poverty and strives to make visible the intricate network of sites and relationships that produce power and inequality.

Resisting the Reproduction of Inequalities: Time to Let Go of the Practice?

The power of poverty to enact violence on communities is the reason Eve Tuck (2009), suggests it may be time for a moratorium on research and educational programming in “damaged” communities. Tuck (2009) argues that,

In damaged-centered research, one of the major activities is to document pain or loss in an individual, community, or tribe. Though connected to deficit models—frameworks that emphasize what a particular student, family, or community is lacking to explain underachievement or failure—damage-centered research is distinct in being more socially and historically situated. It looks to historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy. Common sense tells us this is a good thing, but the danger in damage-centered research is that it is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community. Here’s a more applied definition of damage-centered research: research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation (p. 413).

Tuck’s analysis suggests that those who intervene, even for well-intentioned principles, do so more to meet their need to feel empowered by effecting benevolent reparation than addressing the original sources of social damage. Critical poverty studies scholar Emma Shaw Crane (2015) concurs, arguing that “much of hegemonic poverty knowledge theorizes impoverishment as a problem to be solved: a lack of resources, services or gadgets—a need for a radio or a pig for example. Poverty is often framed as a deficiency of people or of place, or incomplete inclusion into prosperous and benign
global markets” (p. 347). Focusing on the production of poverty is crucially linked to understanding how we are to engage with Others for it “informs how we imagine what is possible and what is just” (Shaw Crane, 2015, p. 344). It is at this point that I turn attention to the central focus of this paper: How does a fair trade approach to IESL respond to the political and economic dynamics that produce poverty and inequality and positions people and communities in need?

**Fair Trade Learning in an Unfair World**

Responding to the field of critical theoretical analyses and empirical studies that document the exploitative and oppressive impact of IESL programs and partnerships, a strong movement is growing among some IESL scholars to develop a fair trade learning (FTL) approach as a way to mitigate the harmful or negative consequences of such programs (Hartman, 2015). Hartman argues persuasively for the need to establish a set of standards for IESL practice citing research that documents how inequitable partnerships “undermine local development efforts, cause tangible harms in communities and miseducate the learners involved” (Hartman, 2015, p. 216). This movement in IESL parallels the international fair trade movement in commodities. Given its growing global economic value, the turn to fair trade practices is not surprising. According to one estimate, in 2012, 1.6 million participants spent over US$173 billion on volunteer travel (Hartman, 2015, 108), with the industry expecting growth to increase in the foreseeable future. The enormous dollar values generated by international travel and volunteer tourism further closely link this practice to the logic of global capitalism. Fair trade learning frameworks emerged in recognition of the highly asymmetrical values accruing to practitioners and participants, versus hosts of IESL programs and as a response to “demands to better manage volunteer tourism” (Hartman, 2015).

The FTL construct developed by the Association of Clubs in Petersfield, Jamaica, along with Amizade Global Service Learning, a non-profit partner in the United States, is a detailed model of fair trade IESL practice, which combines participatory budgeting and community-driven development practices to help organization partners “stay honest” with one another (Hartman, 2015, p. 110). This work is an important contribution to thinking through ways to respond to the concerns of host communities for more equitable, reciprocal and just IESL practices. Yet in as much as it contributes to pushing forward a vision for ethical standards of IESL practice, FTL frameworks, in an attempt to anticipate and manage power inequalities among partners, do so within a framework that may elide structural change. Linked to techno-management strategies for IESL, FTL approaches are a response to the “explosion in corporate-dominated voluntourism,” (Hartman, 2015, p. 222), but do not necessarily invite a response or critique to the ways in which knowledge, social structures or conditions produce poverty.

The turn to ethical consumption is a contemporary feature of the neoliberal marketplace, and for this reason, a critique of fair trade learning practices opens up new spaces to question, challenge and learn from our practices. According to Fridell (2007), the ability to choose to consume or purchase something that has the status of ‘ethical’ or ‘fair’ has the effect of affirming and assuaging any dissonance a consumer may experience for their choice. The designation of fair or ethical recognizes that at some level,
exploitation occurs, however, and the extent to which fair trade mitigates exploitation, at least in the commodities marketplace, is contested. Fridell (2007) states that, “fair traders aspire to mitigate the negative impact of neoliberalism within the constraints of the existing international order, but they have failed to address the aspirations of fair traders to go beyond this and radically reform the international trading system” (p. 99). Given the primary focus of fair trade to operate within a system that generates inequity and poverty, how will turning to a fair trade practice impact host communities over the long term? Does a fair trade approach to IESL normalize some degree of exploitation and shift attention away from critical analysis of the root causes of poverty and inequality?

One of the strongest criticisms of fair trade strategies is the limited impact they have on the industry overall. Developing standards of practice incorporates rather than transforms organizational relations. Again, turning to Kapoor’s analysis of international development practices, packaging strategies appeals to institutional marketability (Kapoor, 2005). Similar to international development practices that target specific groups such as “women in development” or hopeful themes including “sustainable development,” fair trade approaches to IESL may be a way to differentiate a product, a “strategy to ensure the reproduction of consumerism…the new (approach) turns attention away from the ‘old’ recurring problems, challenges), mobilises new energy and resources and inaugurates a ‘fresh’ start” (Kapoor, 2005, p. 1211). Fair trade networks in other commodities have come under criticism for attempting to break with the past and start fresh. According to Fridell (2007), fair trade networks for coffee production have only “been more successful as shaping advantage for specific groups to enter the international marketplace on relatively better terms than it has been at providing a radical challenge to neoliberalism and global trade in general” (p. 100).

Do fair trade approaches capitulate to “the already-evident commodification of education broadly and international education in particular?” (Hartman, 2015, p. 224). Liberal critiques of the negative impacts of IESL see it as potentially a necessary first step toward transformation and awareness of the world for youth from the West (Slimbach, 2010). There is an optimism that a fair trade approach will provide some measure of justice and resource distribution through engaging with the market. Hartman (2015) justifies this position, arguing that “in the international education sector…it is better to call attention to possibilities for equity and reciprocity in a commodified space than it is to pretend that some kind of authentic space of exchange independent of market structures still exists” (p. 224). I find this statement somewhat discouraging. This assertion calls to mind Margaret Thatcher’s infamous statement that “there is no alternative (TINA)” to global capitalism and confirms Tuck’s suspicions, that some research originates, “even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation” (Tuck, 2009, p. 413).

To foreclose the possibility that an alternative is possible is to subject impoverished and marginalized communities to a bleak future conditioned by the logics of global capitalism and to radically reduce the educative potential of IESL practice. If international education is always-already commodified, what are the possibilities for social changes or alternative futures? Will an FTL approach allow for the interests of power that currently govern our international institutions to continue to exploit and oppress communities for economic gain?
Engaging a Lens of Complicity

In contrast to a practice of foreclosure, the concept of complicity acknowledges the participation of all in the production of social relations, including those practices that produce inequality or poverty. The Oxford English Dictionary (2017) defines complicity as “involved knowingly or with passive compliance, often in something underhand, sinister, or illegal; a state of being complex or involved.” I am particularly drawn to the second half of this definition and see in it an opportunity to problematize our IESL practices as a site for critique of our interests, motives and actions with host communities. Seen as a method for analysis, Hoofd (2012) argues that engaging a lens of complicity makes visible “moments of complication to reveal ambivalences embedded within contemporary resistance activities and those interests they resist” (p. 5). It is not clear that compliance with the principles of fair trade will necessarily respect the interests of host partners, nor will evading critique of the principles themselves provide a reflexive insight into the desire and motives that inspire IESL participation. Why and what are we doing in the practice of IESL? In analysis of complicity, Hoofd recognizes a troubling parallel between the actions of anti-globalization activists that actually mimic the actions of global capitalism. Hoofd explains that mobilities, communications and technologies, deployed by activists in what is strategically conceived of as resistance may become merely a depoliticized act, having no effect on the interests and organizations, corporate and otherwise, that drive global capitalism.

The notion of complicity is further developed by Andreotti (2016a) and applied to the field of education. She calls for engaging with the notion of complicity to reveal the ways in which universalist and hegemonic notions of knowledge, partnership, sustainability, equity, diversity, protection and privilege are claimed, absolved and foreclosed in an attempt to establish professional or ethical standards. Andreotti (2016b) frames her critique as a series of questions organized by the concepts represented in the acronym HEADS UP—hegemony, ethnocentrism, ahistorical, depoliticized, salvationist, uncomplicated, paternalistic. Two examples illustrate the difference between an open-ended engagement with Others and a foreclosed set of principles that define practice.

The first principle for FTL establishes dual outcomes to guide practices: those of the host community and the learning outcomes for student participants (Hartman, 2015). Reconciling these two outcomes demand exploring answers to the following questions: whose knowledge is perceived to have universal value? How can the imbalance be addressed? How is privilege mitigated? How do students understand their privilege in the community context? The third principle for FTL demands transparency, particularly in financial exchanges between partners. How will the terms of transparency be negotiated? How are the epistemological and ontological status/positions of certain individuals/institutions, deemed as dispensers of education, rights and help, acknowledged as part of the problem? (Andreotti, 2016b). By shifting focus from an ends-orientation to IESL, practitioners and participants engage in the messy work of critique which moves it from a static practice to a force for change and resistance. Andreotti’s
(2016b) heuristic is designed to push scholars to articulate and understand the implications for the claims that are made by appeals to reciprocity, mutuality or justice. Engaging a lens of complicity is a strategy to push the boundaries that FTL principles may unintentionally foreclose. It demands persistent critique of our activities and actions towards Others in recognition of our embeddedness in a broader global set of political and economic relations (Spivak, 2004). This is a step toward acknowledging that we are all participants in the ongoing project of capitalism at this moment in time. It brings a democratic dimension to the practice of IESL that already exists beyond the attempt to structure relationships through best practices or professional standards. The open-endedness of the use of questions engages IESL participants in a conversation and investigation of the ways in which programs and practices may impact host communities while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of what may be possible, what may yet come, through IESL practices. It is not a strategy to foreclose the possibilities, positive and negative, for IESL practice, rather it foregrounds the potential to produce new ways of engagement while disrupting assumptions that there is a universal set of values to which all participants ascribe. In contrast to the acquiescence by fair trade approaches to global capitalism, critique and deconstruction engage in a relentless, persistent critique of hegemonic knowledge, practices and institutions (Spivak, 2004).

Desire for a Fairer World

In this analysis, I have raised practical and theoretical questions for the turn to ethical or fair trade learning practices in IESL programs. My primary concern targets the potential for FTL practices to be taken up and made complicit with neoliberal ideology. Acknowledging that desire for greater equity and social transformation may be a motivating force in the turn to fair trade practices, the problem persists with accepting IESL as a practice that is firmly embedded within a system of international education that operates as a for-profit market. In assuming a fait accompli stance toward the macro-structures and institutions that produce global inequity, i.e. that what has happened in the past cannot be undone and it is time to move forward, IESL loses its potential as a source of learning leading to social-political change. Next, due to the imbalances in power that exist within North-South IESL partnerships, the obligation to abide by the fair trade principles are most likely to fall to the partner who controls or possesses the resources (Larkin, 2013). This is a precarious position for the host community partner, who typically has much less leverage in terms of resources to ensure they can protect their interests. Further, the adoption of fair-trade labelling masks the ever-present privilege that persists in IESL, driven by racialized, gendered, class and spatial inequalities. Finally, pedagogies and strategies exist to rethink the way in which we organize IESL. My hope in engaging in this critique is to continue to push practitioners of IESL, especially those who recognize the exploitative and oppressive dimensions of its practice and who have turned to FTL as a solution, to continue to engage in debate and to work with host communities to confront the root causes of poverty and inequality.
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Service Learning and Solidarity: Politics, Possibilities and Challenges of Experiential Learning

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**ABSTRACT:** International volunteering and experiential learning programs provide important opportunities for personal and academic growth for students, universities and communities. However, they also have the potential of reinforcing neocolonial frameworks of power and privilege. Furthermore, these programs occur more and more in an academic context where short-term experiences are promoted, and long-term programs abandoned in the wake of neoliberal university policies. This paper is a reflection on the politics, possibilities and challenges of starting a new experiential learning endeavour through the Service Learning Program at St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University from a critical standpoint by exploring tensions and power dynamics of such programs whilst working from a decolonizing and solidarity-based pedagogy of development.

**Introduction**

International volunteering and experiential learning programs provide important opportunities for personal and academic growth for students, universities and communities; however, they also have the potential of reinforcing neocolonial frameworks of power and privilege. Unless the development and ongoing evaluation of such programs includes intentional critical analysis to challenge such frameworks, these programs do not
provide meaningful decolonizing learning or critical development practice. At the same time, these programs occur more and more in an academic context where short-term experiences are promoted, and long-term programs abandoned in the wake of neoliberal university policies (Chapman, 2016; Georgeou, 2012; Grantham, 2018; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Rennick & Desjardins, 2013).

Given this new reality, this paper is a reflection on the politics, possibilities and challenges of starting a new experiential learning endeavor through the Service Learning Program at St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University from a critical standpoint. By exploring tensions and power dynamics in leadership, structure, length of program, status-quo challenging focus, student support and community projects, this paper will outline key learnings, processes and approaches derived from reflections on the development of a new short-term experiential learning course. With objectives that contest the aforementioned critiques and structures, this course was envisioned and designed to instead build solidarity and conscientize students for an embodiment of ideas of shared struggles and enduring relationships and impacts with community partners engaged in challenging the development, as well as socio-economic status quo. This paper presents these reflections and hopes to provide our learnings as a possible reflection on what worked, did not work, was undermined and was supported for those who are searching for and designing meaningful international experiential learning programs.

**International Service Learning**

One of the long-standing international experiential learning frameworks within universities in Canada is service learning, “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development.” (Jacoby, 1996 cited in Rosenberg, 2012, p.5). Key concepts of service learning include reflection and reciprocity (Jacoby, 1996 cited in Rosenberg, 2012). Rhoads (1997) used the concept of mutuality to embrace a duality of reciprocity within service learning; “that service should be a two-way relationship in that both parties receive benefits; and that both parties should be involved in the development and structuring of the service project” (p. 150 cited in Rosenberg, 2012). Additionally, as Rennick (2013) reminds us, “service learning in Canada is strongly tied to values based on historical Christian principles of service, responsibility, social justice and accountability,” influences which still resonate today in university programming, even if they go unacknowledged (p. 36). Within Development Studies, international service learning (ISL) “has come to be accepted as a means to enhance student learning, while contributing to development initiatives and promoting global citizenship” as a pedagogical development practice (Chapman, 2016 p. 1). However, neo-colonial power relations are “inherent in ISL as a practice” recognizing the historically missionary and “civilizing” roles of Christianity as well as asymmetrical power relations in terms of conceptions of superior knowledge of people of European descent and from the Global North towards Indigenous peoples and communities in the Global South (Chapman, 2016, p. 2; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). In recent years, “ISL has expanded and spread under a neoliberal development model” filling gaps
of disappearing welfare provision of nation-states through universities in partnership with non-governmental organization (NGOs) and student volunteers (Chapman, 2016, p. 2). Despite its more than twenty years of existence in this country, “in institutions of higher education across Canada both the justification for, and the activities that qualify as, legitimate service-learning experiences are varied” (Chapman, 2016, p. 2). Chapman (2016) cautions that focusing solely on benefits or consequences for students or universities minimizes the complexity of ISL’s effects on host communities (p.3).

**Critical Service Learning Pedagogy**

For any service learning program to be effective, whether Canadian-based or international, a critical pedagogy must be undertaken to transform the students’ understanding and experience of a particular place and the corresponding issues from historical, cultural, social, political and economic standpoints through supportive reflective processes (Rennick & Desjardins, 2013, p. 11). Rhoads (1997) crafts “a concept of critical community service” by calling on teachers and students “to develop a critical consciousness that transforms their understanding of the social order” to engage in the “larger struggle to improve social conditions” (p. 221 cited in Rosenberg, 2012, p.27). Furthermore, “students should have opportunities to participate in development programs in their own communities in Canada, to learn that conditions of injustice and inequality are everywhere” (Rennick & Desjardins, 2013, p. 11). Anderson and Krathwohl (2000) elaborate:

To deeply learn through ISL, students must become aware of this heterogeneity within communities and the global scope within local contexts. They must be able to see their own cultures in the foreign and the foreign in themselves. More so, they must attain an awareness that implicates their own values, biases, senses of entitlement, and previous training and upbringings in the entire educational process itself. ISL, as a collaborative form of educational and cultural verite, leads to this type of metacognitive knowledge of self that creates the opportunity for a true international education (cited in Kahn, 2011, p. 120).

Identifying and confronting political-economic power dynamics that create these unequal social conditions through praxis is also central to a critical service learning pedagogy. Morton (1995) recognized that “an action/reflection dynamic that contributes to social change is...political because it questions how power is distributed and the connection between power and economics” (p.201 cited in Rosenberg, 2012, p. 26). However, in traditional service learning literature and frameworks, “it is rare that social change, power, and economic structures are mentioned,” reinforcing “helping” and service provision instead of social change (Rosenberg, 2012, p. 26). Advocating for critical service learning, Rosenberg (2012) explains, “As educators, we need to create service learning experiences that extend beyond empathy and “helping others.” Important as these, service learning must be an avenue of education that enlarges students’ critical consciousness and contributes to the transformation of society” (p. 42).
Within a critical service learning pedagogy, as educators, we must also “constantly seek to understand the implications of our praxis and the responsibilities we have to all stakeholders,” ensuring, in particular, that community partners are included in decision-making, implementation and evaluation (Rennick & Desjardins, 2013, p. 8-9; Rosenberg, 2012, p. 43). We also need to acknowledge and confront “the fine line between supporting narrow institutional goals and exploiting global partners” as well as remain vigilant about addressing power dynamics embedded in university-community relations (Rennick & Desjardins, 2013, p. 8). Rennick and Desjardins (2013) emphasize that “without ongoing reflection and debate on the ethical implications of sending students abroad [or into any community], we run the risk of establishing a new form of structural violence” (p. 9).

Neoliberal Influence Within the University

Many scholars have shed light on the growing neoliberal environments of Canadian universities linking the increase in internationalization and experiential learning programs that develop global citizens to maintaining a competitive edge for recruitment and creating workers for the labour market within an atmosphere of decreased funding and corporatization (Chapman, 2016; Georgeou, 2012; Grantham, 2018; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012; Rennick & Desjardins, 2013). Chapman (2016) explains that “the Northern university is already a neoliberal institution...the corporate [or neoliberal] university is run like a corporation because it has become a corporation” (p. 8). Desjardins (2013) asserts that the evolution of the university mission has reached a period of internationalization (p. 218).

In a study featured in another paper of this Special Issue, Grantham evaluates the strategic commitments of Canadian universities for North-South mobility programs and “transformational” approaches, noting the overwhelming linkage of “internationalization” to neoliberalism. One of the significant findings is that “current approaches are shown to be highly instrumentalist, used mainly by universities for strategic purposes to enhance branding and generate increased student enrollment and revenue” (Grantham, 2018, p. 73). Acknowledging the driving forces of “internationalization” approaches as economic to generate student enrollment and revenue, it is frequently used within university strategic planning and mission statements and “is reflective of broader trends in academia resulting from the increasingly globalized and competitive neoliberal environment of higher education” (Grantham, 2018, p. 15). Grantham (2018) also points out it “demonstrates that there is a neoliberal focus on the development of Canadian students through international experiences to be good, competent citizens and workers” (p. 15).

Chapman (2016) notes that “post-secondary education institutions have been hit particularly hard by neoliberal policies” and “ISL is reflective of this trend” as it is “a consumer good designed to draw students into a model which will give them the skills sought by corporations, while providing services to people and communities in need” (p. 6). Jorgenson and Shultz (2012) explain, “experiential learning, in the forms of community service learning and cross-cultural exchanges are featured consistently in the literature as a way to develop global citizenship” in an environment of internationalization and corporatization that is linked to the intensifying neoliberal climate in higher education as
branding and for recruitment within an increasingly “competitive environment” to act as a “competitive advantage” to attract students (p. 9, 12). Not surprising, “when applied to commitments around student mobility, instrumental approaches contribute to poorly designed and executed programs that prioritize institutional benefits over the goals of sustainability, reciprocity and global social justice” (Grantham, 2018, p. 5). This also supports Desjardins’ (2013) statements that university “mission statements rarely reflect existing resources and programs” (p. 219).

For international service learning, there seems to be a “confusion of values and meanings in the interchange that occurs between institutional goals to target new student markets while also toeing the economic bottom line and avoiding liabilities, along with student objectives to participate in a service learning experience” that makes a difference (Rennick, 2013, p. 24). Rennick (2013) explains that service learning is “caught between the quasi-religious aims of “doing good” and “making a difference,” and the corporate-style institutional goal of the internationalization of education, the national aim of promoting Canada in the world, and the personal objectives of students” (p. 37). As noted above, the neoliberal Canadian student is made into a good global citizen and worker through “internationalization programs” whereby “university administrations create opportunities within their academic record... The danger here is that the pursuit to meet this demand comes without careful consideration of the community partners, the vulnerability of the students, or the long-term impacts in the community” (Huish & Tiessen, 2014, p. 281).

Furthermore, it raises “questions about whether university administrators would praise or scorn such initiatives that “conjoin progressive change, partnership, and solidarity” (Huish & Tiessen, 2014, p. 284). Neoliberalism and the corporate university structures reflective within service learning programs have resulted in top-down managerial approaches that reinforce neo-colonial neo-imperial asymmetrical power relationships which makes reciprocity with community partners impossible (Chapman, 2016, p. 16; Georgeou, 2012, p. 51). Grantham (2018) noticed that universities’ interest in these types of international learning programs “is geared toward generating benefits for students and for universities themselves, with little attention paid to the impacts (positive or negative) for host partners and communities (p. 16).

### Managerialism as Neoliberal Model

Within an increasingly neoliberal climate, universities, public services and other community service organizations are subject to a more “managerial” or top-down approach that attempts to resolve social, economic and political issues through management (Georgeou, 2012, p. 51). Management systems or “managerialisms” focus on economic efficiencies and measurable outcomes, examined for “procedural efficiency”, cost reduction and services rendered rather than evaluating the change or difference actually made for population groups, participants or communities (Georgeou, 2012, p. 51). Georgeou (2012) explains that a major problem with managerialism is that, although allegedly neutral, its systems and approaches “carry cultural values, definitions and understandings of the process of “change” and the relative skills and capacities held in the North and the South that serve to perpetuate new and existing power dynamics within communities” (p. 51). Therefore, managerialism reinforces the agendas of the Global North and their control over activities as a form of neoliberal neocolonialism.
To this end, we must confront the ongoing educational neocolonialism that international experiential learning programs embody through neoliberalism that is based on financial self-interest, a reproduction of relationships that re-inscribe inequities and a lack of reciprocity and that retain outsiders as the program architects, facilitators and primary beneficiaries (Chapman, 2016; Luker, 2008 as cited in Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012, p. 5). The case study that will now be presented attempted to resist this neoliberal agenda of internationalization and economic globalization at the institutional and structural level.

Curriculum-based International Service Learning

In the spring of 2014, a number of interested faculty and Service Learning staff at StFX initiated a committee to set up a new kind of international service learning experience that embedded a course grounded in critical service learning and decolonizing pedagogy within an 8-week service learning program in Ghana, taught by local instructors and including 4-week community-based placements. This was driven by the desire to develop a transformative experience for students that would deepen learning and relationships with communities in the Global South. The committee that was assembled to undertake the development of this course also felt that given the long history and commitment to community and social justice of StFX and of the Service Learning program, it was the right time to embed International Service Learning into a course that explored the local dynamics of change in communities set within a global context.

The 11 person committee was comprised of Service Learning staff and faculty from a variety of disciplines and community partners, and included feedback from students. The faculty involved had an interest in this endeavour, had integrated service learning into their courses for local experiences and had previously acted as faculty leaders on short one- or two-week immersion service learning experiences to the Global South. Over the next two years, from 2014 to 2016, this committee envisioned, developed and piloted the experience to Ghana as an Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) course, titled Contemporary Issues and Service Learning in Ghana, which eventually came to fruition in May 2016, with eight students participating in the first year of the 8-week program. We had a number of ideals in mind and we worked through these as a committee. Some of these were successfully implemented and some were not. The next focus of this paper is to examine the process of designing and launching this international service learning course and to explore its successes and challenges. This section is a reflection of our thoughts, as three people on the committee, positioned with different insights on what transpired, to explore why we met the challenges we did. As this process is ongoing, this is merely a snapshot of the reflections and learning that have emerged thus far.

As members of this committee, the authors of this paper played an integral role in this process by spearheading the work. However, each of the authors provide a different perspective of their experience developing the course, depending on their positionality, further illustrating the nuances of this effort, even as committee members. Dr. Jonathan Langdon is a professor in the Development Studies program at StFX and the Canada Research Chair in Sustainability and Social Change Leadership. His insights include
comparing the teaching of this offering to other forms of teaching at StFX. While this course was being developed, Sheena Cameron worked at StFX University as a coordinator of the Service Learning program, an experiential learning program that offers curricular placements locally in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, as well as curricular or co-curricular placements internationally. Her insights explore how the course was incorporated administratively into StFX Service Learning offerings.

Upon deciding to offer the experience in Ghana, in part due to the combined experience of Jon and Sheena working in Ghana and the pre-existing relationships with communities, the committee brought Coleman Agyeyomah into the group in the fall of 2014. Coleman, a colleague and instructor in the Trent-in-Ghana year abroad program since its inception in 1998, is a development consultant and practitioner with over 30 years of experience in Northern Ghana. His insights draw on his extensive experience with the local dynamics of hosting such experiences with years of teaching Trent University students in Northern Ghana contexts. All three authors provide insight into participating, offering and supporting similar programs for Canadian students in Ghana either through Trent University or StFX. From a relational perspective, it also made a significant difference in the development of this course and in reflecting on the process that the three authors have a long time collaborative working relationship.

For over twenty years StFX has been offering international/immersion service learning programs over the reading week in February to a number of different places in Canada and the Americas; however, with this program we hoped to create an experiential learning program that was very new and unique to what had been done in the past. We felt this course would push StFX boundaries regarding geographical programming and build an affordable option in a non-Americas context. While recognizing the shortness of the stay, we thought it was a good chance to bring critical experiential learning or critical service learning to StFX, to develop a set of relationships that this program could nurture over time, and to link students to the amazing activism and critical development work that many of our partners are doing in Ghana—challenging the development hegemony in ongoing ways under difficult circumstances. Through the committee, we had discussions about best practices, especially using the model that Trent University had been using but on a smaller scale and timeframe. We also hoped to perhaps dovetail with partners that Trent and the StFX Coady International Institute work with in Ghana (e.g. Venceremos Development, Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development) to synergize with and complement what partners wanted. As opposed to competing between what could become two very powerful long-term relationships between Canadian universities and Northern Ghana, we believed that working together would better support both programs and partners.

Critical Hyper-Reflexivity

Processes of self-reflection on practice are not new to the authors. For instance, Langdon and Agyeyomah’s (2014) previous piece on Critical Hyper-reflexivity, where we shared using a prompt-based, multiple reflection model for deepening reflection, helped to frame the conversations leading to this contribution. We emphasized the importance of relationships, equal partnerships and the intentionality of the experience to avoid
voluntourism and neocolonialism. We also emphasized different forms of reflection from the private/individual, dialogue with instructor through prompts, to the collective through open discussion spaces, and theme based conversations (once every week). At the same time, we recognized the need to critique global citizenship in the way that it could still be colonialism by another name by assuming the right to interfere, the privilege that comes from access to finances and mobility for global travel and what citizenship implies (Grantham, 2018; Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Rennick & Desjardins, 2013).

Key priorities that emerged in the early conversations concerning this course were for it to challenge the status quo for service learning and experiential learning at StFX and in general, move beyond the 1-week short term stays, tourist destinations and service projects to create an 8-week stay. Another key priority was for it to expose students to teaching from Ghanaian resource people, including core instructors of the course. By including 2 weeks of in-class time with intentional experiential learning and development studies pedagogy taught by experienced Ghanaian practitioners and instructors, the course was envisioned to challenge historical constructs and dominant narratives about Ghana. This supports Chapman’s (2016) suggestions that “students could be taught by their host communities how to examine the political-economic circumstances of said communities, thereby gaining an understanding of them as a lived reality and putting the students in a position to take such learning back to their home societies” (p. 5). A final priority of the committee was to include a 1-month intensive community-based placement with partners (discussed later) with whom we had historical and ongoing relationships and who were doing activist and critical development work to create social change in their communities from a social justice standpoint.

This program was therefore considered innovative at StFX because it has broken the model of the vast majority of voluntourism programs available at the university. However, it is also innovative from the perspective of broader discussion of such experiential learning in an international development context, where the industry, and safe options in international NGOs are eschewed for placements with organizations pushing back on the status quo, challenging who gets to define development and how (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014). As Chapman (2016) asserts, within international service learning programs “it is unfortunate that far too often there is little or no regard for already existing activist groups that are fighting to improve their people’s lives” (p. 17). Furthermore, as per the findings in Grantham (2018), although “commitments around social justice and social equity” were raised in 67 percent of the strategic plans of Canadian universities, none of these were in the context of discussing North-South student mobility options—a clear gap in the intentions of universities in combination with international service learning (p. 16). The committee also felt that critical hyper-reflectivity was key to grounding work in social justice and social change so we set out to ensure that decolonizing pedagogy was at the heart of the program.

Employing a Critical Decolonizing Pedagogy

Within all aspects of the program, whether in the relationships that we developed and maintained, our ways of working together between a university in the Global North and partners in the Global South, the development, content and methods of the course
experiences, the advertising, pre-departure training and decision-making, we wanted to include a decolonizing pedagogy as an ongoing relational process. Based on the work of Freire (2000), “this is a different type of pedagogy. It demands deep, ongoing time commitments on the part of both students and their teachers. It cherishes messiness, it relaxes control, and it prioritizes relationships over efficiencies” (Desjardins, 2013, p. 228).

In situating our attempts to enact a decolonizing pedagogy, it must first be acknowledged that we agree with Tuck and Yang (2012) who emphasize that decolonization is not a metaphor and who explain that decolonization means first and foremost repatriating land, and not just symbolically (p. 7). Furthermore, in Decolonizing Methodologies, Tuhiwai Smith (2012) explains that imperialism acts as a system of extraction and claiming of territory but also as a system of distribution of ideas and knowledge that follows Said’s notions of “positional superiority” in his work on Orientalism. This represents and reproduces ways of knowing and thinking about ‘the other’ that supports the logic of domination model. The “knowledge gained through our colonization has been used”, in turn, as Ngugi wa Thiong’o says, “to colonize the mind” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 62). Contesting colonialism and imperialism is an ongoing process that requires vigilance because, “[i]mperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly” and because “[d]ecolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p.20-21). This pertains to the importance of confronting moves to innocence that Tuck and Yang (2012) outline that re-center the white settler as superior, rightful inhabitants and the ‘normal’ subject by which everyone else is ‘othered’.

Although speaking more specifically about research, Tuhiwai Smith’s (2012) decolonizing methodologies pertain to all forms of experiential learning programs as well. Kahn (2011) explains that ISL is not exempt or innocent from the process of decolonization:

> Because ISL brings together various frameworks where colonialistic ideologies still linger, such as community service, international development, study abroad, and academic definitions and paradigms of observation, it is vital that all participants acknowledge and work through and against these imperialistic ideas and actions….it is no understatement that many contemporary development programs and the institutions that support them are still in need of decolonization (p. 115).

The ways in which we position ourselves in relation to others can either reinforce or challenge coloniality. International experiential learning programs, without employing critical self-reflexivity or confronting dominant ideologies, are inherently colonial with their “impetus to know and encounter difference” and to “experience the other” (MacDonald, 2013, p. 216).

Just as Wolfe (1999) emphasizes that settler colonialism is a structure and not an event, decolonizing pedagogies are a process that, as MacDonald (2013) reminds us, “perhaps cannot, be completed while working with privileged students in a system that
remains colonial” requiring that we remain vigilant to challenge institutions, structures and relationships that reinforce inequities (p. 209; cited in Tuck and Yang, 2012). Challenging neoliberalism and neocolonialism characteristic of international experiential learning programs through a decolonizing pedagogy means destabilizing their historical foundations and ongoing principles and approaches. According to MacDonald (2013), “this pedagogy moves towards making international experiences less about the student’s learning through an experience with marginalized others and engages a pedagogy that does not guarantee a kind of learning, or a kind of citizen but rather resists answers and embraces questions” (p. 210). This is a pedagogy committed to social justice and solidarity.

Prior to, and throughout the process, the committee considered a number of questions and issues that directed our decisions, which were also consistent with suggestions from Kahn (2011, p. 115-117). These included the importance of true collaboration with our partners in Ghana, balancing or even privileging community partner desires over student learning or program concerns, the importance of listening and responding to a multiplicity of perspectives, the inclusion of local people as instructors, organizers, and resource people, the consideration of culturally appropriate projects and interactions, the inclusion of community partner program evaluation feedback, the financial viability and sustainability of programs for students, communities and the institution, and finally, as discussed above, an ongoing challenging of neocolonial models of development and engagement.

Finally, in adopting a decolonizing pedagogy, the committee wanted students to go beyond analyzing their own positions and privilege, of critical self-reflexivity, to go deeper into the history, politics and connections that, as Canadians, we have to Ghana, both in the historical and current colonial project. This corresponds with MacDonald (2013) who contends, “(de)colonizing international experiential learning pedagogy seeks to cultivate citizens who, rather than simply claiming their globality, recognize their rootedness and citizenship and the legacies they inherit” (p. 218).

**Particularities for Ghana**

There was also a deliberate focus on the North of Ghana for two reasons: 1) to concentrate on a region of the country that had been historically marginalized and deliberately underdeveloped regarding infrastructure and social programming in the colonial period, and where this legacy continues in contemporary times; and 2) to challenge the dominant tourist narratives of Ghana that place emphasis on Southern Ghanaian sites, such as the slave castles near Cape Coast.

As a committee, we also wanted to ensure that the program was connecting the local and the global issues through a structural framework to recognize the systemic issues that impact communities and individuals everywhere, so that they could act as change agents upon returning to their own communities (Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Rennick & Desjardins, 2013). We paid close attention to the ethics of sending students from other contexts into local organizations and communities in Ghana and the kind of training, background and
mindset they were bringing with them. We created a structure of the program based on best practices and our own experiences with pre-departure trainings, multiple reflections before, during and after, connection with course work and a re-entry training, all key variables recognized to uphold strong principles of international experiential learning programs (Rennick & Desjardins, 2013, p. 11). We also made sure to draw as many Ghanaian, and Northern Ghanaian voices in particular, into the classroom portion of the course, with both Bismark Ayorogu and Fr. Dr. Gariba leading discussions and with students reading Abugre (2000) and Apusigah (2009), for instance. This was all taken into consideration to create a meaningful program with enduring effects that would conscientize students, initiate and deepen solidarity relationships between students, faculty, staff, community partners and the university as well as challenge structures of power.

A final priority held by the committee was to develop relationships with the partners and communities with whom the university and students would be working. We were dedicated to challenging traditional imbalances of power, hierarchical relationships and charity models to instead create equal spaces for dialogue that would allow for a decolonizing of this process and of the course. As mentioned earlier, the authors have a long time collaborative working relationship in Ghana and in supporting similar programs which meant that there was an extensive knowledge-base and familiarity of context available to draw on as well as the pre-existing relationships necessary to develop trusting partnerships with community. The authors also held prior relationships with other community partners who would play significant roles in the program as orientation facilitators, guest speakers and community organizations where students would undertake their placements. The committee recognized this knowledge and relationships as invaluable to the process as it served to enhance and facilitate the development of the course and drew on them as a resource. Throughout this process, the authors also found that their pre-existing relationships were integral to their own learning and reflections.

The System Intercedes

As with all of the best-laid plans, there were a number of things that did not go as our committee expected or intended. An important element of international service learning programs are specific policies that are needed to govern their management and to keep students and communities safe. However, what became apparent throughout this process were the tensions that exist between system-oriented decision-making and relationship-oriented decision-making in creating and managing this type of program. A system-oriented decision making model is driven by mechanisms, risk management and efficiency, which can be at odds with a relationship-oriented decision-making model which seeks to prioritize building trust through transparency and inclusive participatory decision-making. Yet a balance of these must be reached in order to successfully develop this type of program within a community-university partnership.

The deep commitment of committee members to ensure relationships with community partners was at the heart of this partnership and led to some relationship-oriented concessions being made. Nonetheless, system-oriented decision-making ended up being the dominant force in this process. This meant that there were times when decisions were
made that did not encourage dialogue and partnership-building to equalize power between university program staff in the Global North and partners in the Global South. Instead of challenging positionality to build transparency and relationships, the emphasis was on the legal requirements and release of liability forms of the program, without full community partner involvement. Unfortunately, in the months leading up to the launch, the focus on legal considerations and waivers became a central priority. Consequently, pre-departure preparation, critical reflection and course content became secondary. More importantly, the focus on developing relationships with the community partners with whom students would work and the focus on challenging traditional power dynamics took a back seat. Although the committee anticipated that we would encounter challenges that would require us to resist traditional and conservative ways of engaging with community partners in the Global South (and in Ghana in particular), we felt we were well positioned to confront and overcome them. Indeed, in most instances we did. This tension reveals the contradictions within ISL programs in university settings that purport to be committed to social justice and community relationships but are ultimately forced to succumb to the neoliberal university system requirements.

As was mentioned previously, the committee believed that the development of relationships was crucial to the success of such an endeavor and as such, throughout the process we kept returning to this. While the Service Learning program prides itself on the centrality of relationship-building with communities, there were significant tensions that arose including system-oriented decision-making. The result of this was a perceived lack of inclusion or trust in the knowledge and relationships of those familiar with the Ghanaian context in decision-making when in actuality it was due to the legal responsibilities and timelines of the university system that restricted full participation and transparency. Interestingly, the committee was developing this course while the university was simultaneously establishing a relationship with a Canadian for-profit, voluntourist-sending organization that has been criticized for reinforcing values contrary to those of the Ghana program. The efforts to promote solidarity and mutual learning through the Ghana program were considered, by the members of the committee, to be undermined by the university’s willingness to promote voluntourism that privileges the experiences and benefits of Canadian youth over those of the partner country (Jefferess, 2012).

This system-oriented decision-making also dominated conversations within the committee. At times, instead of utilizing the extensive knowledge and experience that the authors each brought to informing the development of the program, it was challenged and often excluded from consultation. On many occasions the suggestion of having a qualified Ghanaian teach the course was dismissed by some members of the committee. Although this decision was justified by system-oriented thinking as a process that was too arduous, this reason was contradicted by the Dean of Arts and others on the committee, especially given the candidate’s background and education. This example could be understood as institutional racism, at worst, and at best, as risk aversion or an act that undermined the knowledge of a highly qualified Ghanaian, reinforcing a superiority of knowledge of Westerners over local people with accredited education and valid lived experience.

Something that heavily impacted this process is the pervasive neoliberal corporatization of the university system with an increase in the business model of operations and increasingly managerial/top-down and litigation-focused/risk averse
approaches to decision-making as was discussed earlier (Georgeou, 2012; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012). Although this has resulted in austerity measures for many programs, at the same time, within this business model of universities, there is a readiness of administration to provide financial support for this kind of program, albeit to increase recruitment to set itself apart from other institutions, instead of other purely academic-based programs in the collegial system (Chapman, 2016; Grantham, 2018; Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012). As the impact of this model became evident for our process, a few examples of how this system-oriented approach also intervened to derail some of what we intended to happen is outlined below, including “top-down hierarchical arrangements and unequal partnerships typical in the neoliberal paradigm” (Georgeou, 2012, p. 68).

The normal collegial course development process at StFX is by committee; however, since this was a new model whereby a course was embedded within an international service learning program, the mechanisms of enacting this program did not unfold within the normal structure. Although the initial framework of this course was set up by the committee, once the course began to be implemented, the Service Learning program began to make decisions outside of the committee and without proper consultation with community partners, where power was concentrated in the hands of one or two people. The transition away from the committee did not happen in an inclusive or democratically determined manner; instead the committee was merely not consulted on many decisions. This change in decision-making was justifiably conceived as streamlining service learning-related matters, even though the course and the service learning components of the program were intertwined. This meant that many of the committee members felt excluded and uninformed regarding the direction of the course and powerless to stop the derailment of relationships within the committee and with community partners. Instead of an organic manifestation of the dialogue that had gone on up to the point of managerial insertion, the actual administration of the program became didactic, top down and authoritative.

This seemed contrary to our intentions, given the necessity for relationships to be developed and maintained for the creation and sustainability of the program and for supporting Canadian students in Ghana. For example, when developing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the program, the university program managers and lawyers insisted on including a clause that our partners in Ghana would have to comply with Nova Scotia laws even though the program was operating in Ghana and without familiarity with or being beholden to Nova Scotia laws. Additionally, when developing a budget for the program our Ghanaian partners were asked to provide their costs and expenses of running the program in country and then were promptly told that this cost was too high and that they would need to cut essential elements of the program that had been included for pedagogical purposes. This was done in a very unequal balance of power and in a way that resulted in tensions, rifts and distrust in relationships. These rifts were no less with us, and between us. Those of us at StFX felt embarrassed by this behavior, and called it out in committee meetings. This did not change the approach of the program; however when the course actually ran, many of the budgetary constraints placed on the program were identified as major problems by student and community partner participants alike. For instance, the fact that a budget line for Coleman and Jon to monitor the student placement was replaced with only one for Jon. This meant Coleman’s usual practice of
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dropping in on students and community partners to offer support was denied to them. However, the impacts of this type of managerialism have been acknowledged by the current administration of Service Learning, which speaks to the potential of change if the pressure is kept up, and mistakes are clearly pointed out. This demonstrates the role of people working across difference and in solidarity to challenge these behaviours and attitudes from various angles.

The latest manifestation of the university’s neoliberal corporatization project has been the process of “internationalization” at StFX. Similar to the findings within university strategic missions of Grantham (2018), “members of the academic staff are encouraged to re-examine their curricula to identify ways in which departments can incorporate a focus on global issues and global thinking in the classroom” (p. 7). In this way, “strategic plans are framed as being instructive documents, used to guide the actions of university faculty, staff members and students and bring them in line with broader institutional mandates” (p. 3). Anything considered to have an international focus is now directed through the office of internationalization, to be reviewed under universal policies that consider liabilities to the university and risk management.

However, this also means that people without on-the-ground experience could inadvertently reinforce stereotypes through policy and liability decisions and, in an effort to reduce institutional or student risk, transfer liability from the university to community partners. Our program experienced this type of system-oriented managerial decision-making of university corporatization with miscommunication and risk aversion in the weeks leading up to the date of commencement, in light of perceived security risks after attacks in countries neighboring Ghana. In an effort to create efficiency and universal institutional policy, a managerial approach by-stepped those who were most familiar with the realities driving a wedge into already tenuous community-university relationships. Although, understandably, decisions must reflect university policy, by utilizing a critical decolonizing pedagogy and relationship-oriented approach to decision-making in this situation unnecessary confusion would have been avoided.

Resistance That Persists

Despite the challenges and the derailing of a ground-breaking program during its development process by system-oriented decision-making, students who participated in the experience in Ghana have taken up important critical analyses. The structure and content of the course have incited important transformative learning trajectories. Disorienting dilemmas have surfaced over Canada’s connection to the colonial project in Ghana. For instance, the students read of Canada’s role in training the 1966 coup-makers who overthrew Nkrumah; and read, but also heard from Northern and Southern Ghanaians about Governor Guggisberg, a Canadian colonial administrator from Galt, Ontario, who was the person most single-handedly responsible for Northern Ghana’s educational gap (Engler, 2015; Lecture by Rev. Gariba, May 13, 2016). Canada’s continued legacy of colonialism through foreign direct investment, the mining industry and aid tied to trade was also shared with them, not only as readings, but by discussions of implications of these
exploitative investments by Coleman. Community partners also shared their own work at making change. Northern Patriots in Research and Advocacy (NORPRA) presented on the problems with Ghana’s Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) program— including the activism they have been engaging in to change it to support local economies. This was felt to be important to our partners, as they wanted to ensure those present left with a sense of how Ghanaians were taking their destiny into their own hands and not waiting for development agencies to “save the day.”

As Rennick and Desjardins (2013) explain, the experience is the catalyst that is the beginning of an ongoing journey. Questions that students are now contemplating are: if Canadians have made negative impacts on this country, is there not room for Canadians to make positive impacts? Students have learned of pro-poor policies that are the result of Northern Ghanaian activism, and that this activism is still hard at work to make sure SADA actually benefits ordinary Ghanaians. This has led to a number of students doing their placements associated with this effort, to learn about Ghanaians taking their destiny into their own hands, rather than witnessing the roll out of yet another international development trend.

Students worked with community partners in Ghana who are painting a very different picture of Ghanaians as active agents of change despite challenging circumstances. This is challenging the “single story” of Ghana and development that so frequently emerges with service trips of the “white saviour complex”, a belief in the responsibility and capability of white people to “save” people of colour, and a dominant discourse of poor people, dependency and charity (Adichie, 2009). Some of the partners students worked with include SADA (mentioned above) in the area of long-term development and citizen mobilization in the ecological development of the savannah region. Another worked with Northern Patriots in Research and Advocacy which focuses on equity and social justice, accountable governance, mining and fair distribution of resources. Yet another worked with Radio Gurune, a community radio station focused on providing a space for broadcasting in the local language. Finally, in order to maintain the integrity of the program and the pedagogy, Jon, Coleman and his associates volunteered some of the labour and costs that the university said were too much, however, in their view essential to the program, with the hope that the importance of these would be recognized in future planning.

Throughout the course of the planning process, Coleman and Jon had ongoing communication with community partners in Ghana to determine their interest in participating in the program and the projects where they thought students may be able to become involved. These options were then communicated to the planning committee and presented to students who were interested in the program and who were eventually selected. Although student interests were also taken into consideration for their final placements, attempts were made to ensure that community partner desires were prioritized and honoured and that placements upheld activist and social justice ideals. Coleman and Jon acted as a bridge to this process between the community partners and StFX; however, it is hoped that community partners will be more involved in future program planning through evaluations of their experience regarding their satisfaction, the structure of the program, student engagement and community perceptions as well as through direct
feedback of project options, support and criteria for potential students. Unfortunately, a formal evaluation with participating community partners has not yet occurred to determine their level of satisfaction in the program and their experience with students; however, there are plans for this in the near future.

A major strength of this program and it being situated at StFX is that this experience does not happen in isolation. Many programs at the university have local service learning opportunities where students can layer what they learn in Ghana, on this experience, with local opportunities which provide spaces for the critical hyper-reflectivity that was mentioned earlier, “pairing the local with the global” (Rennick & Desjardins, 2013, p. 12). This form of critical Service Learning that Mitchell (2008) speaks of “encourage(s) students to see themselves as agents of social change and use the experience of service to address and respond to injustice in their communities” (p. 51). This is also documented in research undertaken by Foroughi, Langdon and Abdou (2014) conducted on the way that layering experiences impacts the depth of reflexivity and criticality achieved by students in experiential learning opportunities. A high percentage of students, especially those in Development Studies, are encouraged, and are choosing, to make these connections and juxtaposing their experiences using a critical systems approach to understand the structural inequalities that exist everywhere and their corresponding roles.

Lastly, regardless of the challenges faced in this program, those involved in developing it have still been successful in acting as a wedge to create and hold space to push back on traditional voluntourism or service trips in a decolonizing way. Beyond this it goes even farther to develop a program that challenges power and privilege and creates linkages to the Canadian context to create more active change agents when students, upon return to Canada, act in solidarity and with an increased analysis of critical pedagogy. The work that has been done over the last twenty years at StFX with the Service Learning program began to carve out this space but this process and course took it a step further. However, this work is ongoing as it requires a constant and active resistance to the conservative creeping that occurs if people do not hold similar commitments to equalizing power, to ensuring that such programs are relationship driven and that the “single story” is not that of the dominant narrative (Adichie, 2009). To address the neoliberal tendency towards these programs, Desjardins (2013) explains, “international learning experiences are much more valuable to all concerned…when institutions invest sufficiently in them and when students are adequately supported not only before and during but especially after their experiences” (p. 225). Furthermore, “they must also be done properly if they are to be sustainable and if we are to take seriously our multiple responsibilities to students, to ourselves, to our institutions, to our global partners, and to the new types of global relationships we are seeking to model” (Desjardins, 2012, p. 225).

Dirik (2016) describes solidarity relationships as “a horizontal, multidimensional, educational and multidirectional process that contributes to the emancipation of everyone involved. Solidarity means to be on an eye-to-eye level with one another, to stand shoulder to shoulder. It means to share skills, experience, knowledge and ideas without perpetuating relations based on power.” Rennick (2013) proposes “global solidarity”
instead of “global citizenship” “as a more appropriate term for the objective behind service learning programs in Canada” (p. 37). By “global solidarity,” Rennick (2013) means “a reclaiming of the objectives of mutual responsibility and interrelatedness of purpose on a global scale, but with the acknowledgement and acceptance of difference and diversity” (p. 37). Those of us who are most committed to this kind of experience and work are committed to the solidarity-based spaces and relationships. Yet there is always space for challenging our own perceptions, ideologies and approaches, acknowledging that, as a committee, our own actions have contributed to both the successes and challenges that arose through developing this course.

Simultaneously, as solidarity requires a decolonizing pedagogy, we must acknowledge the tensions of these concepts, as delineated by Tuck and Yang (2012). Tuck and Yang (2012) explain that there are “limitations to solidarity” and that solidarity is incommensurable with decolonization (p. 26). Instead Tuck and Yang (2012) offer that it should be a particular, strategic and contingent collaboration recognizing that portions cannot be aligned or allied, believing that lasting solidarities are elusive or undesirable (p. 28). This inherent temporality is obvious considering that solidarity is based on relationships and situations that change over time. Therefore, constant reflection, reconceptualizing and revisiting the necessity and usefulness of solidarity is important. Reflexivity of one’s positionality and purpose within a solidarity relationship and the openness to acknowledge and evaluate power differentials and shared assumptions and understandings encourages a dynamic solidarity but accepts that in achieving the goals the solidarity may no longer be required or may run its course. Within solidarity, futures are unwritten, uncertain and incommensurable and must be dismantled because any proscribed future is written within circumstances that are currently colonizing. Gaztambide-Fernandez (2012) emphasizes the importance of decolonizing the pedagogy of solidarity through relational, transitive and creative solidarity modes. This is a recognition that requires humility, self-reflection and openness to learning and criticism to constantly improve on our efforts to create and hold space for change.
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Author Biographies

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Imagining, Constructing and Reifying Disability in Volunteer Abroad: Able Global Citizens Helping the Disabled Southern Other

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Keywords: disability; able-bodied; global citizenship; helping; critical disability studies; agency

ABSTRACT: In this chapter, I argue that the ways in which disability is constructed and produced through encounters in volunteer abroad (VA) programs function to (re)produce a caring and benevolent able-bodied Northern global citizen. This subject formation relies on two main processes: (1) the creation of the able/disabled binary: the volunteer/the beneficiary and (2) the obscuring of the role the Global North (the place from where the volunteer comes) plays in producing impairment. The research presented in this paper is from a larger study theorizing encounters with Southern disabled others. Here I engage in a qualitative textual analysis of Projects Abroad, a large VA organization based in North America that provides international volunteer placements to young people from Canada and the United States. I consider how the lack of analysis of Global North/Global South power relations reproduces depoliticized and ahistorical approaches which individualizes and pathologizes disability, and subsequently obscures any analysis of the geopolitical-social production of impairment and disability. I end the paper by asking how we can invite Northern volunteers to engage in more inclusive ways, and in a learning that destabilizes hegemonic narratives of disability in this space.

Introduction

An example pre-departure activity designed to prepare Northern volunteers for living abroad provides the following instructions to participants:

“Welcome to your volunteer abroad program preparation! We are going to start today with a group exercise to teach you about how hard it is to live abroad, and all of the difficult things you will need to negotiate. You will be out of your comfort zone, you will be far from
home and things will be difficult! Now, get into a pair with another participant. Make up a sound that will serve as your signal to each other, like clapping your hands or whistling. Each pair must have a unique sound. Now put on these blindfolds!"

The facilitator hands out blindfolds. She then separates each pair, placing them in strategic locations around the room, leading them through the objects strewn about, making sure partners are as far apart as possible. The facilitator instructs the pairs to use their sound, and only their specific sound, to find each other.

“No peeking… Go!”

Participants then attempt to move through the room, blindfolded, making their designated sound to find their partner.

This is one of many exercises designed to teach Northern young people embarking on experiences abroad about the difficulties of leaving home and going over there. It operates on the following logic: acquire a sensory impairment, then navigate a disabling built environment with your newly acquired impairment. The impairment is the location of difficulty. By acting out impairment, Northern secondary or post-secondary students are asked to consider how hard it will be to live abroad. The script on impairment/disability begins here. Until I engaged in studies of disability from a critical place, I engaged in this type of cross-cultural animation activity. I always felt uncomfortable doing so, but until I was introduced to Critical Disability Theory, I did not have the language to express why. These types of exercises are ubiquitous in this field, and often elicit powerful responses from students. They are designed to do so. They are also deeply embedded in individual and medical understandings of impairment and disability, and they invite students to engage with disability from this perspective.

In this chapter, I argue that the ways in which disability is constructed and produced through encounters in volunteer abroad (VA) programs function to (re)produce a caring and benevolent able-bodied Northern global citizen. This subject formation relies on two main processes that are reproduced through mainstream VA experiences: (1) the creation of the able/disabled binary and (2) the obscuring of the role the Global North plays in producing impairment. With this in mind, I ask the following questions in this chapter: How are encounters with the disabled Southern others presented to young Northerners when they participate in VA programs? How do young people understand and represent these encounters and what narratives about disability are reproduced? And lastly, how do these representations and understandings inform binaries of able/disabled and assumptions of who needs help and who is entitled to do the helping? The disabled body is often imagined in VA programs as a fixed object, requiring the charity and pity of the Northern volunteer. It is through this imagined relationship or dynamic that Northern volunteers enact their neoliberal subjectivity as benevolent caregiver.

The research presented in this paper is from a larger study theorizing encounters with Southern disabled others. Here I engage in a qualitative textual analysis of Projects

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8 I have chosen to italicize other throughout this chapter. I do so in order to the highlight the word as othered from other words, as a small attempt to highlight the process of othering in this space.
Abroad, a large VA organization based in North America that provides international volunteer placements to young people from Canada and the United States. It runs specific programs placing North American volunteers with disabled people living in the Global South. In the larger study, I focused my analysis on Projects Abroad’s mission statement and marketing, with specific attention to how the organization presents its programs that address disability. I studied the organization’s website to see how the organization invites young people into these programs, the language used and any age limits, qualifications or prior training they require. I further analyzed the reflections from past participants featured on their website, understanding these as representative of larger institutionally held beliefs. These participant reflections demonstrate the ways in which Projects Abroad chooses to market their programs to young people interested in an international volunteer experience. They also highlight the ways that young people are told they should or could engage in these programs. I understand these reflections as intentional representations of the kind of experiences Projects Abroad is selling.

This chapter will explore how the subjectivity of the benevolent Northern helper manifests in encounters with the disabled Southern other. I consider how the lack of analysis of Global North/Global South power relations reproduces depoliticized and ahistorical approaches which individualize and pathologize disability, and subsequently obscure any analysis of the social production of impairment and disability. VA programs individualize disability through helping, curing and rehabilitation narratives that position Northern students as subjects who can intervene in the lives of certain Southern bodies, to perform affective tasks (Andreotti & de Souza, 2012; Angod, 2015; MacDonald, 2016; Mahrouse, 2010, 2015; Vrasti, 2012). The “care” experience begins, and ends, with the person who has an impairment: the solutions are individual and there is no analysis of how Global North-driven processes of (neo)colonialism, imperialism, transnational capitalism and other state interventions produce impairment in the South in non-natural ways. Absent is an analysis of how those with impairments are disabled by a system that is intimately propped up by those in the North.

I organize this paper by first outlining the theoretical framework that I employ in my analysis and providing brief discussion of Critical Disability Theory for readers who may not be familiar with this emerging field. Next, I take up disability and disablement in the Global South, drawing attention to the production of impairment and the erasure of alternative disability politics in the Global South. I then provide real-world examples of encounters with the Southern disabled other in VA, by analyzing the work of Projects Abroad. I end the paper by asking how we can invite young people to engage in more inclusive ways, and in a learning that destabilizes hegemonic narratives of disability in this space.

Theoretical Framework

How the concepts of “disability” and “impairment” are being used here is essential to this research. I understand both terms as fluid, constructed, influenced by context and culture, relating to neoliberalism and systems of power, and in constant flux and shift. Each of these frames are addressed in this chapter. Goodley (2011) makes known the uneven and contradictory nature of disability, explaining that it is more present in geographical spaces which experience poverty, violence, conflict, malnutrition and child labour, but also
everywhere because of a rise in the pathologizing of disability in medical and public discourse. In terms of the distinction between impairment and disability, I employ the definition first proposed by Disabled Peoples’ International (DPI):

**Impairment:** the functional limitation within the individual, caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment.

**Disability:** the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of community on an equal basis with others due to physical and social barriers. (DPI, 1982 as cited in Goodley, 2011, p. 8).

In this early conceptualization of disability and impairment, “disability is seen as resulting from practices of structural, social and attitudinal impediments to the full inclusion of people with impairments” (Goodley, 2011, p. 1391). Scholars in the field of Critical Disability Studies are pushing this understanding further, taking up the ways that impairment is constructed and changing, using Foucauldian analysis. They posit that all “biological facts” have been constructed/moulded over time by institutional and discursive forces, arguing “impairment and disability are two sides of the same socially constituted coin” (Goodley, 2011, p. 115), and calling attention to the non-natural production of impairment through conflict, environmental degradation and the violation of human rights, as well as highlighting the Global North’s role in this production (Soldatic, 2013).

Critical Disability theory is a helpful framework to examine VA programs that send young people from the Global North to volunteer in communities in the Global South. The subversiveness of Critical Disability theory, with its roots in Critical Theory and dialectical thinking, are a natural framework through which to examine issues of who is valued, power and narratives of “helping” or “curing” that are inherent in many VA programs. This analysis is also embedded in the material structures of inequality and the process that produce impairment and disability. For a long time, injustices done against people with disabilities were seen as legitimate social processes necessary to protect or to care for them (for example large institutions, asylums and hospitals built to house people with disabilities). Critical Disability theory brings important critical areas of thought and discussion to the field of critical theory. It challenges emancipatory theories to transgress boundaries/borders/limits by pushing foundational thought around rationality, normalcy and a myriad of other constructions. It challenges any path to social change to be truly inclusive, and exposes the ways that people with disabilities have historically been excluded from the organization and living in society.

Critical scholarship on VA is robust (Andreotti, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2016; Heron, 2007; Jefferess, 2008, 2012; Mahrouse, 2010; Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Vrasti, 2012) but thus far no researcher has specifically used a critical disability lens to study VA, including positing disability as a site of difference and oppression in these experiences. The intersection of disability and VA has yet to be taken up, and the implications on subject formation and reproduction of disablement and the hidden sites of production of impairment necessitate
this critical inquiry. Narratives around helping, curing and rehabilitating are strong in the marketing of these programs, and also damaging for how they construct disability as an individual problem, further reproducing charitable and medical models. Instead of valuing or complicating difference, this system reproduces subjectivities that essentialize difference (Taric, 2013). How does one’s desire to “do good” maintain the hierarchical relationship that reproduces disablement and individualizes disability? In order to shift the way young people engage in VA opportunities, stronger engagement with critical and intersectional analysis is needed.

Disability and Disablement in the Global South

Meekosha (2008, 2011) tells us that approximately 66% of people with disabilities in our world live in the Global South, and that this number is likely larger due to underreporting. She fleshes out the link between disability and poverty in the Global South and highlights the tendency for those in the Global North to attribute this to exotic natural disasters like tsunamis and earthquakes. Meekosha highlights “the role of the global North in ‘disabling’ the global South,” through systems of colonialism, imperialism and globalization (p. 668). Gorman (2010) uses the example of Haiti to analyze the production of impairment through Global North interventions into Southern spaces, and the system of economic, social and political disablement that is subsequently produced. Gorman highlights a core critique of the disability rights model—a model which positions justice for those with disabilities as a matter of human rights, not charity or something to be granted benevolently, but a matter of rights enshrined in the various UN Conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). She asks the critical question of who is responsible for guaranteeing the rights of people when one state intervenes in another state’s affairs, such as when Haiti signed over control of its main airport to the United States following the massive earthquake in January 2010. She asks whether the extraterritorial control of the airport by the United States military meant they are responsible for the impairments and deaths caused by subsequent delays in medical aid arriving from international NGOs. The narratives around disability most prominent in international reporting on the earthquake were tales of disabled people as “being at risk in the context of an ableist culture and an inaccessible built environment” (Gorman, 2010, p. 4). These narratives made no mention of the role of the Global North, specifically the United States, in the production of impairment, obfuscating the role of imperialism in causing disablement (p. 4). Similar questions can be asked of transnational mining corporations in the South, which use toxic pesticides and cause environmental devastation to water, land and farming practices. These transnational corporations produce impairment in non-natural ways by harming the environment, causing problems to agricultural production that result in malnutrition, and fueling conflicts that impair local communities. They further refuse to protect workers’ rights when they are exposed to harsh chemicals and unsafe working conditions (Connell, 2011; Meekosha & Soldatic, 2011).

Soldatic (2013) takes up the World Health Organization’s World Report on Disability in her larger critique of the problematic relationship between the Global North and South. She argues that the report leaves no room for alternative disability politics, a politics articulated and driven by disabled people, first articulated by Oliver (1990) as a social
model of disability. As I move through this chapter, I demonstrate a similar reproduction of disability among individuals featured in VA recruitment materials. Young Northerners travel to the Global South equipped with an already ingrained framework for how to relate to the disabled Southern other; they come with the desire to help, to fix and to rehabilitate. Any alternative for how to function outside this “helper/helpee” framework is erased in VA recruitment materials; alternatives are seen as suspect, as asking too much. The relationships built on this tacit agreement of who is helping who becomes strained when the unruly disabled body moves outside this script. VA programming responses to disability are steeped in neoliberal language; by this I mean they focus on individual rights, which may sit in opposition to how the host culture responds to disability or impairment. Experiences of impairment might not be disabling in certain cultures or subcultures, yet these local norms are erased in Northern VA programs and recruitment materials (Berghs, 2015).

Encounters with the Southern Disabled Other

I now turn to analysis of the typical ways that encounters with the Southern disabled other are constructed and presented by a large North American VA organization, Projects Abroad. I analyze the language Projects Abroad uses to market its programs and any qualifications or prior training they require volunteers to have. I further analyze the reflections from past participants featured on their website, understanding these as representative of larger institutionally held beliefs. I understand these set of discourses as reflective of the “desired” VA experience. This research involved qualitative textual analysis of promotional materials and website used by Projects Abroad to market their programs.

Projects Abroad is based in New York City and Toronto. It claims to be “the world's leading international volunteer organization,” with over 600 staff members and has sent more than 100,000 volunteers abroad to date (Projects Abroad, 2016). The sheer size of Projects Abroad, their ubiquitous presence on university campuses and their focus on care-centered programming led me to focus on them as an important presence in the VA field. On the Projects Abroad website, volunteer projects are organized by age of the volunteer, desired length of placement (from 1 week up to 12 weeks) and by category of volunteer activity. Opportunities to work with people who have disabilities can be found under all age categories, under short-term volunteer placements and under the imagined activity of “care”. The role of the volunteer is described as “assisting with caring for children and others in need of support at orphanages, day cares, kindergartens, special needs centres, elderly homes and other care facilities. Requirements: None” (Projects Abroad, 2016b). The prospective volunteer then chooses, in this generic “care” category, from the different projects organized by country. Therefore, the potential volunteer is assumed to be making their choice by first wanting to do “care work” and then choosing where geographically that work will take place.

I will now analyze one country example, Argentina, to illustrate what a typical care placement entails. The call to action for potential volunteers is: “Volunteers are needed in children’s homes and special-needs centres. You may be asked to help with a wide range
of activities, from assisting the staff with basic care duties to playing with the children” (Projects Abroad, 2016c). The length of placement can be as short as one week and Projects Abroad states, “All we ask is that you have energy, enthusiasm, and a commitment to seeing the work through” (Projects Abroad, 2016c). Entering into institutional care homes for children has no age restrictions and requires no special training, police checks or previous experience. When describing the kind of work this placement entails, Projects Abroad is very careful to mention that this placement will cater to the preferences of the Northern volunteer: “You will also have some time to spend one-on-one with individuals at your placement, helping them with basic education or activities of your choice,” and “There are some opportunities to get involved in physiotherapy sessions and help with necessary daily exercises. It can make a huge difference for these individuals to have your attention, support, and friendship, and you will quickly find that you are an integral part of the staff team” (Projects Abroad, 2016c). The programming is structured to ensure maximum enjoyment and personal development for the Northern volunteer. The centrality of the volunteer self in these encounters works to erase the historical forces of disablement, rendering the Northern self the ultimate caregiver or saviour of the disabled Southern other (Chouliaraki, 2013).

One reflection posted by a Northern volunteer who previously engaged in this experience is telling of this larger narrative that caters to the preferences of the Northern volunteer, and the use of disabled bodies to construct that caring and benevolent volunteer identity (Jefferess, 2012):

I learned quickly what "making a difference" really is. In Bethel Children's Home (or in any care placement), that is seeing love sliding off of you and onto the children, pouring onto them what they need most and lack of volunteers from Argentina and international alike do not offer that to them. The kids’ vibrancy of love back onto you reflects that love, and that is how you can tell how much you are giving them. Making a difference in the short term falls into that, and making a difference in the long term...that comes with making promises to the children that you won't forget them, that they aren't just a phase of your life where you were giving and then didn't look back...that you will either return to see them, or follow up on seeing how they are doing, or try to give more to the organization in some means. This is how I feel, at least... I spent about 4-6 hours a day at the placement, walking about the quarters and playing with whichever age group I desired, merely playing or helping with the lessons in the “jardin” (pre-school) for the youngest children in the home... Everyday on my walk home, I thought of how little I had actually done but of what a huge emotive exchange had passed between the children and me (Projects Abroad, 2016C).

Here we see this Northern volunteer imagining that she is uniquely placed to give love to the children with disabilities that no other local volunteer can. Particularly telling here is that she sees her work as filling a void unfulfilled by local staff and services and suggesting that Argentinians do not do this work. She imagines her work as making a difference
without any context of existing national support and services. Research has shown that short-term volunteer work with vulnerable children, where short-term manufactured attachments are encouraged, actually worsens the effects of institutional care (Richter & Norman, 2010). Yet this volunteer highlights her ability to move in and out of each institutional care space, stating that it was based solely on her desire to do so, and not the needs of the children she worked with. This is troubling, as the bodies she was caring for are rendered fixed to the institutional space, making her choice of movement ever starker by comparison. The volunteer expresses amazement at a very troubling common narrative from volunteers in these spaces; that there was little done in terms of work, but the experience was emotional. Would this be acceptable in a pre-school or school for children with disabilities in the North? Would we accept that while no learning was accomplished, at least there were many emotional exchanges? This volunteer ends with her reflection on becoming an unofficial Argentinean—here we see the total erasure of class, race and global structures of power, including colonialism, all of which just disappeared as she magically became Argentinian, when she wanted, for as long as she wanted; all her choice. Research by Mahrouse (2010, 2011, 2014 and 2015) yields similar findings.

Projects Abroad uses a clear script in their marketing to volunteers, one in which the Northern able-bodied volunteer will bring joy, care, love and enrichment to the lives of the disabled Southern other through activities like holding hands and sharing a meal. The Projects Abroad website even goes as far as to say that this will break down stigma against people with disabilities in the community. The depoliticization and individualization of disability shown here creates a dangerous narrative of how bodies are imagined, what they need and how they must be disciplined. The Southern disabled other is imagined as passive, in need of care, and only able to lead a fulfilling or happy life through the agency and benevolence of the Northern volunteer. The Southern disabled other is imagined as a passive recipient of care, waiting for someone to touch their hand and awaken their joy. They are imagined to be welcoming of this encounter, which will remove all barriers to a more whole and worthwhile life. This imagined disabled other does not have agency and is not imagined to want anything more than love and attention. There is no room for alternative ways of imagining, constructing or resisting disability, and certainly no room for imagining disablement as being about human-made systems or politics. The processes underlying colonization and neo-colonization are intimately tied to disability and the production of impairment, but volunteer encounters as presented by Projects Abroad do not make space for engaging in an analysis of alternatives or the role of Northern volunteers in these processes. The able-bodied Northerner is constructed as being uniquely placed to help the Southern disabled other and not as a benefactor of the very systems that create disablement. No self-reflexivity is required on the part of the Northerner. They remain innocent; simply there to help the poor disabled other. The body of the disabled other is there to care for, to fix and to give enrichment, hope and joy to the Northerner, producing their subjectivity as a caring global citizen.

The Northern volunteer is framed as a powerful expert with the ability to help. They are able-bodied and ascribed a legitimate right to intervene. Conversely, the disabled other is imagined as pliable, fixable, willing, and importantly, grateful for this intervention in their lives. There is no space for alternative ways of being, embodied experiences, narratives or politics. Far from being naturally occurring, it is problems like war, armed conflict, capitalism and climate change that produce impairment (Soldatic, 2013).
Global North is intimately involved in the production of impairment and disablement in the South. This subject formation works to do specific things; it erases the possibility of a disabled volunteer from the North, since the Northern helper is necessarily constructed as the able-bodied caregiver. What happens when the Northern subject is disabled and engages in the space of VA? Is their body seen as unruly, disruptive or unwanted? This subject formation also erases the Southern other with an impairment who does not identify as disabled. The able/disabled binary at play does not leave room for these alternative subjects or ways of being. It erases any space for an alternative disability politics to be imagined or worked towards.

Mainstream VA programs are situated in an individual model of disability, one that provides no structural analysis or moves to acknowledge the structures that create disablement. The invitation to this specific encounter does not allow for North-South partnerships or agency, and places the onus on the other to help the Northern volunteer unlearn this framework, labour that is unfair and onerous (Heron, 2011). The disabled body is imagined as serving the educational and personal development of the able-bodied Northern volunteer, whereas the disabled other is a passive recipient of care. The disabled body is the perfect site on which to project the helping and caring narrative; it is an unruly body in a chaotic and exotic space, in need of the loving and joyful (read: civilized and enlightened) affective touch and disciplining of the capable Northern volunteer.

The able/disabled binary produced by mainstream VA programs invites Northern volunteers into an innocent script where they are invited to engage with an individual construction of disability; vague references to stigma and lack of resources are masked by the more forceful narrative around helping the Southern disabled other through holding their hand and giving them joy. We see the reproduction of this narrative through Northern volunteer reflections, with one young person understanding herself as the only actor uniquely equipped with that which is needed, that is: “Seeing love sliding off of you and onto the children, pouring onto them what they need most and lack of volunteers from Argentina and international alike do not offer that to them” (Projects Abroad, 2016c). The able/disabled binary, the erasure of the production of impairment and the individualization of disability work together to produce a caring and benevolent Northern subject. One who brings joy and love to those who have no joy or love, and one that can move in and out of geographical spaces, spaces that are de-politicized, de-historicized and function as a space of learning and enrichment for them, subjecting certain bodies to policing, interventions and care dictated by the desires of the Northern able-bodied subject.

**Invitation to Unstable Learning**

The question then becomes, how do we make known the blurriness of the able-bodied/disabled binaries produced in this space? How can educators make known the processes of disablement and production of impairment in the South that are fueled by our consumption and way of life in the North? Could this be fertile and revolutionary ground for the deepening of learning in this field? The main question for the field of VA is how we can get students to understand that “global poverty is not distant; it is a part of everyone’s
daily existence” (Jefferess, 2012, p. 37). Mahrouse (2010) makes known the importance of a larger, structural analysis in international volunteer learning programs: “Perhaps most importantly students need to notice how our involvement with social justice activism obscures our complicity in current power imbalances and allows us to conceive of ourselves as innocent” (p. 183). How can we make known that the food and the clothes produced in the South are all done so under conditions that produce impairment and disablement, all in order to satisfy the capitalist consumption of the North? How can we make known our complicity in this production of impairment and disability? How can we make known to Northern volunteers and students who will complete their VA experiences in these very places that they are not separate from these processes, and engage them in critical self-reflection and a willingness to stay in that difficult learning space? How can we make VA a less disabling and ableist space? The problematic discourses surrounding disability are entrenched and normalized; therefore, our work must be transdisciplinary, collective and critical. We must engage in hopeful and sustainable ways, carrying VA into new and radically inclusive possibilities. I end here with a quote from Judith Butler on engaging anxiety. Butler asks how, as educators, do we invite students in VA programs to:

[Open] up the possibility of questioning what our assumptions are and somehow encouraging us to live in the anxiety of that questioning without closing it down too quickly? Of course, it’s not for the sake of anxiety that one should do it…but because anxiety accompanies something like the witnessing of new possibilities (in Salih & Butler, 2004, 333).

This is the difficult work of engaging Northern students in difficult learning, asking them to stay in the space of anxiety to possibly witness new possibilities, inviting them into the space of learning as "contextual and difficult" (Andreotti, Jefferess, Pashby, Rowe, Tarc & Taylor, 2009, 21). An embodied anxiousness as a space that opens participants of VA up to deeper learning, more complex learning that values different ontologies.
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Inclusive Global Citizenship Education: Measuring Types of Global Citizens

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ABSTRACT: In three studies, we constructed and provided initial evidence of validity for a measure of types of global citizenship. Oxley and Morris (2013) proposed eight different types of global citizens based on prior theory (e.g., moral, economic). In Study 1, we constructed and examined the factor structure of a measure of these different types. With the exception of a social dimension of global citizenship, all of the proposed types appeared to be distinct factors. In Study 2, we found the same factor structure in a different sample of participants and examined associations between the dimensions and prosocial values related to global citizenship (e.g., social justice, intergroup helping). Lastly, in Study 3 we examined the associations between the seven different types of global citizenship, different types of intended activist behaviours, and various values (e.g., moral foundations, core political values). Together, the results suggest that the measure of global citizen types is a valid and reliable measure.

Measuring Types of Global Citizens

The concept of global citizenship is widely discussed across academic disciplines, and has recently received some attention in psychology as well (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013a). Following different theoretical perspectives within discrete disciplinary frameworks, global citizenship has been conceptualized in various ways and forms, oftentimes conflicting and converging (Oxley & Morris, 2013). For example, Falk (1994)
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distinguishes between two conflicting approaches to global citizenship, which he calls globalization from above and globalization from below. The globalization from above is a hegemonic, dominant form that is based on consumerist ideals and is identified with political elites and transnational businesses. The globalization from below is a reactionary activism to the former and "consists of an array of transnational social forces animated by environmental concerns, human rights, hostility to patriarchy, and a vision of human community based on the unity of diverse cultures seeking an end to poverty, oppression, humiliation, and collective violence" (p. 39). The former connotes a "negative," and the latter a "positive" evaluation of global citizenship. Currently, the majority of definitions of global citizenship tend to have converging elements with Falk’s (1994) conceptualization of globalization from below. For example, Morais and Ogden (2011) conceptualize global citizenship as having three overlapping dimensions: social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement. Similarly, Reysen, Larey, and Katzarska-Miller (2012) define global citizenship as global awareness, caring, embracing cultural diversity, promoting social justice and sustainability, and a sense of responsibility to act. Regardless of the overlap between these definitions, one can argue that one’s perception of themselves as a global citizen may be more strongly aligned along one dimension of the definition (e.g., social justice, sustainability). Furthermore, global civic engagement can be a result of different ideological underpinnings (e.g., political, moral).

**Global Citizenship Types**

Oxley and Morris (2013) reviewed the literature regarding global citizenship and proposed a typology identifying and distinguishing the diversity of conceptions prevalent in the literature. Positioned within two broad categories, cosmopolitan and advocacy types, Oxley and Morris propose eight different types of global citizenship. Under a cosmopolitan framework (a universalist form of global citizenship), they include political, moral, economic, and cultural types of global citizenship. Under an advocacy framework (anti-individualistic ideologies that are advocacy oriented), they include social, critical, environmental, and spiritual types of global citizenship. Political global citizenship is related to citizenship as political status and is manifested in a global governance system that promotes democracy and the utilization of international organizations in maintaining a well-organized world society. Moral global citizenship is based on shared understanding of a universal moral code, with particular emphasis on human rights. Economic global citizenship focuses on economic international development, and the effects of free markets and corporations. Cultural global citizenship encompasses exposure, awareness, and cultural competence in regard to diverse groups and values. Social global citizenship focuses on a global civil society and advocacy for one’s freedom of expression. Critical global citizenship is based on activism that challenges oppression and focuses on breaking down oppressive global structures. Environmental global citizenship advocates changes in the treatment and responsibility of humans to nature. Spiritual global citizenship focuses on the transcendent bond between individuals and society, encompassing caring, and spiritual connections between humans.
Correlates of Global Citizenship Identification

Although Oxley and Morris (2013) did not conceptualize the eight types of global citizenship in terms of prosocial outcomes, the majority of current research on global citizenship identification supports an association between global citizen identification and prosocial values. For example, Reysen, Pierce, Spencer, and Katzarska-Miller (2013) examined the content of global citizenship by reviewing students’ definitions of global citizenship, themes found in interviews with self-described global citizens, and global education literature theorists. Across the three types of investigation, the authors concluded that the main content of global citizenship is a concern for the environment, valuing of diversity, empathy for others beyond the local environment, and a sense of responsibility to act. Furthermore, global citizenship identification was positively associated with the above-mentioned prosocial values. Subsequent studies have further demonstrated the empirical association between global citizenship identification and prosocial values (e.g., Katzarska-Miller, Barnsley, & Reysen, 2014; Reysen & Hackett, 2017; Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013b, 2013c, in press; Reysen, Katzarska-Miller, Gibson, & Hobson, 2013).

The above studies show that global citizenship correlates with a cluster of prosocial values. In regard to types of global citizenship, one question is whether one’s perception of themselves as a global citizen is aligned along a particular dimension or type. In other words, will a person who views themselves through the lens of one particular type of global citizenship only endorse prosocial values related to that type or will the person endorse all the other prosocial values typically found to be outcomes of global citizenship identification? For example, if one’s global citizenship is the environmental type, is endorsement of environmental global citizenship correlated only with values associated with environmentalism (e.g., concern for the environment, responsibility to act), or with the whole cluster of prosocial values (e.g., intergroup empathy, valuing diversity, etc.)? The question posed here is comparable to the research on feminism showing that under the broad term of feminism there are different perspectives (e.g., conservative, liberal, radical, etc.) and one’s identification with a particular perspective is correlated with a different set of attitudes (Henley, Spalding, & Kosta, 2000). The objective of the present research is to explore the measurement of different types of global citizens and examine the relationships with various prosocial values and intended behaviours.

Overview of Present Studies

In three studies we set out to develop and empirically test a scale reflecting the eight global citizenship types proposed by Oxley and Morris (2013). In Study 1, we started with 80 items reflecting global citizenship types, and reduced these initial items through exploratory principle components analyses. The purpose of Study 2 was to conduct a factor analysis on the global citizen type scale, and examine initial convergent and divergent validity. The purpose of Study 3 was to examine convergent, divergent, and predictive validity of the global citizen type scale.
Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 is to reduce the initial pool of 80 items reflecting global citizen types through exploratory principle components analyses. Based on the dimensions proposed by Oxley and Morris (2013) we expect to find eight distinct factors.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants (N = 957, 52% female; M_{age} = 36.43, SD = 13.21) included Americans recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. Mechanical Turk is an online labour market where individuals can complete tasks for money. In recent years this website has been a popular tool for data collection (for more information see Paolacci & Chandler, 2014). Each participant indicated their ethnic/racial identity as White (75.9%), African American (9.2%), Asian/South Pacific Islander (6.3%), Hispanic (4.7%), multiracial (1.8%), Indigenous Peoples (1.4%), Arab/Middle Eastern (.3%), Central Asian/Indian/Pakistani (.3%), or other (.2%). Participants completed the initial set of items tapping components of global citizen types and reported demographic information.

Materials

We constructed 80 initial items to tap the types of global citizens as described by Oxley and Morris (2013). The initial measure contained 10 items per construct (i.e., environmental, political, economic, spiritual, cultural, critical, moral, and social). The measure used a 7-point Likert-type response scale, from 1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree.

Results and Discussion

To examine the factor structure of the global citizen types measure we conducted a series of principle components analyses (oblimin rotation) with the initial 80 items. After removing items that cross-loaded or showed low factor loadings (> |.50|), seven factors remained. The items initially constructed to tap the “social” dimension of global citizenship did not emerge as a separate factor. Therefore, the social items were removed from the analyses. The remaining seven factors (28 items) comprised the final global citizen types scale (see Table 1 for items). As shown in Table 2, the items loaded on factors representing environmental, political, economic, spiritual, cultural, critical, and moral types of global citizenship. The factors tended to positively correlate with one another (see Table 3), with the exception of the economic subscale. The economic global citizen type measure was negatively related to environmental, cultural, and critical types of global citizens.

Overall, seven of the eight proposed factors were observed. The items tapping the social dimension of global citizenship overlapped with cultural and moral dimensions of global citizenship. Although this result may be due to the items constructed to tap the social dimension, the result may also be due to the theoretical similarity of these dimensions as described by Oxley and Morris (2013). With a final set of items following the exploratory analyses, we constructed a second study with a different sample of participants to conduct a factor analysis.
Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 is to conduct a factor analysis on the global citizen types scale, and examine initial convergent and divergent validity. Convergent validity will be shown via positive correlations between the global citizen type subscales and variables related (e.g., global citizenship identification) to global citizenship identified in prior research (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013b). Divergent validity will be shown via non-significant correlations between the types measures and a measure of social desirability. Furthermore, we examine the relationship between the subscales and characteristics of participants (e.g., political orientation, age).

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants (N = 555, 54.1% female; Mage = 37.02, SD = 12.96) included Americans recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. Each participant indicated their ethnic/racial identity as White (76.2%), African American (8.3%), Hispanic (5.4%), Asian/South Pacific Islander (5.2%), multiracial (2.9%), Indigenous Peoples (.5%), Arab/Middle Eastern (.5%), Central Asian/Indian/Pakistani (.5%), or other (.4%). Participants completed the revised global citizen types measure from Study 1, global citizenship identification, outcomes of global citizenship identification, social desirability, and reported demographic information. Unless noted otherwise, all measures used a 7-point Likert-type response scale, from 1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree.

Materials

Global citizen types scale. The 28 items derived from the initial items administered in Study 1 were included in Study 2 to examine the factor structure (see Table 2 for subscale reliability).

Global citizenship identification. Two items (e.g., “I strongly identify with global citizens”) were adapted from prior research (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013b; Reysen, Katzarska-Miller, Nesbit, & Pierce, 2013) to assess identification with global citizens (α = .95).

Global citizenship outcomes. To assess outcomes of global citizenship identification we adopted six 2-item measures from Reysen and Katzarska-Miller (2013b). The outcomes include intergroup empathy (e.g., “I am able to empathize with people from other countries,” α = .83), valuing diversity (e.g., “I would like to join groups that emphasize getting to know people from different countries,” α = .80), social justice (e.g., “Countries that are well off should help people in countries who are less fortunate,” α = .72), environmental sustainability (e.g., “People have a responsibility to conserve natural resources to foster a sustainable environment,” α = .83), intergroup helping (e.g., “If I could, I would dedicate my life to helping others no matter what country they are from,” α = .81), and feeling responsibility to act (e.g., “Being actively involved in global issues is my responsibility,” α = .85).
Social desirability. To assess socially desirable responses we adopted Crowne and Marlowe’s (1960, 1964) social desirability scale. The measure contains 33 true/false items (α = .85).

Results and Discussion

We first conducted a factor analysis of the 28-item global citizen types measure. As expected, the items loaded well on the same seven factors as Study 1 (see Table 2 for factor loadings and eigenvalues). Next, we examined the correlations between the subscales of the types of global citizens. Similar to Study 1, the economic scale varied from the general trend of positive correlations among the types of global citizens. Examination of the correlations between the types subscales and variables related to global citizenship showed a similar pattern. With the exception of the economic subscale, all of the global citizen types showed positive correlations with global citizenship identification and global citizen outcomes (see Table 4). Additionally, although significant, the political dimension showed weak correlations with the global citizen outcomes. The results provide initial convergent validity (with the exception of the small correlations with the economic subscale). The environmental, economic, spiritual, and cultural subscales showed small, but significant correlations with the measure of social desirability. However, non-significant correlations, providing divergent validity, were found for political, critical, and moral subscales.

Examination of the relationships between the types and participant characteristics showed age positively related to environmental, and negatively related to political and cultural. Religiosity was positively related to economic and spiritual, and negatively related to the critical type scale. Prior research (Katzarska-Miller et al., 2014) showed global citizen related variables are associated with a liberal political orientation. With the exception of a negative correlation (i.e., conservative political orientation) with economic and a non-significant correlation with spiritual type, the dimensions showed a positive association with liberal political orientation.

The lack of associations between economic type and global citizenship related values, the positive relationship with conservatism and religiosity suggests a pattern that is different than the other global citizenship types. One explanation is that economic global citizenship is associated with Falk’s (1994) globalization from above framework, where the economic sphere is being connected conceptually with neoliberalism and capitalism, rather than with the prosocial outcomes associated with the globalization from below. Neoliberalism has been consistently criticized for its neglect of moral global principles, with its focus on consumption and economic growth (e.g., Falk, 1994). Thus, the economic type might be associated with values that are perceived as contrary to the prosocial variables measured.

Political global citizen type showed a correlation pattern with prosocial outcomes, which although in the same direction as the other types, is much smaller. One explanation for this pattern may be the meaning of one-world state/government that participants had in mind. As Oxley and Morris (2013) point out, there are different ways in which political global citizenship is conceptualized, and the meaning of one-world state can vary from cosmopolitan democracy, to a sovereign world state. Depending on how one conceptualizes the one-world state, the degree to which their definition is associated with
certain values can lead to a more ‘diluted’ pattern of results. Despite this, the different associations between the type dimensions and other variables assessed suggest that the dimensions do differ. To examine further associations we constructed a third study.

**Study 3**

The purpose of Study 3 is to examine convergent, divergent, and predictive validity of the global citizen type scale. Convergent validity will be shown with positive correlations with global citizenship identification, and variables related to prosocial values. Divergent validity will be shown via non-significant associations with measures of social desirability. Predictive validity will be shown with positive association between the types and intention to participate in activist causes related to those dimensions.

**Method**

**Participants and Procedure**

Participants \(N = 343\), 7.6% female; \(M_{age} = 21.70, SD = 6.34\) included undergraduate students from A&M-Commerce \((n = 271)\) and Transylvania University \((n = 72)\) participating for partial or extra credit toward a psychology course. Participants indicated their ethnic/racial identity as White (54.2%), African American (25.7%), Hispanic (11.1%), Asian/South Pacific Islander (4.7%), multiracial (2.3%), or other (2%).

Participants completed measures regarding global citizen types, global citizenship identification, intention to participate in activist issues, ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, moral foundations, core political attitudes, Schwartz’s universal values, social desirability, and reported demographic information. Unless noted otherwise, all measures used a 7-point Likert-type response scale, from 1 = *strongly agree* to 7 = *strongly disagree*.

**Materials**

- **Global citizen types scale.** The final 28-item global citizen types scale was identical to Study 2. The subscales showed adequate reliability: environmental \((\alpha = .94)\), political \((\alpha = .92)\), economic \((\alpha = .70)\), spiritual \((\alpha = .85)\), cultural \((\alpha = .84)\), critical \((\alpha = .90)\), and moral \((\alpha = .85)\).

- **Global citizenship identification.** The global citizenship identification measure was identical to Study 2 \((\alpha = .94)\).

- **Intention to participate in activist issues.** To assess intention to participate in activist causes participants were asked to rate the extent that they planned to be involved in various causes in the future (if they were not already active in the causes). The causes were chosen to reflect issues related to environmental (“Animal Rights,” “Environmental Issues,” \(\alpha = .80\)), political (“Political Issues,” “Congressional Lobbying Issues,” \(\alpha = .88\)), economic (“Business Support and Expansion,” “Financial Issues,” \(\alpha = .85\)), spiritual (“Religious Issues,” “Peace Issues,” \(\alpha = .71\)), cultural (“Global Education Issues,” “Diversity Issues,” \(\alpha = .85\)), critical (“Struggle Against Oppression,” “Civil Rights Issues,” \(\alpha = .83\)), and moral (“Human Rights Issues,” “Racial Equality Issues,” \(\alpha = .89\)) activist issues. Responses were made on a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1 = *not active* to 7 = *very active*. 
Ethnocentrism. Eight items (e.g., “Life in the U.S. is much better than most other places”) were adopted from Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) to assess ethnocentrism ($\alpha = .93$).

Authoritarianism. A 10-item (e.g., “Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn,” $\alpha = .85$) measure of right-wing authoritarianism was adopted from McFarland (2010).

Moral foundations. A 20-item measure of moral values was adopted from Graham et al. (2011). The measure taps moral domains related to harm/care (e.g., “Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue,” $\alpha = .70$), fairness/reciprocity (e.g., “When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly,” $\alpha = .77$), in-group/loyalty (e.g., “I am proud of my country’s history,” $\alpha = .60$), authority/respect (“Respect for authority is something all children need to learn,” $\alpha = .61$), and purity/sanctity (e.g., “People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed,” $\alpha = .63$).

Core political attitudes. We adopted a 34-item measure of core political values from Schwartz, Caprara, and Vecchione (2010). The measure contains subscales tapping beliefs related to law and order (e.g., “The most important thing for our country is to maintain law and order,” $\alpha = .89$), traditional morality (e.g., “Newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of our society,” $\alpha = .80$), equality (e.g., “The government should take responsibility to provide free health care to all citizens,” $\alpha = .80$), foreign military intervention (e.g., “Any act is justified to fight terrorism,” $\alpha = .49$), free enterprise (e.g., “It would be a good idea to privatize all of the public enterprises,” $\alpha = .75$), civil liberties (e.g., “The most important thing for our country is to defend civil liberties,” $\alpha = .81$), blind patriotism (e.g., “It is unpatriotic to criticize this country,” $\alpha = .79$), and accepting immigrants (e.g., “People who come to live here from other countries make America’s cultural life richer,” $\alpha = .54$).

Schwartz's universal values. We adapted a short 21-item measure (Knoppen & Saris, 2009) of Schwartz’s (1992) 10 universal values. The subscales tap benevolence (e.g., “I want to devote myself to other people,” $\alpha = .82$), universalism (e.g., “I think it is important that every person in the world be treated equally,” $\alpha = .86$), self-direction (e.g., “I like to do things in my own original way,” $\alpha = .80$), stimulation (e.g., “I want to have an exciting life,” $\alpha = .72$), hedonism (e.g., “I seek every chance I can to have fun,” $\alpha = .81$), achievement (e.g., “Being very successful is important to me,” $\alpha = .83$), power (e.g., “I want people to do what I say,” $\alpha = .76$), security (e.g., “I avoid anything that might endanger my safety,” $\alpha = .76$), conformity (e.g., “I believe that people should do what they’re told,” $\alpha = .84$), and tradition (e.g., “I believe that people should be satisfied with what they have,” $\alpha = .45$).

Social desirability. We adopted a 40-item measure (Paulhus, 1984) of social desirability. The measure taps dimensions related to self-deceptive enhancement (e.g., “I never regret my decisions,” $\alpha = .54$) and impression management (e.g., “I never swear,” $\alpha = .70$).
Results and Discussion

As a preliminary examination, we conducted correlations among the types subscales. As shown in Table 5, the subscales were moderately correlated with one another. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, the economic type showed a different trend with non-significant or small associations with the other dimensions. Next, we examined the correlations between the types subscales and the other assessed variables. Showing convergent validity, all of the subscales were correlated with global citizenship identification. Providing predictive validity, each subscale was positively associated with intention to participate in activist causes related to that dimension (see Table 6).

Political and economic subscales showed positive relationships with ethnocentrism (see Table 7). Economic subscales also showed a positive relationship with right-wing authoritarianism, while environment, cultural, critical, and moral subscales showed negative relationships. With the exception of political and economic, the subscales were positively related to concerns about harm/care as a moral foundation. With the exception of political, all the subscales were also related to fairness/reciprocity moral foundation. Furthermore, the economic subscale showed positive relationships with in-group/loyalty and authority/respect.

The relationships with core political values subscales showed that environmental global citizenship was most strongly related to equality and civil liberties. The political global citizen measure was most strongly related to law and order and free enterprise. The economic subscale was most strongly related to blind patriotism, and law and order. The spiritual subscale was most strongly related to civil liberties and equality. The cultural, critical, and moral global citizen type scales were most strongly related to civil liberties, acceptance of immigrants, and equality. Furthermore, critical was negatively associated with law and order and traditional morality.

Prior research utilizing Schwartz’s (1992) universal values suggested that values related to stimulation, universalism, and self-direction when combined are predictors of a prosocial orientation to help others (Salgado & Oceja, 2011). With the exceptions of political and economic, all of the subscales showed strong positive associations with these constructs, as well as benevolence (see Table 8). On the other hand, political was related to power, hedonism, and achievement values, and economic was related to tradition, power, security, and conformity. Lastly, providing divergent validity, with the exception of economic showing a small positive correlation with impression management, none of the subscales showed significant relationships with the two dimensions of social desirability.
General Discussion

The purpose of the current research was to develop and empirically test a scale reflecting the eight global citizenship types as discussed by Oxley and Morris (2013). Through exploratory principle components analyses (Study 1), a factor analysis (Study 2), convergent, divergent (Study 2 and 3), and predictive validity (Study 3), we created and provided initial validation for a global citizen type scale incorporating seven of the eight types. Support for the factor structure was evidenced in Studies 1 and 2. Convergent validity was shown via significant correlations with similar constructs (e.g., global citizenship identification, prosocial values) in Studies 2 and 3. Divergent validity was shown via small or non-significant correlations with social desirability measures in Studies 2 and 3. Lastly, predictive validity was shown via positive correlations with intention to engage in activist activities in Study 3. Together, the results across the three studies provide initial support for a reliable and valid measure of seven different types of global citizenship.

Global citizenship as a concept has received widespread attention across various disciplines including psychology (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013a). The vast amount of theorizing and discussion about what global citizenship means and what it comprises has led to a multitude of opinions, definitions, and conceptualizations. Oxley and Morris (2013) provided another interpretation of the concept by suggesting there are eight different types of global citizens. In line with the objective of the present research, we built upon their eight types of global citizens and constructed and provided initial validation of measures of the types, with the exception of social global citizenship. This latter type of global citizenship showed a great deal of overlap with the cultural and moral dimensions. Presumably this is due to the notion of awareness of interconnections with others that is a component of all three of these dimensions. Because the social dimension was not distinguishable from these other dimensions it was removed from the measure. Despite not finding a distinguishable social global citizen type, the remaining seven dimensions did show to be distinct factors. The results largely support Oxley and Morris’ (2013) conceptualization of different types of global citizens.

A primary objective of the present research was to examine if different types of global citizens were empirically distinguishable. As noted above, the results indeed suggest that there are dimensions and that they are distinct. A second objective was to examine whether these different types of global citizenship would be associated similarly with related constructs or if they would show different associations. This question was based on prior research showing that identification with a particular perspective of feminism is related to sets of attitudes that differ depending on the perspective taken (Henley, Spalsing & Kosta, 2000). First, we expected, and found, that all of the dimensions would be related to global citizenship identification, with the exception of a non-significant correlation between economic global citizenship and identification in Study 2. This result suggests that regardless of the type of global citizenship endorsed, greater endorsement of a type is related to feeling a psychological connection to the larger category label of global citizenship in general. Second, although overlap emerged between the types and a variety of values and attitudes, there were differences in the associations. For example, in Study 2, with the exception of economic global citizenship, all of the dimensions showed positive correlations with prosocial values. The dimension of economic global citizenship showed the largest difference from the other types of global citizenship in Study 3 with
positive associations between the dimension and variables such as ethnocentrism, traditional morality, authoritarianism, and conformity. We suspect that economic global citizenship is similar to Falk's (1994) globalization from above framework and connected conceptually with neoliberalism and capitalism rather than prosocial values that reflect a globalization from below notion. Across the studies, and in line with the objective of the present research, the results showed that there are distinct global citizenship types and those types did indeed show relationships with prosocial values and intended behaviours relevant to the corresponding type.

The present research, although novel in empirically showing Oxley and Morris’ (2013) different types of global citizens, is not without limitations. First, this research is correlational and therefore does not provide any causal explanations regarding the associations between the types of global citizens and endorsed values and intended behaviours. Second, although we assessed intended activist actions in Study 3, we did not measure actual behaviour. Future research may assess different activist behaviours to address this limitation. Third, all of the participants were from the United States. Participants in other cultural spaces may respond differently to the measures.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, in the present research we constructed and provided initial validation of a measure of Oxley and Morris’ (2013) types of global citizens. The measure showed a consistent factor structure across two samples and all of the dimensions showed adequate reliability. Convergent validity was shown with associations with related variables, divergent validity was shown with small or non-significant associations with two different measures of social desirability, and predictive validity was shown with associations with intended activist behaviours. Across the studies there emerged overlap between the dimensions and prosocial values. Yet, differences, particularly the economic global citizen dimension, emerged in the patterns of associations with other values and beliefs. Together, the results support the notion of a typology of global citizenship. Further research is needed to provide a fuller understanding of how endorsement of different types predicts different behaviours related to global citizenship.
References


### Table 1 Global Citizen Types Scale Final Measure Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 1:</strong> Future generations have the right to enjoy clean air, fresh water, and uncontaminated food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 2:</strong> Human beings have the right to enjoy clean air, fresh water, and uncontaminated food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 3:</strong> Humans have a responsibility towards nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 4:</strong> Everyone needs to do their part to care for the natural environment. <strong>Item 5:</strong> We need a one-world government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 6:</strong> There should be a one-world state.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Item 7:</strong> A one-world government will lead to social justice for everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 8:</strong> Cooperation between nations can be achieved only by a one-world government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 9:</strong> Economic international development is good for everyone in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 10:</strong> Free markets are good for everyone in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 11:</strong> Corporations benefit everyone in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 12:</strong> Corporations are good for the planet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 13:</strong> All people are spiritually connected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 14:</strong> Spiritual and emotional connections among people are the basis of humanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 15:</strong> The core function of spirituality is to promote caring for other humans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 16:</strong> Individuals and society have a transcendental bond.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Item 17:</strong> Schools should require knowledge of many different cultures as a graduation requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 18:</strong> People should incorporate diverse cultural values into their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 19:</strong> It is everyone’s responsibility to be knowledgeable about the diverse cultures in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 20:</strong> People benefit from interacting with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 21:</strong> Everyone should question the status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 22:</strong> People should be involved in the organized struggle for their liberation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 23:</strong> People should support the breaking down of oppressive global structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 24:</strong> Everyone should challenge oppression in the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 25:</strong> There are universal moral values that everyone should follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 26:</strong> Everyone in the world needs to be held to the same moral code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 27:</strong> Human rights should embody a universal global ethic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item 28:</strong> One of the laws that every nation should have is a human rights law.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Subscales include: environmental (items 1-4), political (items 5-8), economic (items 9-12), spiritual (items 13-16), cultural (items 17-20), critical (items 21-24), and moral (items 25-28)*
Table 2 Global Citizen Types Scale Factor Loadings for Principle Components (Study 1) and Factor Analysis (Study 2)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Political</th>
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<th>Cultural</th>
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Note. S1 = Study 1, S2 = Study 2. Oblimin rotation used in both studies.
Table 3 Correlations between Subscales of Global Citizen Types
Scale, Studies 1 & 2

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Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01. Top half of diagonal is Study 1, bottom half of diagonal is Study 2.
### Table 4 Correlations between Global Citizen Type Scale Subscales and Relevant Variables, Study 2

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Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01. GCID = global citizenship identification, biological sex (1 = male, 2 = female), political orientation (1 = very conservative, 7 = very liberal).
Table 5 Correlations between Global Citizen Type Scale Subscales, Study 3

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Mean       6.19   3.06   4.11   4.45   4.93   4.83   5.23
SD         1.24   1.56   1.13   1.35   1.30   1.35   1.34

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01. 7-point scale from, 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.
### Table 6 Correlations between Global Citizen Types, Global Citizenship Identification, and Intended Activism, Study 3

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**Intended Activism**

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Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01
Table 7 Correlations between Global Citizen Types, Ethnocentrism, Authoritarianism, Moral Foundations, and Core Political Values, Study 3

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Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01.
Table 8 Correlations between Global Citizen, Universal Human Values, and Social Desirability, Study 3

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Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01
Author Biographies

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The Bridge Program: Recasting Blackness, Fostering Resilience and Transformative Resistance through Narratives of Success

Beverly-Jean Daniel, Ph.D.
Ryerson University
Canada

Keywords: black student success; intentional programming

ABSTRACT: This article presents the results of data based on individual interviews and focus groups conducted with Black students who participated in a post-secondary student retention program called The Bridge. The program was specifically designed to address the needs of Black students and to identify the types of support programming that would enhance their engagement and graduation rates. Three of the themes that emerged from the interviews and focus groups identified the importance of developing differing frames of Blackness, engaging in transformative resistance, and the importance of providing spaces for the students to engage with and explore multiple conceptions of Blackness and narratives of success.

Introduction

Black students, when provided with the appropriate supports, exposure to models of success and narratives of success, experience higher graduation rates and academic excellence. However, the experience of Black students and other racially minoritized groups in the context of schooling continues to be a source of concern for many educators. The achievement gap between Asian, White, Black, Hispanic and Aboriginal students continues to grow, with Asian students outpacing the other groups. In the Canadian context, research conducted by the Toronto District School Board (2017) indicates that Asian students (both South 60.3% and East Asian groups 73.2%) have the highest rate of applications to and acceptance of offers to post-secondary institutions. In contrast, Black students and Latino/a students have the lowest rates of applications and acceptance to university, 24.2% and 22.9% respectively (Toronto District School Board, 2017).

This significant discrepancy in rates of applications and acceptances to post-secondary educational (PSE) institutions has the potential to have long-term impact on these communities in terms of economic viability, family stability and educational attainment. It is the recognition of the potential consequences of limited PSE attainment that was the impetus for the development of The Bridge program and the related research
research project. The primary goal was to increase engagement, retention and post-secondary graduation rates for Black students in a Canadian urban college.

In my role as the program coordinator of a justice studies program, I noted that Black students had a high dropout rate from the program and recognized that the pattern was consistent across the three years that the program had been in existence. The students had an approximately 40% completion rate; in other words, approximately 60% of the Black students dropped out of the program. The approximate program completion rate for the college population was 65%. Given the above indications that Black students were applying to and accepting post-secondary offers of acceptances at an already lowered rate than their counterparts, it was important to explore options for increasing their retention. All the more troubling was that the students who were dropping out were bright, competent and capable students as evidenced by their initial performance in the program. Therefore, the first part of the process required developing an understanding of the factors that led to early school withdrawal, which required conducting interviews with Black students to explore the challenges they were experiencing that were negatively impacting their rates of successful completion of their studies. The second step involved providing supports for them in an attempt to ameliorate those challenges.

The Bridge program, the first of its kind in any post-secondary institution in Canada, was aimed at increasing engagement, retention and graduation rates specifically for students who identified as African, Black and Caribbean. Research on student retention indicates that students who are engaged in the larger college or post-secondary environment, i.e. activities, faculty and programs, tend to have higher rates of program completion (Harper, 2014). This paper will discuss the programs, strategies and data outcomes for The Bridge program based on the existing research literature, individual interviews and focus groups conducted with students who participated during the first 2 years of the program (n=31 individual interviews; n=20 focus group participants). The three main themes that will be discussed are recasting Blackness; transformative resistance and resilience; and the importance of safe spaces on campus for Black students. The success of the program underscores the importance of providing intentional programming to support Black students in challenging systemic oppressions that serve to limit their academic success.

**Background and Purpose**

Over the years it has been estimated that within Ontario, there has been a 40% dropout rate amongst Black students from high schools, which represents a pattern of systemic failure. A report on Black student achievement indicates that third generation Black students still present a similar pattern (James & Turner, 2017). However, an alternative viewpoint would suggest that 60% of Black youth and Black people in general are succeeding. The message and normativity of success, which has been and continues to be a strong thread woven throughout the fabric of Black history and society, needs to be reinforced for students if we are truly invested in ensuring their success as part of the larger Canadian society. The message that one receives about the self informs identity
development and, unfortunately, all members of society are inundated with the message of Black student failure and social challenges. The result is that members of society adopt and often deploy the negative stereotypes about Blacks in all arenas. In addition, Black students essentially become primed for failure, impacting their attitudes, forms of engagement and thus limiting their options for success. Therefore, taking the idea that Black students can be primed for failure through larger systemic machinations, The Bridge program focused on priming them for success.

In the 1950’s, Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted the famous “Doll Experiment.” In their study titled “Emotional Factors in Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children,” the researchers examined “the genesis and development of racial identity as a function of ego development and self-awareness” (Clark & Clark, 1950, p. 169) and its relation to racial attitudes. The results of the study indicated that Black children overwhelmingly preferred white dolls to Black dolls and regarded the white doll as the “nice doll” while the brown doll “looks bad.” These early messages become the foundation for children’s concepts of self. Children begin to develop mental schemas about the self, based on the images that are present or absent in society (Clark & Clark, 1950), and members of society often also interact with the children based on those same messages. If Black students are inundated with messages of failure and are exposed to differential treatment by teachers from their earliest interactions in school, then it is not difficult to understand the patterns of failure that are evidenced. Further to this, the existing research underscores the challenges of healthy identity development amongst Black students which is central to education, social and personal success and development. The challenges to healthy identity development unfortunately enter the lives of Black children during their earliest experiences of schooling.

Research by Downey and Pribesh (2004) has shown that in the early grades in some classrooms, Black males are proportionally disciplined at much higher levels when subjective levels of analysis of behaviour are employed. However, the levels are relatively consistent between Black and white students when objective measures are employed. The reality is that the vast majority of decisions that teachers make in the context of their classrooms are often based on subjective measures. As such, teachers’ varying notions and beliefs about race, class and multiple sites of differences will inform and impact the ways in which they interact with students (Dickar, 2008; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). A study by Downey and Pribesh (2004) examined teachers’ ratings of children’s behaviour in kindergarten classes. The results indicated that teachers consistently rated the behaviour of Black students as indicative of poor citizenship and being engaged in externalizing behaviour. The authors posit that this breakdown in the teacher-student relationship occurs in the early schooling years, primarily because of the often unconscious, anti-Black bias amongst teachers and Early Childhood educators (Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Brown, Souto-Manning, & Tropp Laman, 2010). The pattern is replicated in middle and high schools (Edelman, 2006, 2007; Fenning & Rose, 2015; Hatt, 2011; McMurthry & Curling, 2008; Monroe, 2009; Swain & Noblit, 2011) and again amongst college and university students in post-secondary institutions. The reality is that at each juncture in their educational journey, Black students are bombarded with messages of failure and exposed to inequitable treatment.
When Black students are exposed to such disparaging messages through various institutionalized processes and practices, these experiences can negatively impact their attitudes towards schooling. According to Wood and Turner (2010), challenges related to their experiences at post-secondary institutions can limit their engagement, levels of success and inhibit their academic self-concept (Awad, 2007; Downey, Ainsworth, & Qian, 2009). Alternatively, teachers’ exposure to the negative ideas regarding the capacity of Black students also contributes to their rating, evaluation and expectations of the students (Dragnea, Erling, Toronto District School Board, & Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), 2008; Ferguson, 2003). This perpetuates a troubling cycle wherein society provides negative messages, which teachers and students consume and internalize. Teachers have lowered expectations of the Black students, while at the same time, Black students develop lowered expectations of themselves, thus resulting in the outcomes we have witnessed.

Given the challenging experiences that many racialized students have in elementary and secondary schools, one can make the argument that there are significant skill sets that are necessary to foster success that many of the students may not have developed along the way. Canada has consistently resisted collecting race-based data which makes it extremely difficult to identify strategies for change that are targeted to specific groups based on the recognition that different people experience life differently. The recent Toronto District School Board (TDSB) decision to collect race-based statistics is a step in the right direction, but it is just a small step. Although free schooling is available in Canada, one has to recognize that there can be a significant discrepancy between availability of resources and a person’s ability to actually gain access to those resources because of the various obstacles that they must overcome. The Bridge program was aimed at identifying the specific needs of Black students that would support their academic engagement and retention at the college level.

**The Bridge Program Description**

This project explored the outcomes of when students themselves began to envision the possibility of success and to adopt strategies that promoted their personal and academic success.

The project had the following objectives:

- To identify the best practices within a Canadian and, more specifically, within a post-secondary context that would foster African, Black and Caribbean student engagement, retention and graduation.
- To support the students’ development of the academic skills that can promote success.
- To support students’ ability to effectively navigate the broader social, academic and cultural environment of the college to increase retention rates.
The workshops and curriculum were designed to enhance student academic skill development, community based connections (including mentor and career guides), provide peer based engagements and support participants in developing positive racial and academic identity markers.

The program included a series of eight workshops that focused on career planning, navigating school environments and developing positive academic, personal, career and race-based identities. In addition, the students were offered drop-in sessions and individual one-to-one meetings. The program also provided students with opportunities to have conversations with members of the Black community who represented a range of career fields. The students spoke to the centrality of this experience given that many of them had not had opportunities to interact directly with people who were considered successful. Program participants were also provided with the option of being paired with a mentor upon completion of the program.

Harper (2014), when examining the records of the multitude of interventions and strategies that were intended to increase the graduation and retention rates of Black males in post-secondary institutions, identified several gaps in the programming. According to his research, programs were generally structured as one to two day conferences that attempted to provide mentoring. However, these programs were limited in their efficacy and long-term matching. His research also indicated that the participants did not attribute their continued involvement in schooling to these conference-type programs. Although Harper’s research specifically focused on the needs of Black males, the work provided strong direction that guided the development of the current program. The Bridge program was designed to provide opportunities for the students to access regular and ongoing support.

Harper critiques what he refers to as the movement to enhance Black male success as a “directionless campaign” (2014, p. 126) with the development of stand-alone programs that were not institutionally supported or implemented and with no clearly defined goals and/or mission. The Bridge program, like the other programs emerged in response to an identified need; however, the intent of the planners and the development was and continued to be guided towards an institutional strategy. Academic institutions need to recognize the importance of and commit to implementing differentiated retention programming models to support historically marginalized students including Indigenous students and Black students. The Bridge program, while seeking to empower the participants to address the daily and structural level micro-aggressions, worked with various departments at the college to conduct presentations and workshops related to the issues in an attempt to get staff and administrators to understand the broader macro level issues. Therefore, the program sought to combine macro – institutional; meso – staff ideologies; curriculum materials; broader systemic issues of injustice; and micro - individual levels of focus. Although the initial goal of the program was institutional embeddedness, there continued to be a host of challenges and resistance at all levels of the college that were clear indications of anti-Black racism at the college. However, that discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

Another critique offered by Harper (2014) of retention programming that was aimed at Black male student engagement was the way in which the programs focused on the “amplification of deficits” (p. 127). From its very inception, The Bridge program identified
a clear focus on fostering success, highlighting the successes of Black students, and including several tag lines like “Making success visible” and “Making Black Excellence the norm”. Recognizing that the enduring pathologization of Blackness had become the dominant narrative in society, I focused on reframing this dialogue and as evidenced in one of the themes that emerged from the research, the participating students themselves developed the facility to ‘recast Blackness.’ In part, it is this recasting that mediated their conceptions of self and their possibilities. This preliminary data set led to the question, “How might the experience of academic success change for Black students if the markers of Blackness were framed as strengths and possibilities?” The research and continued development of The Bridge program continues to privilege strengths-based approaches and the notion of capabilities wherein which the focus remains on what human beings are able to accomplish and become (Akos & Galassi, 2008; Heyne & Anderson, 2012; Saleebey, 2008).

Discussion and Analysis of the Results of the Research

This project adopted a multi-method design that included individual participant interviews, focus groups, pre-and post-assessment questionnaires and observation notes taken by program facilitators and interviewers. The data that is included in this paper is based on the preliminary data that was collected during the first two years of the program. However, at the time that this paper was being written, the program had provided supports to more than 400 students. The following section provides a discussion and analysis of some of the themes that emerged from the data. The main themes that will be discussed in this section include recasting of Blackness, transformative resistance and resiliency and the importance of safe spaces for positive racial and academic identity development.

Recasting of Blackness

The theme of recasting Blackness is based on the idea that the model or mold which has been presented to Black students is one that reinforces constructed stereotypes of negativity, pathology and failure. Those ideas, although historically produced, remain contemporarily putative and are constantly reproduced in the everyday discourses that pervade the conversations of Black students and other members of society. When students are asked to identify the prevalent markers of Blackness to which they have been exposed, terms such “ghetto,” “ratchet,” “criminals” and “failure” are readily spewed with impunity. The markers of Blackness are framed within negative constructions that appear to have been fixed in their imagination. It is this limited imagery of Blackness that then frames notions of what Black students regard as possible. The conceptions are reinforced through a multitude of sources with limited opportunities to challenge these ideas. The Bridge Program, according to the participants, was the first opportunity that they were exposed to that challenged the long-held conceptions of Blackness and it is this critique of the prevailing ideas of Blackness that became a primary connection to the program for the participants.

The Bridge program provided students with opportunities to attend scholarship events, academic fairs and community events that focused on the celebration of Black success. The students who attended these events indicated their surprise at the number of Black professionals present at the events who would be considered successful by anyone’s standard. The students had become so immersed in the idea of Black failure that they were unaware of the existence of the many Black professionals in the city who
were successful. The experience was very impactful for the students. As part of the basic structure of The Bridge Program, each group that enters the program is exposed to a panel of Black professionals who have attained varying levels of success in their given profession and who are at different stages in their careers, ranging from entry level to post retirement work. Students have the opportunity to connect directly with the panel presenters, ask questions and interact with the panel in an informal setting. These experiences function to make the possibility of success real and achievable and to align success with Black bodies.

The panel members also discuss the challenges and obstacles they have had to overcome, the strategies that they employed in addressing those challenges and the lessons learned. The panel presenters are informed prior to their attendance that The Bridge Program adopts a strengths-based model and focuses on the possibilities rather than the pitfalls. Strengths-based approaches provide a different frame of reference and focuses on the strengths and assets that an individual possesses, rather than what is deemed to be a problem, thus fostering growth and development (Feintuch, 2010; Heyne & Anderson, 2012). The participants indicated that the stories are highly impactful and provide them with the understanding that there are others who travelled difficult paths but have negotiated the societal obstacles to achieve success. As one student attests:

Being able to have guest speakers come into our program during our various sections and have them speak about their stories of success was a motivation for me that I couldn’t stop at this college position where I was, just a college diploma. I had to move on and achieve more for myself as an individual. (A.O.)

The panel presenters also highlight for the students the fact that there are other options and paths they can travel to achieve success. This knowledge also provides a shared sense of possibility, normalizes ideas of success and provides the students with the knowledge that there is a wider community committed to their growth and development.

These experiences foreground a shift in the students' conceptions of self and their potential for achievement. This work of recasting Blackness is also supported by the workshops which focus on critiquing constructions of Blackness and providing the students with strategies and tools for critiquing the existing constructions of the self. Based on the responses in the individual interviews and the focus group sessions, it is vital that the students are exposed to opportunities to change their constructions of Blackness and have this occur early in the program because those are the moments of revelation that allow them to cast Blackness in a different light.

Another participant learned “through The Bridge Program, that there really is no glass ceiling. Not only is the sky the limit, but the stratosphere, the universe, the stars, whatever, is the limit.” (M.T.). Another participant commented on the changes he began to make in his life when he realized that there were people who had gone through similar challenges before him and made a life for themselves. This participant stated:

A lot of the times our parents strive for us to be the best but we’re never really given the tools to actually pursue these things, but at The Bridge it gives us the tools and it shows us ways and means and we have
people that are successful and have taken different paths in life and that can actually mentor us to these places that we want to go. (C.G.)

These exposures appear to suggest that the ongoing negative portrayal of Blackness has an extremely adverse effect on the students’ conceptions of success and what they can see themselves accomplishing. The exposure, according to the participants, was all encompassing almost to the point of invisibility, thus creating the sense that failure was the norm. As another participant stated:

So there’s this narrative for Black people in the West that we are either intellectually inferior, mentally inferior, so on and so forth, and that we come from slaves or that we come from primitive societies in Africa. So when you have those ideas constantly reinforced, you start to think that you are not intelligent enough, or that you aren’t capable enough and that anything you reach for you’re not gonna accomplish it. So in some regard there is a glass ceiling as to what you can accomplish (M.T.)

The above quote highlights the extent to which the continued exposure to negative messages regarding Black capacity, consciously and unconsciously, limits the options that students see themselves as having, and highlights the systemic and insidious nature of oppression. Carter (2007) states that “racial stratification and systemic racism have been and continue to be endemic and ingrained in all aspects of ... life ... as such these barriers to equality have had a profound impact on those who have been racially oppressed...” (2007, p. 13). According to Harper (2012):

Those who are interested in Black male student success have much to learn from Black men who have actually been successful. To increase their educational attainment, the popular one-sided emphasis on failure must be counterbalanced with insights gathered from those who somehow manage to navigate their way to and through higher education, despite all that is stacked against them” (p. 1).

Although in this context Harper is focusing specifically on Black male development, the issue speaks to all genders when he highlights the importance of employing an “anti-deficit achievement framework” (p. 8) that focuses on the factors that promote success. An anti-deficit framework lends itself to reframing the focus on strategies that have fostered success, leads to persistence and promotes positive, healthy, supportive relationships. The Bridge program embedded those discourses of success, possibility and no limitations, positively impacting the participating students and supporting them in developing new conceptions of Blackness, thereby creating a new cast that challenged their prior racial conceptions.

**Transformative Resistance and Resiliency**

The program provided spaces and opportunities for the participants to discuss issues and challenges related to the systemic, institutional and societal aspects of racism, oppression and structures of power. It is important to note however, that the discussion of racism was framed through a critical discourse lens that focused on understanding the manifestations and sites of interruptions rather than structuring it as a space for purging. The participants were provided with opportunities to explore personal challenges they
struggled with, including familial support systems, financial issues and personal difficulties they were attempting to address.

Another important area for discussion and debate was based on the internalization of the negative conceptions of Blackness as an aspect of internalized racism, and the ways in which this has led to engagement with forms of terminal resistance rather than transformative resistance. Terminal resistance is defined as forms or patterns of resistance or challenge to the status quo that has negative consequences for the person who is challenging systemic inequities primarily because the resistive behaviours they adopt reinforces the negative ideations of self. It emerges as a form of opposition that results in increasing personal and professional costs for the person engaged in the oppositional behaviour. In the case of Black students, terminal resistance is evidenced in their internalization of the tropes of failure and then performing behaviours such as skipping classes to avoid interacting with teachers. This results in them failing classes, having to repeat classes, extending their time in school, lowering their GPA which then makes it more difficult to successfully apply to other post-secondary institutions or to complete their current program of study. In essence, their practices result in long-term negative consequences for the self, reinforces the dominant narrative of failure and leads to limited, if any, change in the overall systemic inequities and in effect reproduces the dominant relations of power (Giroux, 1983) and institutionalized discrimination. Their actions lead to more negative outcomes and consequences for themselves and can severely curtail their educational options, thus producing a self-defeating cyclical pattern. The negative ideologies and discriminatory practices of the system on the other hand remain firmly entrenched (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) while at the same time the dominant experiences significant economic benefits from the continued failure. The increase in funding for prisons (Hooks, Mosher, Rotolo, & Lobao, 2004), and the increase in clients for the middle-class service industry (social workers, lawyers, judges, corrections officers, etc.) ensure that there is a viable middle class that functions and thrives on the failure of Black bodies. In addition, the resulting outcomes of failure, lowered academic performance and engagement, and the increasing push towards the prison pipeline (Daniel, 2017; Edelman, 2006) reinforces the initial stereotypical ideas of blaming the oppressed for their failures. This merit-based analysis thus limits the culpability of the system and its adherents for the continued challenges that marginalized groups experience. Similarly, when school administrators, teachers and guidance counselors believe that the system is equitable and non-discriminatory, and that the students are simply not capable, they employ a limited analysis of the students’ resistive behaviours, thus replicating the patterns of failure. At the end of it all, the students experience terminal resistance because their behaviours reinforce the notion of failure in the minds and responses of the dominant.

An added problem with engaging in terminal resistance is that many of the participants and observers are unaware and have not developed the critical intellectual analytical framework to name what they are doing or why. Students are aware on a visceral level that something is wrong or oppressive; however, given that most schools and teachers do not teach how to think critically, the students’ ability to articulate positive forms of resistance both verbally and behaviourally, is partial at best. Most students who engage in what they perceive as a resistance to the system are engaged in these behaviours with limited understanding, analysis and critique of the outcomes of their challenges. These behaviours can be read simply as forms of opposition or defiance aimed at frustrating...
teachers and thwarting the power dynamics in the classroom. This rather problematic reading and response to the behaviours lends itself to the increased use of hyper-disciplinary strategies, such as suspensions (Edelman, 2007; Swain & Noblit, 2011), the placement of students (particularly racialized males) into special education classes or what Downey and Pribesh (2004) regard as a push for the diagnosis of ADD and ADHD. According to a recent report based on statistics from the Toronto District School Board, although Black males only make up 14% of the student body, they represent over 50% of the number of students who are suspended (James & Turner, 2017). In a system where neither the actors nor the responders consistently adopt critical lenses and strategies aimed at supporting the need for a differentiated engagement with the system to increase democratic schooling, the outcome continues to be troubling, with the students paying the highest price.

The Bridge Program supports the students’ investment in constructive or transformative resistance which is defined as the adoption and practice of attitudes and behaviours that seek to transform the system, produce positive markers of self and construct new identities based on critical analyses of power, social systems, practices and ideologies. The term transformational resistance (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) has been used and the authors state that this term:

refers to student behaviour that illustrates both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice. In other words, the student holds some level of awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination and must be at least somewhat motivated by a sense of social justice. With a deeper level of understanding and a social justice orientation, transformational resistance offers the greatest possibility for social change (p. 320)

This shift in understanding resistances requires that the students engage in an interrogation of the self, their identity, the scripts to which they have been exposed and the behaviours they perform which reinforce those scripts. In the context of The Bridge Program, the students are provided with multiple opportunities to explore alternative scripts and ideologies and to map out the outcomes of a range of approaches. Students discuss, analyze and critique the ways in which their options are scripted and delineated by their continued investment in the scripts of pathology and failure.

Bridge participants were also supported in getting to know and understand that many of the teachers and/or administrators with whom they will interact are unaware of the rationale for the opposition, nor do they acknowledge the existence of systemic and institutional injustices that impinge on the daily lives of the students. Given this knowledge, it is vital that students identify strategies for challenging the system that can result in positive change and development and a “commitment to social justice” (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 313). For example, students discussed the impact on their self-esteem when teachers introduce curriculum material, both as text and in the form of movies that reinforce problematic stereotypes about their identities and communities.
When teachers discuss gangs for example, the prototypical gang member is identified as a Black male and discussions of criminality are often accompanied by images of Black males. For Black students who do not participate in such types of criminal activities or ascribe to that lifestyle, these experiences can be very demeaning. In addition, students have also discussed the difficulty they experience when the conversations in the classroom centers Blackness and the ultimate problem, with explanations that are mired in deficit theories.

Students then face the following challenges: how can they engage the teachers and their peers in discussions that challenge and critique the information in the classroom without being regarded as the prototypical angry Black male or female? How do they study for exams or write papers about topics with which they disagree and which diminishes their humanity? Carter (2008) recognizes that many students who possess a strong positive racial identity are able to challenge the information and succeed in spite of the odds; however, there are many students who have not developed positive conceptions of Blackness and are often unable to survive the onslaught. In The Bridge Program, the students can explore with their peers and the feedback from the program facilitators and invited guests, the strategies that they can employ to address these types of issues and occurrences in ways that lend themselves to fostering positive change while avoiding the inevitable pitfalls of terminal resistance. The focus of the program is on ensuring that the students exercise their own agency in choosing behaviours and strategies that are productive and can lead to positive changes in the system, while supporting their capacity to successfully complete their education, thus ensuring that there is congruence between attitude, achievement and outcomes. The system level change is evidenced in the instructors’ willingness to adopt new curriculum, provide spaces in the classroom to challenge stereotypes and engage in more equitable, less oppressive practices that support the development of the Black students.

A central question that is posed for the students when examining the difference between terminal and transformative resistance is: “How might your life change if you began to see yourself as being capable of excellence?” The question is posed in an attempt to have them explore the differences between the types of resistances, to adopt new identities and behaviours that can lead to engagement with their own success. Through the asking of the questions and the discussions, students begin to verbalize the possibility of success and to act in ways to ensure their attitudes and behaviours are in alignment with their goals and achievements. A participant stated:

Whether people talk about it, we are being disenfranchised you know in the workforce, we’re victims of oppression, it’s reality. So being able to discuss these issues and find strategies to overcome them and grow personally in life, that’s a big benefit. (R.R.) Confidence for sure. I’ve been working better with groups since then. I’ve been taking more of a leadership role for sure and like I can talk to people, like I can make conversation easier now because I feel like I’m in (pause) like I’m in the (pause) in the society, like I feel more involved… I’ve been able to step up when I have to and...still feel more in my skin, you know, Black, confident…you know the racial stuff is happening now, some people might feel scared to be Black or you know, to look away from it, but I feel more confident. I feel better being Black (A.N)
In order for teachers and the students themselves to develop the ability to identify clear and purposeful rationale for the oppositional behaviours, the analysis of the behaviours need to be reframed. Knight Abowitz (2000) states that “the opposition of some groups against others is politically and morally necessary in social institutions where mainstream ideologies dominate to discipline participants and social norms” (p. 877). However, resistance that is not informed, constructive or transformative does little to “examine the oppositional acts of students in school settings as moral and political acts of opposition...(that can) lead to a more relational reading of resistance and can promote school based inquiry (Knight Abowitz, 2000, p. 877) or support the positive development of the students.

An additional aspect of their development is that the students come to know themselves in positive ways, which leads to higher levels of engagement:

The leadership for sure. The identity, the role-modeling...just getting to know Black, you know what it is to be Black, you know, what we came from, we’re powerful and so you know being able to use that power for good, you know. We are always noticed because we’re Black so now to be noticed for positivity, and so that’s that, yeah. (A.N)

She (the teacher) picks on me first. She goes um “what do you know about such and such” and I said honestly I don’t know because I did not get a chance to do it...and then her remark was “oh well maybe you should go try another class or something”. And I’m like, oh really! So because of that I sat there, like I was silenced for the whole class literally...After class another girl came to me. She’s white, Caucasian or whatever and she was like “honestly, thank you for that” She like, “I like how you carried your way and how you just sat there and took everything in and just let it slide because honestly I didn’t do the work either and lot’s of people didn’t do it either so thank you for taking one for the team”...If I wanted I could have pointed everybody else out...(but) I just sat down and I’m like you know what, its fine. Its whatever, just let it slide...in the past like I would have been toe to toe with other professors, other students and it just got me nowhere so I’m like you know what, sometimes you just have to sit down, take a back seat and just let it be. (D.B.)

The two quotes above highlight the changes that the students experience in terms of their self-identity, their roles and levels of engagement in the school environment, their ability to interact with others and their ability to manage conflicts differently. The management of the conflict gets linked to changing perceptions of self and a conscious choice to challenge the prevailing markers of Blackness.

Another participant stated:

The question that comes up a lot for my first year was “is racism going to stop” and every time I heard that question, it’s like I wanted to scream, I wanted to yell, and I wanted to cuss a nasty show. The stigma of us
about Black people being rude and ignorant like that was what the anger that I would have portrayed…I’m slowly learning how to deal with those kinds of situations without being irritated or just keeping my mouth shut. (T.A.)

The students are supported in identifying strategies for effectively engaging with their environment, thus limiting their engagement with behaviours that can negatively impact on them academically or personally.

**The Need for Safe Spaces for Positive Racial and Academic Identity Development**

The importance of having a space where students can discuss their experiences without the need for censoring themselves, fear of offending others and to explore new identity options, emerged as another theme. Canada prides itself on having a multicultural mosaic where each group is afforded the legally protected right to maintain their original cultural, religious and social heritages. Theoretically, there is no significant push to adopt “Canadian” cultural patterns. In addition to the ideals of multiculturalism, the Canadian ethic is heavily invested in the construct of colour-blindness. This investment in colour blindness is deployed quite strategically in that any claims to develop specialized services for racially marginalized groups can result in varying levels of social outcry and the continued investment in the idea that “we don’t see colour”. Therefore, if we don’t see colour, the negative experiences that racially minoritized groups undergo can be explained as anecdotal and individual occurrences that are not emblematic of any social patterns of discrimination. Further to this, the investment in liberalist notions of meritocracy are deployed which speak to the failure on the part of the individual, community or group to avail themselves of the opportunities that are made available to all Canadians. Another strategy of resistance and critique to the naming of race or attempts to develop specialized programming to ameliorate the impact of socially sanctioned discrimination, is the cry of reverse discrimination/racism and the return to segregationist practices. Each of these tropes are problematic on multiple levels but that discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

The Bridge Program was designed and developed specifically for students who identify as African, Black and Caribbean and of African racial ancestry, which challenged the Canadian illusion of colour blindness. The development of the program resulted in the targeting of students who registered for the program by their peers, both Black and white. The Black students who challenged the development of the program employed many of the aforementioned tropes but also indicated that the program was not being developed for “real Black” students because The Bridge focused on success. Other Black students did not join the program for fear of losing their non-Black friends and fear of reprisals from their peers. Further to this, the Black students also spoke to the idea that the students and coordinators of the Bridge program (all of whom are Black) felt that they “were better than other Black people”. The students who joined the program and started applying for and receiving scholarships, were also marginalized by other Black students who did not want to associate with them because they no longer “acted Black” or in other words were “acting white” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Murray, Neal-Barnett, Demmings, & Stadulis, 2010; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). The response on the part of the Black students is evidence of the internalization of racism that plagues all too many members of Black communities living in a white dominated society.
The responses of some of the white students included open dissension to the idea of having a program for Black students when, according to their narrative, there was no programming in place for white students. In addition, some of the students wrote racist letters and took to Facebook to criticize the program. There were also claims that the Black students who had won academic scholarships had only done so because their grades had been inflated. Another site of targeting was the faculty members involved in the program and the verbal put-downs of The Bridge students. Many of their behaviours were clearly in contravention of school policies, harassment and racial targeting. According to one Bridge student:

“I mean a lot of the drawbacks that The Bridge has faced was mostly put over social media via Facebook, uhh, Instagram. It was just people stating their opinion on you know, The Bridge isn’t fair and if I’m not Black I can’t get the same opportunities, this and that. You know people create their own rumors about The Bridge and what they think it’s set up to do for Black students. Umm, some students may get the impression that we’re plotting to be better than other minorities and umm, you know, but that’s just what you have to face right?” (S.A.)

These experiences are highlighted here to support the theme that emerged from the research regarding the need for a safe space where Black students can go to feel a sense of safety and security to develop coping strategies. The need for a space where they could retire and not have to deal with the feeling of being targeted was important for the participants. The participants were asked the following question, “Do you think The Bridge Program would have been as useful for you had it been open to all students?” A variation of the question was also asked during the focus groups. All of the participants (n = 31 and n = 20 respectively) clearly indicated that had the program been open to all students, it would not have been beneficial to them or they would not have continued to come. When pressed for clarification on their position, the participants indicated that they believed that opportunities should be provided for different groups to have a space where they could discuss issues that are relevant to their group. In addition, the students indicated that an integrated group would have replicated the dynamics in the classroom and they would have felt disempowered, judged and relegated to the marginal spaces in the classroom. They spoke to the ways in which they felt the environment in classrooms to be disempowering, particularly when discussions about race came up. The participants further highlighted their experiences of racism, racial targeting and being dismissed by non-Black students. They spoke of feeling judged and belittled by their peers and not feeling supported or that they could approach their professors for support. The classroom emerged as an unsafe and disempowering space where, as it became more uncomfortable for them to be there, they avoided attending classes, thus resulting in further academic and personal sense of failure. The Bridge provided them with the necessary supports to enable them to more effectively navigate the classroom and the larger campus contexts.

The Bridge Program sessions were described as a space and place of safety where they did not have to justify, defend or explain their experiences of racism and marginalization. There was a shared sense of understanding and acceptance of the voracity of their claims. There were other students who had shared similar experiences and were able to provide them with strategies that they had used, both successfully and
unsuccessfully. The Bridge provided them with a space where they could ask questions and access supports. They spoke of the feeling of safety that the program provided and most importantly the expectation that they would be successful. According to one focus group participant:

The experience that I had from being involved in the Bridge program highlighted for me what I had been missing throughout my schooling career. The space was supportive and people expected you to be successful. (V.W.)

Another student spoke of ‘The Bridge Culture” (C.G.) which he and others described as the message that he was capable and would be successful. The participants reinforced the idea that The Bridge environment provided them with a community of success where their achievements were celebrated and highlighted. The participants reinforced the idea that The Bridge environment spoke to their success and possibilities, which was, again, identified as unique for them given the normativity of messages of failure. In essence, The Bridge normalized success and excellence for the Black students, thus changing the narrative.

The participants indicated that the presence of non-Black students in the program would take the attention and focus away from their personal development because they would censor their comments for fear of offending others or they would hesitate to participate because they believed that non-Black students would not be able to understand their experiences, since they would not have the same, or similar frames of reference. The presence of non-Black students would replicate the silencing experience of the regular classroom and would have limited their willingness to explore different ideas, understandings and possibilities.

When participants were questioned about the reason why they kept coming to The Bridge despite being targeted by other students, they stated The Bridge environment reinforced for them the importance of recognizing that there will always be challenges and the importance of finding strategies for dealing with those challenges, rather than choosing forms of terminal resistance they would have previously adopted, such as avoiding classes. Further to this, their success would be the venue through which they voiced their forms of transformative resistance, which they had come to see as a more effective strategy for dealing with challenges. In addition, the participants had come to regard the challenges to their involvement as simply an example of real-life challenges they would have to face and used their participation in the program as an opportunity to develop, explore and share strategies that would foster their growth, development and resilience, which they could then transfer to their broader world. The resistance they faced from non-Bridge Black and white students emboldened them to navigate the world in positive and transformative ways. Their successes, they felt, would speak to their possibilities and would eventually silence the critics. The participants also indicated their willingness to go out and recruit future participants for the program to ensure that the incoming students would also have a space of safety, growth, support and a community of success where “Black excellence was the norm”— a statement that had become central to the program.
Conclusion

The Bridge program was started as a pilot project aimed at increasing Black student engagement, retention and graduation. The research component involved a series of individual and focus group interviews along with pre-and post-questionnaires. Based on the responses from the participants, three of the main themes that were identified included ensuring that students were presented with more realistic and comprehensive models of Blackness that allowed them to recast Blackness in frames that were positive and which focused on success. The second theme, transformative resistance, was identified as an important strategy for the students to develop and employ to ensure that in their attempts to challenge the system, they engaged in behaviours that transformed their interactions with the space and resulted in positive changes in the space as well. The students recognized the differences between transformative resistances that underscored their resiliency and capacity versus the more terminal forms of resistance they had adopted before participating in the program. A third theme that was highlighted was the importance of having a safe space where they could critically analyze their own behaviours and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the systemic issues of racism, power and oppression. This space allowed them to explore the new identities they were casting or molding for themselves while employing strengths and success based frameworks and narratives.

The Bridge program highlights the importance of providing intentional programming for Black students to support them in navigating post-secondary educational spaces. In addition, the program underscores what those of us who live and work in Black communities have always known – there is nothing wrong with Black students, it is the systems of oppression in place that continue to undermine their options for success. When effective, focused programming is implemented that centralizes the importance of the experiences of Black students and provides them with options for success, these students can and will succeed in exceptional ways.
References


Author Biography

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Lessons from Los Angeles: Self-Study on Teaching University Global Citizenship Education to Challenge Authoritarian Education, Neoliberal Globalization and Nationalist Populism

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ABSTRACT: Humanity and our planet face a growing number of interconnected challenges and opportunities exacerbated by globalization(s), which demand new paradigms of teaching and learning. Despite criticism, global citizenship education (GCE) has been proffered as an attempt to assist policy makers and practitioners to address complex global challenges through education. Guided by questions of what the roles and responsibilities of universities are in addressing global problems and how teacher education programs should incorporate pedagogies of GCE, the author offers preliminary findings from a qualitative self-study on teaching GCE to undergraduates in Los Angeles, thereby filling a void in empirical research of teaching university GCE in the United States.

Before exploring critical approaches to GCE, the author examines challenges of authoritarian education, neoliberal globalization and nationalist populism that GCE confronts. Moreover, the author illuminates pedagogical themes of critical GCE emerging from the research and considers models of critical GCE, highlighting why they deserve more attention throughout US universities, specifically within teacher education programs and schools/departments of education.

Introduction

Climate change, increasing global poverty and income inequality, transnational migration and refugee crises, as well as the persistence of racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, war and violence, pressures on flora and fauna, and access to and
availability of clean food and water are but a few of the plethora of environmental and social injustices the world currently faces. In an era of global interdependence, these immense challenges—accompanied by rapid advances in technology—demand new paradigms of teaching and learning. These new pedagogies must be grounded in multifaceted global understanding, responsibility and engagement determined to create and harness prospects for local and global solutions. Global citizenship education (GCE) has been an attempt by various educators and international institutions such as UNESCO to assist policy makers and practitioners in addressing the complex challenges of globalization(s) that impact education and society. However, critics decry models of GCE as being overwhelmingly “Western-centric” (Koyama, 2015) and connect them to 21st century tools of imperialism and neoliberalism (Arneil, 2007). Although much theoretical and empirical research on GCE has been conducted worldwide (Abdi & Shultz, 2008; Andreotti, 2006; Davies, 2008; Gaudelli, 2009; Pashby, 2011; Peters, Britton & Blee, 2008; Pike, 2001; Stromquist, 2009; Tawil, 2013; Torres, 2017; UNESCO, 2014; Veugelers, 2011) and despite the call by scholars to bring global aspects of teaching and learning to teacher education programs (Abdi & Shultz, 2010; Apple, 2011; Banks, 2004; Bottery, 2006; Torres, 2017), there is a dearth of empirical research on teaching university GCE particularly within the United States. Most research on university GCE in the U.S. focuses on program development (Sperandio, Grudzinski-Hall & Stewart-Gambino, 2010), measurement of programs (Anthony, Miller & Yarrish, 2014), or student perceptions (Morais & Ogden, 2011; Szelényi & Rhoads, 2007).

Today’s global challenges therefore raise a number of often unasked questions for schools and universities worldwide: in an increasingly interconnected world, what should be the purpose of education? Do conventional educational experiences provide the knowledge, skills and values necessary to fundamentally understand what is happening in the world and how global problems impact our lives, the lives of others, communities, nations and the planet itself? What can critical forms of education do to address global problems for the planet, others and ourselves? Specifically, this study is guided by the following questions: What should be the roles and responsibilities of universities in addressing global problems? How should teacher education programs incorporate pedagogies of global citizenship education? By trying to answer these questions, the present study fills a void in the empirical research on teaching university GCE and offers preliminary findings from a qualitative self-study on teaching GCE to undergraduates at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). In the article, I consider models of critical global citizenship education and why they deserve more attention throughout U.S. universities, specifically within teacher education programs and schools/departments of education. The article begins by exploring various justifications for GCE and significant challenges confronted by GCE. Then, through the lens of critical pedagogy, I illuminate pedagogical themes of critical global citizenship education that emerged from the research involving critical frameworks; focus on local and global power; critical reflexivity; the importance of interconnectedness, interdisciplinary and intersectionality; empowerment through praxis; and the university as a critical public sphere.
An Education to Address Contemporary Problems

Educators worldwide appear to be consumed with questions about global citizenship education and what it comprises. Before I address what GCE is and how it is defined, an important starting point is to explain the urgent justifications for the attention given to theories and practices of GCE. According to UNESCO (2013), teaching and learning of GCE is seen as addressing:

[T]he emergence of a new class of global challenges which require some form of collective response to find effective solutions. These include increasingly integrated and knowledge-driven economies; greater migration between countries and from rural to urban areas; growing inequalities; more awareness of the importance of sustainable development and including concerns about climate change and environmental degradation; a large and growing youth demographic; the acceleration of globalization; and rapid developments in technology. Education systems need to respond to these emerging global challenges, which require a collective response with a strategic vision that is global in character, rather than limited to the individual country level. (p.1)

What this passage demonstrates is not only the pressing demand for models of GCE, but also the multidimensional nature of today’s global challenges and thus the complexity of awareness, understanding and solutions needed for new paradigms of teaching and learning. The need for global citizenship education is a growing global norm, but there remain many obstacles to its teaching, learning and implementation.

Challenges to Global Citizenship Education

Although pressing global problems may present a persuasive justification for the adoption of GCE models, those interested in GCE must first recognize that it confronts many practical and ideological challenges. However, I argue that these challenges not only hinder the development of more critical models of global citizenship education, they may also act as an inspiration to bring about new policies and pedagogies that address and challenge such destructive educational practices. Thus, GCE can be endorsed as a tool to counter practices and ideologies that are deeply intertwined with the problems facing humanity and our planet. At all levels, GCE encounters practical constraints including human resource constraints, limited material resources, timetable constraints, logistical and demographic constraints and sensitivities of subject matter (Education Above All, 2012, p.47). However, there are more profound epistemologies that will either serve to narrowly define the mission of GCE, or operate to manipulate the role of GCE into a tool used for domination and oppression. Three such challenges posed by authoritarian education, neoliberalism and nationalist populism are explored below.
Authoritarian Education

An important challenge to global citizenship education is the conventional pedagogy of schooling that suffocates the potential of educational systems worldwide. It is ironic that while many societies strive for democracy within their broader political systems, they often overlook dictatorships within the classroom. Authoritarian education is the normative system of schooling that is teacher-centered, often disconnects learning from the lives and experiences of learners, upholds instrumental-rationality of knowledge and bifurcated fields of study, over-emphasizes test-taking and memorization, values standardization of curriculum and instruction, and is devoid of any real commitment to citizen building, transformative civic engagement or democratic student participation. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (2007) uses the banking model of education metaphor to describe systems of education that situate the teacher at the center of power and the student on the periphery. The teacher deposits pre-set information to the passive, empty objects of the student-depositories. The student as a hollow vessel is perceived as void of creativity, reflection, action and personal experience. The student patiently and passively receives, memorizes and repeats the prescribed information for the sole and meaningless purpose of regurgitating the information. In restricting the ability of the student to critically analyze their own situation necessary to consciously act to transform their world, this form of learning justifies, maintains and perpetuates structures of domination, exploitation and oppression. Describing banking education, Freire writes, "it attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power" (2007, p. 77). Therefore, banking education and other authoritarian models lead to the condition of learning for obedient citizenship and towards a citizenship for unquestioning compliance and passivity. By undermining the ability of students to share and reflect upon their experiences, critically think about society or practice democracy, models of authoritarian education usher in and provide the structure and legitimacy for destructive educational policies and ideologies grounded in neoliberalism and nationalist populism, which are detrimental and counter-intuitive to the purpose and realization of a critical global citizenship education.

The Agenda of the Neoliberal University and Neoliberal Citizenship

Over the last three decades, the neoliberal common sense of market supremacy, deregulation, commodification and the retreat of the state from social services have permeated university policy worldwide. It has been well established that the neoliberal agenda for universities has diluted and, in some cases, obliterated any mission of the university as an institution for public good; a public sphere for democratic deliberation and action, where education is grounded in social responsibility, social justice, and active citizenship (Giroux, 2002; Giroux, 2015; Rhoads & Torres, 2006; Torres, 2011). The neoliberal agenda for universities prioritizes profit-driven academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and often focuses reforms and policies towards accreditation and

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9 Some may argue that the original mission of the university was to exclude and give preference to particular groups, epistemologies and forms of research, and therefore exclusionary legacies of higher education are difficult to dismantle. For example, Wilder (2013) argues human slavery and the genocide of Indigenous groups was “the precondition for the rise of higher education in America” (p. 114). Moreover, these institutions provided the “intellectual cover for the social and political subjugation of non-white peoples” (p.3).
universalization, efficiency and accountability, decentralization, international competitiveness, privatization and the expansion of vocational education. In a *Truthout* article, Henry Giroux (2015) explains that the neoliberal university is obsessed with “a market-driven paradigm that seeks to eliminate tenure, turn the humanities into a job preparation service, and transform most faculty into an army of temporary subaltern labor” (p.3). University skills are narrowly bound by access and competencies necessary for the global economy. Research and funding is therefore directed to topics and fields that yield the most profit rather than those that benefit the most people. Overall, this corporatization of universities has been significantly driven by the needs of the global market over public and social good.

The neoliberal agenda of the universities has created the condition for neoliberal citizenship. In sharp contrast to the upsurge of critical student activism and movements of the 1960s and 1970s, with few notable exceptions¹⁰, students of the subsequent decades were subjected to models of citizenship that generally promoted passivity, disengagement and possessive individualism—where individuals are seen as the sole proprietors of their own skills and success and owe nothing to society. This citizenship privileges economic citizenship and rights. Moreover, individual responsibility, rather than social responsibility, is seen as the cornerstone of economic wellbeing, and law-abiding citizens making individual and rational choices for success—reducing their claims on the state—are upheld and rewarded. Thus, being a good consumer has become an indicator of what it means to be a good citizen, taking precedent over altruistic and transformative models and acts of citizenship. Furthermore, universities are complicit in creating a climate in which knowledge, scientific research, movements and policies that challenge or disrupt these citizenship norms and premises are commonly seen as falsehoods, while “alternative facts” and conspiracy theories have been constructed to encourage anti-intellectualism and anti-science, ushering in the so-called era of post-truth¹¹. Weakened by its neoliberal policies and visions and neutered by its commitment to academic capitalism, the university, for all its talents and resources, has been ill-equipped to resolve the inequities and injustices produced by decades of neoliberal economic policies and has failed to create sustainable bottom-up alternatives to neoliberal globalization, social injustices, perpetual war, planetary destruction and the current crises of democracy. Consequently, constrained by what Santos (2006) calls a crisis of legitimacy, rather than settling 21st century global issues, the current neoliberal models of education have generated values and mindsets that actually perpetuate the very injustices that the world is witnessing today.

**Nationalist Populism: Exacerbating Inequality and Xenophobia**

Many people around the globe have been shocked by the recent political developments of the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership, the 2016 U.S. presidential

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¹⁰ This is not to delegitimize the recent crucial work that has been done on campuses to create awareness, alliances and action for Black Lives Matter, BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement to end international support for Israel’s oppression of Palestinians), as well as NoDAPL (The movement to prevent the Dakota Access Pipeline). Although significant, these movements are exceptions rather than the norm.

¹¹ Some may ask, if this is the era of post-truth, when was the era of truth?
elections, the popularity of Marine Le Pen, and the National Front party receiving nearly 34 percent of the vote in the 2017 French presidential elections, all events that reflect the rise of far-right movements and the global authoritarian turn. The discontent and the so-called “losers of globalization” have been galvanized through popular discourse that hearkens back to a mythological past. Political leaders unable to devise creative, holistic and new solutions to the problems of globalization(s) have focused more on “the politics of the past,” re-igniting nationalist populist rhetoric by tapping into society’s unresolved racist and xenophobic undertones that are blended with real concerns of economic inequalities indicative of the “jobless society.” Some characteristics of contemporary nationalist populism include fermenting a culture of fear through the mythical impending threat of the other while promoting the so-called traditional values of one ethnic group; rejecting economic globalization by denouncing the export of labour and the influx of “foreigners or terrorists”; attacking political correctness under the guise of free speech; and favouring policies grounded in xenophobia, isolationism and economic nationalism. These developments have ushered in a contentious social and political atmosphere that sows divisive and exclusionary citizenship, emboldening white supremacists and other hate groups to commit violent attacks and hold public rallies of aggression and hate. Meanwhile, liberals and globalist are scrambling to find the answers to the question: what went wrong?

These political developments can be seen as a narrow-sighted response to unresolved social frictions that have been exacerbated by failed global economic policies and the increase in global inequalities and transnational migration, thus highlighting the ideological divide between global and national, and global and local citizenship. In his recent article entitled How Neoliberalism Prepared the way for Donald Trump, Polish scholar Zygmunt Bauman (2016) argues that the Enlightenment and liberalism have been based upon the interconnected triad of Liberté, Egalité and Fraternité. However, the more recent hegemonic philosophy of neoliberalism tore at the fabric of the liberal triad by “exiling the precept of Egalité.” After decades of being unchallenged, the glove-less hands of neoliberal capitalism created a void in the triad and, as Bauman explains, the resurgence of nationalist populism and illiberal democracy “has become all but predetermined.” Consequently, within the metropoles of neoliberal globalization, unfettered capitalism led to unfettered inequities, which greatly shocked the foundation of liberal democracy resulting in a backlash against the national and global status quo. Additionally, schools and universities, consumed with preparing learners for the global economy and whose central mission of citizenship education is to teach tolerance of others—failed, to a certain extent, to either critically address and respond to the destructive forces of globalization(s) or uphold any critical mission of deep understanding about the other. Recent research on public primary and secondary schools in the US asked about culpabilities of education in general and citizenship education that would allow for the current political atmosphere (Kahlenber & Janey, 2016). Researchers found that rather than preparing young people to be reflective citizens engaging in cherished American democratic ideals such as tolerance for others, freedoms of religion, press, and independent judiciary, and challenging authoritarianism, over the past three decades, neoliberal globalization have persuaded educators and policy makers to emphasize the importance of serving the global market needs, which has greatly hindered commitment to citizenship education. Additionally, reports during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign have found that in U.S. schools, immigrant and Muslim students express fear about what might happen to them and their families. The reports also revealed an increase in uncivil
political discourse, an increase in anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments, and teachers being hesitant about teaching contemporary politics and other controversial issues (Costello, 2016). On university campuses, emboldened by the hateful rhetoric of American politicians, there has been a rise of hate crimes and hate incidents as well as increases in mobilizations by white supremacists groups (Dreid & Najmabadi, 2016; SPLC, 2016). For example at UCLA, my peers and I found flyers posted on campus by a hate group called American Vanguard. This is the same group that James Alex Field Jr. is allegedly associated with. Fields took part in the recent neo-Nazi white supremacists rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017 and drove his car into a crowd, killing a counter-demonstrator Heather D. Heyer. The group’s website explains that “a government based in the natural law must not cater to the false notion of equality” and further states:

White America is under attack. Through subversion, the forces of Marxism have brought our nation to its knees by rotting it from within. The traditional values that have kept Western civilization alive for millennia are being torn apart, leaving a generation of American youth without direction or purpose. While millions of our countrymen languish in poverty, our infrastructure crumbles, our jobs are shipped overseas and billions are sent to Israel. The greatest threat to our country did not fall in 1945, nor in 1991. The true enemy is within our walls, destroying our nation and opening our gates to the millions of outsiders who want to take all that our forefathers have created.

The website is loaded with other racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic rhetoric. This group exemplifies the resurgence and normalization of nationalist populism and racist nativism on university campuses. Thus, it could be argued that contemporary nationalist populism sprang out of the failures of neoliberal globalization and the inability of universities to critically respond to current global inequities and unresolved past issues of diversity. Consequently, when searching for a response to globalization while lacking a deep understanding and appreciation of critical multiculturalism, people have looked inwards for answers. They have latched onto leaders that promote an imagined past, leaders that tap into historical legacies of fear, dehumanization and violence against the other, and leaders that narrowly define culture and citizenship, encouraging an anti-cosmopolitanism.

It should be acknowledged that other ideologies and structures such as colonialism and imperialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, paternalism and anthropocentrism, to name a few, also pose significant obstacles as well as objectives-to-dismantle for models of GCE. As social systems of exclusion and violence, I view these ideologies as being deeply intertwined with, endorsed by and perpetuated through the triple forces of authoritarian education, neoliberalism and neo-nationalism. The more the world is unknown, the easier it is to pervert, dismiss and isolate the world. Without critical, global and comprehensive forms of citizenship education, the chances for the continuation of short-sighted and violent knowledge and learning will only increase. Therefore, GCE should be regarded as a means to understand, confront and disrupt destructive and violent ways of knowing the world and being in the world, and the structures that support these ideologies. Moreover, GCE must lead to the creation of action that counters the forces causing injustice to humanity and the planet, even if those forces are within ourselves. Thus, the answer to the rise in neo-nationalism is not neoliberal globalization and vice-
versa. Moreover, the status quo in pedagogy and educational policy—a system that shares complicity in creating the world’s problems—should definitely not be seen as a sustainable or effective means of addressing today’s global troubles. Authoritarian education, neoliberalism and nationalist populism present significant hurdles and can adversely influence any model of GCE. However, the triple forces can provide a benchmark for what GCE is not, and what GCE should fight against. Critical global citizenship education has the possibility to offer a formative answer to global problems, in that it promotes de-colonialism and unlearning of violent paradigms of society and the world, as well as encourages a broadening of identity, an indignation for injustices, a radical international solidarity that engages in new processes of teaching, learning, institution building, and finally, promotes healing and solution-making that counters the caustic hegemonic forces of globalization.

**Conceptualizing Global Citizenship Education**

Global citizenship education is an oft contested and contentious concept. Carlos Alberto Torres (2017) describes GCE as an “intervention in search of a theory” (p.17). This phrase underscores the unsettled nature of the term as well as the complications that abound when conceptualizing GCE, which can be viewed as a framing paradigm, a field of study, as well as a model of education. The space provided in this article cannot do justice to the contours of conceptualizing GCE. However, I view GCE as more than simply creating global awareness and understanding of the world’s most pressing issues. GCE should also be concerned with fostering a new set of ethics necessary for expanding the responsibilities, identities and actions of learners.

**Expanding Responsibilities, Identities and Actions**

It is first essential to tease out the differences between GCE and earlier related models of education, namely global education and civic education. Whereas global education often focuses on international awareness frequently gained through study abroad programs that are commonly connected to developing a more “cultured” or well-rounded individual, GCE incorporates citizenship that, in my view, should emphasize action for social justice. Moreover, GCE moves beyond civic education that has been conventionally restricted to national politics, identities and belonging. Thus, GCE should strive to help students epistemologically and theoretically expand their understanding of citizenship beyond legal notions and de-territorialize citizenship beyond national borders, ultimately striving for an expansion of rights and justice, responsibilities and identities across borders that can thus be seen as adding value to national citizenship because it includes struggling for a global consciousness while addressing issues that locally manifest. To the point Rhoads and Szelényi (2011) argue:

> It is not simply the geographic scope of one’s actions as a citizen that constitutes global citizenship, but rather it is the nature of one’s understandings and the commitment to broader concerns that constitute global citizenship. We see global citizenship as being marked by an understanding of global ties and connections and a commitment to the collective good... Even actions on the part of citizens aimed at addressing local concerns may still constitute forms of GC when those actions are informed by global understandings and reflective of concerns...
As the quote highlights, GCE should work towards understanding and building new global relations and struggle for the common good beyond individual concerns, regardless of where the action takes place. Moreover, GCE challenges the instrumental rationality of civic education commonly delivered in banking pedagogies, which has often been to develop a submissive and obedient national citizenry in order to maintain and reproduce particular economic, social and political structures of society (Giroux, 1980). GCE is a moral and political citizenship towards rights and justice, planetary belonging, with goals motivated by transforming destructive complex global systems for a more egalitarian world. However, this is not the abandonment of loyalties to culture or reasonable patriotism, but an inclusion—a planetary layer in the age of global interconnectedness—of wider loyalty to justice and equity for humanity and our finite planet.

Two decades ago, in their report entitled “Curriculum for Global Citizenship,” UK Oxfam defined a “global citizen” as someone who:

- Is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen; respects and values diversity; has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally; is outraged by social injustice; is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place; participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from the local to the global” (1997, p. 1).

This encompassing definition of global citizen connotes a very active citizenship with foundations in global knowledge about issues of diversity, equity and justice and peace and sustainability. Significantly, there is a willingness to be engaged in actions that constitute what Shultz (2007) defines as transformationalist global citizens, as people who understand the dialectical relationship of globalization(s) and are committed to social justice, building relationships through diversity and finding shared purposes across national borders. Positioning global citizenship education as means to expand responsibilities, identities and actions in learners, demands an exploration of the approaches to GCE that have the potential to facilitate such educational endeavours.

**Towards Critical Approaches of GCE**

There should be an acknowledgement of the varied models of GCE, from softer approaches to more critical approaches (Andreotti, 2006). Teachers, students and policy makers must decide which approaches are more valuable for their educational environment. Although the application of any education must be relevant to the lives of the learners and educational context, I tend to advocate for more critical and transformative approaches to GCE. I argue that is imperative for critical models of GCE to adopt forms of problem-posing education vital to what Freire (2007) terms in Portuguese as conscientizacao, which refers to “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 35). Thus, there is an importance placed on particular issues and ways to address those issues through forms of learning. Problem posing education must begin first by blurring the dichotomous relationship of the teacher-student contradiction. The blurring of roles occurs...
when students and teachers use dialogue, thereby becoming critical co-investigators unmasking their world. This dialogue must include love, humility, faith, mutual trust, hope and critical thinking. Taken alone, these conditions are important to citizenship in any society, but together they can have a profound and revolutionary impact toward a more liberated society. It is through dialogue that teacher and student(s) create knowledge. Knowledge, rather than mechanistic, static information, should be the means for critical reflection by both student and teacher. As they constantly unveil reality and struggle to regain their humanity, students co-author (in solidarity with each other and the teacher) and find ownership in a problem-posing education that is relevant to the oppressive issues in their reality. Thus, through a pedagogy that can provide the possibility of praxis, “the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it” (Freire, 2007, p. 79), education is transformed into an invaluable comrade for the learner in their human vocation of liberation. Henry Giroux (2004) expands upon Freirean pedagogy and develops general themes of critical pedagogy that can be useful in understanding more critical models of GCE. Through a process of critical questioning and critical imagination of what it might mean and look like to transform existing relations in the world, critical pedagogy can provide educators and students with the tools to develop more engaging and relevant GCE. However, it must be understood that critical pedagogy is not “a fixed set of principles and practices” that can be standardized and indiscriminately transferred from one context to the next; critical models of GCE must begin from the experiences of those within that particular context (Giroux, 2004, p. 37). Therefore, the model of critical GCE presented in this article should be seen more as an inspiration, or a provocateur for critical GCE models in other localities.

Critical pedagogy is an educational process that empowers learners to question existing social structures and ideologies while symbiotically constructing new localities necessary to transform people into more than their present consciousness. The educational endeavour of critical pedagogy is centered more on issues of politics and power and less on the language of technique and methodology. Critical pedagogy emphasizes a critical reflexivity that connects learning to everyday life and understanding the connections between power and knowledge. Critical pedagogy links learning to social change in a wide variety of social sites; thus it is a political intervention in the world, making visible alternative models of radical democratic relations. Associated with a political intervention is the task of rekindling social and political agency to subvert dominant structures of power. As mentioned above, pedagogy must always be contextually defined as indispensable when responding to the problems that arise with a specific educational site. Moreover, there should be a rejection of the notions of neutrality and apolitical-ness, while fostering a language of critique and transformation. I would argue the overall goal of any critical model of GCE is to illuminate the critical consciousness in learners through global knowledge, transformative engagement and collaborative solution making. Therefore, with regards to GCE, critical pedagogy can “reinvigorate the relationship between democracy, ethics, and political agency by expanding both the meaning of the pedagogical as a political practices while at the same time making the political more pedagogical” (Giroux, 2004, p. 33).

The critical pedagogy of GCE that is presented in this article builds upon previous theories and foundations highlighted above from Freire and Giroux, combined with additional inspiration by such foundational critical scholars as Apple, Fanon, hooks, and Said, and is substantiated in the following understanding of GCE: I regard and teach GCE
as a new global ethos of teaching and learning citizenship education (not confined to formal education) that fosters understanding of and actions concerning issues of power, equity, justice, marginalization and oppression that manifest locally and globally for people and our planet. It offers a source of learning that is critical of the failures and unevenness of globalization and unpacks the current hegemonic models of globalization that are tied to and embolden local and national structures of power and hierarchies. It is a moral and political form of cosmopolitanism, one that is not obsessed with neoliberal access to the global economy, but uses privilege and knowledge to minimize and transform local and global suffering. It can be characterized as a form of de-colonial pedagogy that offers pathway for un-learning, healing and subversion. Moreover, this pedagogy must attempt to counter racism, sexism, homophobia, paternalism, imperialism, anthropocentrism, ablism, xenophobia, neo-nationalism and other forms of bigotry, systems and structures grounded in hatred and violence towards people and our planet. This is done through forms of education that promote a deeper understanding of and mutual respect for the histories, experiences and struggles of groups, specifically Indigenous and traditionally marginalized communities who are culturally different than oneself. Therefore, it is concerned with viewing the world through an amalgamation of social and environmental inequities and injustices and the actions necessary to create models of new possibility. Overall, I see GCE as a critical global pedagogy that attempts to foster youth engagement, consciousness of global interdependence, emboldened by global knowledge and thinking that is vital to creating new local and global modes of knowing as solutionaries (Weil, 2016) to the most pressing local and global problems.

**Self-Study as A Method to Examine Teaching GCE**

To empirically explore teaching university global citizenship education, this research was guided by self-study methodology (Loughran et al, 2004; Samaras & Freese, 2006; Tidwell, Heston & Fitzgerald, 2009). Self-study is a methodology that relies heavily on qualitative data collection techniques and is used in teacher education and education research as a means to better understand the complex nature of teaching and learning as well as a process for advancing teacher efficacy and educational change. Researchers conducting self-studies often focus on their own learning and teaching perspectives, practices, contexts and relationships. I view self-study as being motivated by the following important questions: As a teacher, how can I improve my craft and enhance learning with students? How will my own experiences enrich the broader teaching community? How can this understanding of teaching and learning better inform society? As Berry and Hamilton (2013) state, in a self-study, “both personal and public purposes are concerned with the reform of teaching and teacher education that works from a social change and social justice perspective” (p.1). Therefore, self-study is grounded in the purpose of enriching learning experiences and environments through an intentional, systematic and truly emic perspective that reveals the ways learners and teachers co-construct knowledge (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992).

There are many approaches, purposes and methods associated with self-study. As Loughran (2004) argues, “there is not ‘one way’ to do self-study” (p. 24). Since this was the first time I taught the course, the goals of this particular self-study were to improve my teaching practices of GCE and provide deeper insight into the relationship between teaching and GCE for the field of education and the broader society. Moreover, given that there is limited empirical research on teaching university GCE in the U.S., it is necessary
to expand the body of literature in the field. I utilized three forms of qualitative data collection techniques including reflective journaling, classroom dialogues and student-created texts comprising of course papers, presentations, lesson plans and course evaluations. Qualitative analysis of the data included a coding process that unearthed pertinent information and passages, and organizing connected data into themes or categories (Merriam, 2009). The findings below are presented within pedagogical themes that were coded from the data. To support and explain each theme, I used direct quotes from students and other forms of data that are then blended with my interpretation and relevant literature.

**Pedagogical Themes for Critical Global Citizenship Education**

The context for this study was an undergraduate course that focused on curriculum and instruction of global citizenship education; it was part of a newly implemented set of three undergraduate courses on GCE offered by the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. This was a four-hour course that met once a week for the ten-week quarter. The course fulfilled upper division requirements for students in the Education minor program (UCLA does not currently offer Education as a major). There were twenty-one junior and senior undergraduate students enrolled in the course in addition to a visiting professor from China who audited the course. Although there were only three male students, the class was quite diverse, representing various racial/ethnic backgrounds, various religious beliefs, varied immigration status, sexual and political orientations, as well as wide array of majors including African American Studies, Biology, Business Economics, Chicana/o studies, Communications, English, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and Spanish and Portuguese. About half of the students were interested in pursuing careers in teaching. The remaining half were either uncertain about their career goals, pursuing graduate school or interested in careers in other fields. When asked why the students enrolled in this course, the common response was, “The title sounds interesting but I have no idea what global citizenship education means.”

My teaching methodology was guided by the following broad interrelated objectives: (1) Be an encouraging and accessible mentor; (2) Provide culturally relevant and culturally sensitive pedagogies that align to the student demographics of the course; (3) Position issues of social and environmental justice at the core of learning; (4) Have students uncover diverse problems of globalization using various lenses including personal experiences; (5) Attempt to foster a relationship between the student and the problem (e.g. how does it impact the student, why should they care, and how does the student impact the problem?); (6) Co-construct a space where students can creatively and holistically think, reflect and dialogue about solutions to complex global problems; (7) Convey a sense of empowerment and optimism about the ways in which teaching and learning can be a vehicle for global transformation; and (8) Inspire students to continue seeking knowledge about global problems and instill an active responsibility to social engagement that will persist after the course has ended.

Each class period was divided into three sections. The first section was devoted to lectures and student-centered discussions/activities facilitated by the instructor on global challenges providing the context of globalization(s). The second was devoted to lectures and student-centered discussions/activities facilitated by the instructor related to topics/themes of GCE viewed as an intervention to specific problems e.g. peace
education, human rights education, social justice education, ecopedagogy, etc. The last section consisted of discussions facilitated by students pertaining to ways in which students could develop lessons to address specific global problems. For example, the two main assignments underscore the students’ attempt at using education as a means to address global challenges.

The first assignment was the Global Challenges Research Paper and Mini-Lesson. Each student selected a single global issue and wrote a research paper guided by the questions: what is the biggest challenge facing humanity on the planet and how are people actively addressing the challenge? Specific questions for the research paper included: what is the global challenge? What are some of its causes, and who/what does it impact? What are the consequences if it is not addressed? What are some of the innovative/creative ways people are addressing the global challenge? What can UCLA students do to address the challenge? The students then presented a 20-minute mini-lesson pertaining to the global challenge they selected. Creative, innovative and engaging ways of teaching were expected.

The second assignment was the Group Unit Plan on UN SDGs. In self-selected groups of four to five, students designed a five-day unit plan covering at least two of the 17 UN SDGs United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). The Unit Plan included: Introduction: title, purpose/overall objectives, an explanation of which UN SDGs were covered, the educational context and class/school environment, and the age group and student demographic this unit was designed for; Framework and Theory: define global citizenship education and how their definition connects to the unit; Explain the core principals and concepts used in the unit; the skills, knowledge and virtues emphasized in the unit; and the literature/research supporting the framework; Teaching Practices: describe how the teaching practices and content were culturally relevant and interdisciplinary and how the teaching practices relate to pedagogy for critical global citizenship education; Table of Five Lessons: a visual representation of the unit containing name of lessons, learning objectives, key activities, name/number of SDGs. Last was a detailed description of five individual lessons including a description of the lesson, learning objectives, activities, assessments, key materials and literature. Note that one lesson had to include some form of community engagement project/exercise. At the end of the quarter, groups were given 45 minutes to present their unit, teaching a part of a synthesis of the unit.

With the above context in mind, the following six themes arose out of the self-study research. It must be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of pedagogical themes of critical global citizenship education. Moreover, the themes greatly overlap.

Critical Frameworks

Reflecting on the course, one student stated, “You allowed us to critique knowledge. That was something new. You didn’t just tell us to ascribe to global citizenship but said it was okay to challenge and critique literature and theories.” The quote underscores that an important goal of the course was to create a GCE learning community that is grounded in critical theories including de-colonial, anti-imperial and anti-racist frameworks, which, in turn, fosters in students a commitment to these frameworks when developing their own curriculum and instruction of GCE. Critical frameworks of GCE enables students to nurture
the skill and ability to question the world and conventional worldviews, nurturing a language of critique. These critical epistemologies endeavour to expose, unpack and critique power structures and hierarchical relations, while simultaneously offering spaces for agency and creative and sustainable solutions.

An example of an activity that encouraged students to challenge preconceived notions about GCE topics and attempted to develop critical analytical skills was the short report group activity. Students organized themselves in four to five groups and each group was assigned a one to three-page news report on a similar topic from vastly different perspectives. Upon reading the news report, each group was required to present on it. Components of the presentation included: main arguments; legitimacy of data/evidence used to support the arguments; notable quotes; reflections on ideological/theoretical underpinnings of the argument/background and positionality of author(s); group critiques of the arguments; and how the group would teach their topic. After each presentation was complete, the other students were encouraged to provide critical feedback, pose questions, and connect it to their articles and course readings. Often, a lively and deep class discussion would ensue. From this and other related activities, students also shared that the class helped them to “think past our western-centered views and see education and society more nuanced and globally.” Similarly, another student stated, “The class was a new and great experience in teaching and challenging current ways of education and normative American-centric perspectives.”

Critical frameworks for GCE involve the recognition and inclusion of multiple wisdoms, learning, philosophies, cultural practices and economic relationships that strive for communal peace and environmental preservation. It is about bringing into frame alternative world visions and knowledges, which some refer to as epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2012). Such frameworks are generally related to the re-centering and re-narrativization of knowledge and epistemologies that have been traditionally based upon Eurocentric, male, neoliberal, hetero-normative and other hegemonic norms and standards. GCE should be an attempt to decolonize the university deeply tied to Western, normative and elitist ideas dominated by universal and monolithic narratives of citizenship. Such critical frameworks also include critiquing anthropocentric norms of citizenship and education. Ecopedagogy (Misiaszek, 2015) models of GCE were discussed in class, which advocates for a reconstitution of pedagogies towards raising consciousness about the entangled human-environment relationships that demand a merging of education for/through social and ecological justice.

Other educators have also promoted creating a critical and decolonizing GCE. Abdi, Shultz and Pillay (2015) argue for nuanced thinking about and practices of citizenship and a GCE that critically understands and responds to “the problematic habitualization of unidirectional and uni-dimensional mentalizations and practicalizations of citizenship and citizenship education” (p.3). Moreover, the authors advance a GCE that not only challenges institutionalized and historically normalized understandings and practices of citizenship but also has the task of education for global social justice. To this point, Abdi et al. (2015) argue:

With the histories and legacies of colonialism, patriarchy, and imperialism intertwining to create international and global relations that are continuously the antithesis and counter-practices of global justice
and rights, multi-directionally constructed global citizenship education has an important transformative contribution to affect crucial and timely changes in the lives of the world’s still and citizenship-wise, marginalized billions. (p. 3)

The quote highlights the significant transformative properties that critical frameworks of GCE contain, not only for privileged universities in the global North, but also the importance that these critical epistemologies of GCE can have for global South and “majority world” to understand and interrupt systems of local and global power.

Local and Global Power

One student shared, “You blew my mind. I never thought about the connection between politics and education or that education can be political.” There are three significant points to this quote. The first obvious point is that the student came to realize the synergistic relationship between knowledge and power. Second, though the student had been formally schooled for nearly two decades, this clarity was not found until the student’s senior year. This shows the failures of primary, secondary and university education as well as lack of exposure to critical education in non-formal or informal spaces. Nevertheless, this awakening does provide hope for notions of lifelong learning and it is never too late to be exposed to critical forms of knowledge and learning. Third, the student realized the significant dialectic power of education, in that it can be used as a tool for control as well as a means for change.

Pedagogy of GCE must first and foremost be critical of the dominant mode of globalization(s). Moreover, the dialectics of local and global power are analyzed within human relationships, structures, complex systems and human interactions with the environment, as well as the role of culture and culture-making institutions such as education, media, religion and many others that are recognized as greatly informing hegemony and common-sense interpretations and actions of citizenship. Therefore, there is a focus on power and knowledge; on the one hand, offering a critique to the dominant educational policies and teaching practices that have led to the current global challenges, while on the other, providing innovative forms of individual and collective action. The topic of power and knowledge was an essential theme that ran throughout the course. After the first four weeks of building a common foundation in research and theories of citizenship education, globalization, global citizenship education, and teaching GCE, the following specific themes were the focus of each week: (1) Human rights education that is detached from the imperial mission; (2) Issues of Diversity and Multicultural Education; (3) Poverty, Global Inequities and Social Justice Education; (4) Peace Education, Ethics of Nonviolence (including civil disobedience), and Conflict Resolution; (5) Sustainable Development and Ecopedagogy.

A class reflection at the end of the quarter found a limitation to this arrangement of themes. Because there was much overlapping, the next time I teach this course I plan to combined theme two and three to create a new blended theme entitled Global Social Justice Education: Justice and Equity for a Multicultural World. Additionally, the syllabus gave little attention to the powerful role of technology including social media, but many class discussions incorporated these topics. Therefore, the next time I teach this course, I will set aside one week to focus on the dialectics of oppressive and liberating forms of
technologies including the power of social media and digital spaces of citizenship, and the importance of critical media literacy (Kellner & Share, 2009). Another consideration is to include a week on Indigenous wisdoms, issues and questions of sovereignty. Overall, this course brought to light the significance of a GCE that offers a critique to forms of globalization that exacerbate both social and environmental injustices. Moreover, students realized that in order to begin to address the devastation to the planet and people, in a globalized world attention at all levels must be given to the interrelationship between both social and environmental justice, including the ability to reflect on one’s own thoughts and actions in relation to systems of power.

Critical Reflexivity

The ability and time to reflect on global challenges and one’s relationships with forms of globalization was crucial for this course. To this point, one student explained, “Instructor Dorio made sure to give us time to reflect and critique our views and those presented in the topics, which really created a space for discussion.” This reflection was accomplished through personal writing and thought activities, in small groups as well as within whole class discussions. Students were made to reflect upon their roles in connection to and impact on the world. Conversely, they were asked to reflect upon how they have been positively and negatively impacted by various social, political, economic, cultural and environmental events and challenges occurring in other localities. The goal of critical reflexivity was to foster in students the ability to recognize individual, community and national identities in collective solutions as well as complicity in harmful local and global systems and structures. Thus, the emphasis was on a critical reflexivity that connects learning to everyday life by providing a vision and language of critique grounded in global understanding. Learners understand both their own complicity and agency within structures of global power. As a form of empowerment, a kind of thinking and acting beyond oneself, this critical reflexivity uses consciousness-raising towards altering destructive social patterns that negatively impact our planet and communities. This critical reflexivity can include critical thinking and problem solving skills that are broad, holistic, transdisciplinary and systems-orientated for the purposes of developing complex solutions and alternatives towards research for action. Reflecting upon one’s thoughts and actions, especially one’s cultural ignorance and insensitivities can also help foster social communication and dialogue between groups. On another level, critical reflexivity should also be an action conducted by the teacher. The teacher can model and share personal experiences and life trajectories that have interwoven with forms of globalization. Additionally, teachers can reflect upon their own privileges and negative behaviour (racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other forms of microaggression and anthropocentric action) in class and society, and how they are working towards addressing these narrow worldviews. A critical reflexivity of GCE helps students and teachers to discover, for themselves, the complicated interconnected, interdisciplinary and intersectional nature of today’s global problems.

Interconnectedness, Interdisciplinary and Intersectionality

Another important goal of this course was to nurture a sense of active global interconnectedness, especially with regards to the complex nature of global problems. As the adage goes, complex problems demand complex solutions, but they also demand the often-painful task of rethinking the structures and systems that perpetuate those problems in the first place. Various activities allowed students to use multiple lenses to critically
explore the complex multidimensional systems. As stated above, a critical reflexivity helped students to realize the interconnected nature of local, national and global problems as well as assisted in recognizing ones local, national and global identities (Banks, 2004).

With students from various fields of study, there was an organic interdisciplinary nature to the course. This not only provided a richness of experiences and knowledge to class discussions, especially when discussing solutions, but it also helped students to realize the complex interdisciplinary approach needed to devise solutions. Having space in the curriculum for learning interdisciplinary skills organized around real-world issues is vital to any model of GCE. As Weil (2016) succinctly explains:

Because life in our world—both ecological and societal—is dependent upon interconnected systems, to be a solutionary it is also essential to become a systems thinker, able to identify the interlinking components that contribute to the challenges we face. (p. 28-29)

Global problems are therefore inextricably linked through various systems, and an attempt to solve a problem in isolation has the possibility of exacerbating problems in other connected systems. For example, intersectionality became another important running theme of the course. Intersectionality initially was conceived to explain the ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple experiences of Black women in the U.S. (Crenshaw, 1991), and often contentiously refers to the interrelationship of such structures of race, gender and class that impact experiences, especially with regards to privilege and oppression. Intersectionality in GCE therefore provides a formidable lens to help locate and name the multiple ways local and global power coalesce to shape social structures as well as human-environment relationships, and to examine the ways that power of intersecting structures work against communities of color, the poverty stricken, the Global South and other marginalized groups. Thus, an intersectionality of GCE can provide the means to identify, examine and find solutions to issues of the global politics of identity.

With regards to the relationship between GCE and “issues of diversity,” the class came to the conclusion that tolerance for “the other” should not be the goal for education and society. GCE must move beyond being content with tolerance and understanding of diversity. Moreover, settling solely on tolerance may be the reason for the failures of some models of multicultural education (Tarrozo and Torres, 2017). The class discussed the need for GCE to move beyond tolerance towards models of citizenship and education that locate injustices and call for an “outrage” towards intersectional issues of injustice, striving for policies and pedagogies that are grounded in compassion, mutual respect, humanization—in the words of Freire, striving for “the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love” (2007, p.40). Our conversations echo the call by Stewart (2017) to move beyond diversity and inclusion toward justice and equity. Therefore, we realize that for GCE to be more universally applicable in the U.S., in addition to being anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-other forms of violence, bigotry, and xenophobia, GCE must be used to dismantle, resist and disrupt the relationship between white privilege, the white savior complex (Straubhaar, 2015) and global citizenship. This aligns to theories of intersectional global citizenship built upon feminist theories. Thus, any GCE must analyze the interaction between gender and other categories such as race/ethnicity, geographical location and be grounded in understanding and challenging globalization linked to present and historical structural inequalities (de Jong, 2013).
Empowerment through Praxis

Empowerment through praxis of GCE is concerned with the ability to believe in oneself, the consciousness of one’s current and future roles and responsibilities in the world, and the courage for self and social transformation, learned through global knowledge, reflection on that knowledge, and the agency to change. Reflecting on the course, one student explained, “This course pushed us to realize the importance of using our privilege to better the world. We can have an impact especially within our communities, with our families and friends.” This quote demonstrates that throughout the course, I attempted to instill in students a sense of awareness about their privilege associated with being students of this elite university (as well as other privileges), and the importance of problematizing and utilizing that privilege for the betterment of humanity rather than for selfish endeavours. Another example is from the beginning of the quarter, when I shared the syllabus with the students and asked them if they wanted to scrap all but the first three weeks of the set readings (to provide common foundational knowledge). I suggested that they design the syllabus and provide relevant readings and activities for the remaining weeks. Unfortunately, they were not ready for that power and explained that, being new to this topic, they felt uncomfortable designing the syllabus. This exercise in classroom democracy and empowerment is not only crucial to models of democratic and participatory education, it also signaled to students that this was a space where their voice was welcomed and appreciated. This approach to empowering education has elements of culturally relevant and sensitive pedagogies that not only engage learners, but also foster agency through a real-world education that has meaning to the lives of leaners.

As I have stated before, the Freirean notion of praxis is essential to guide objectives of empowerment and civic engagement for any GCE course and program. This is knowledge of the world in order to transform it. Thus, an important goal when teaching this course was to foster empowerment towards an agency that promotes learning for and through social action—a political intervention in the world through subversion, disruption, resistance and problem solving that makes visible the vast inequities around the globe while unearthing alternative models of radical democratic and sustainable relations. To have students use the knowledge and reflection gained in this GCE course to engage in transformative social action is the ideal outcome. As one student shared, “The class was not only about theories, but allowed us to think and discuss about solutions to global problems. Even if those solutions seemed not feasible or far off.” As will be discussed below, the ability and space to reflect, dialogue and imagine solutions to global problems can be considered a transformative action. The course was an attempt to nurture thinking about issues outside one’s own communities, simultaneously connecting global issues to issues in one’s communities, thus fostering the ability to be outraged by and act against issues of social and eco injustices, as well as the ability to combine critique while thinking about and designing solutions.

Nonetheless, a limitation of this course was that specific transformative social engagement components were not included. As one student lamented, “Now that course is over, what do we do with the knowledge and awareness gained?” However, I would argue that transformative social action was addressed in this course in three alternative ways. First, within the global challenges research papers and presentations, students proposed and examined multiple ways that UCLA students could be engaged with
particular global problems, providing real-world ideas for social action. Second, students in groups developed unit lesson plans that were grounded in knowledge and awareness of sustainable development issues and included a lesson that focused on community engagement. These interdisciplinary and creative unit lesson plans could potentially be used to educate younger students for action, which may be considered a learning tool for transformative social action. Lastly, meaningful dialogue occurred on the difference between social action that is grounded in “good deeds” and has altruistic intentions but is limited in its approach to addressing multifaceted causes of problems, and transformative social action that attempts to actually address structures and systems of problems. For example we discussed the distinction between active citizenship and activist citizenship. Isin (2008) contrasts activist citizens with active citizens, writing that “while activist citizens engage in writing scripts and creating the scene, active citizens follow scripts and participate in scenes that are already created. While activist citizens are creative, active citizens are not” (p. 38). Isin’s activist citizenship is more aligned to what Shultz’s (2007) typifies as transformationalist global citizens, who are “not content to just challenge the unjust structures that exist,” but are people that “[join] together to create social justice through deep compassion and accompaniment, through creating democratic spaces for building inclusive community, and through action that links the local experiences with the shared global experience” (p. 255). Moreover, to the point of engaging in systems thinking and transformation, Weil (2016) asserts:

If, for example, we ignore the root systems that are causing climate change, then we will perpetually be putting out the fires of what have become frequent less-than-natural disasters. If we don’t develop systems for people to move out of poverty, we will always be faced with the need for aid” (p.46).

Therefore, an important task of any pedagogy of GCE that is committed to transformative social action is to empower students with the global knowledge and skills necessary to converge systems of thinking with engagement for social change. Although many students were involved in various organizations and many plan to teach in various capacities, a follow-up study would be necessary to explore the extent to which students actually applied the knowledge gained from this course towards transformative social action. Some proposals for the next course discussed by the students included developing unit plans with a community organization and teaching it to the people that the organization serves; incorporating a volunteer, civic engagement project, or awareness campaign that strives to engage with problematic systems; and integrating a social media project, where students design and maintain a blog, website or social media page.

**Critical Public Sphere**

Creating a safe dialogical space where empowerment through praxis can be cultivated is the last important theme of our GCE course. As one student wrote:

The teaching practices used in this course encouraged engagement and conversation, even when they were opposing views. This kind of critical conversation is rare in most classes, because we are not fully challenged thus hindering our full potential for learning.
The classroom as a critical space to dialogue about global problems, allowing opposing views, was seen by this student as vital to their “full” learning potential and was viewed as a “rare” occurrence during their previous university experiences. Therefore, with such pressing issues plaguing humanity and our planet, universities in general and schools of education and teacher training programs in particular have the responsibility to create spaces for a critical public sphere. As Giroux (2002) argues, higher education “is one of the few public spaces left where students can learn the power of questioning authority, recover the ideals of engaged citizenship, re-affirm the importance of the public good, and expand their capacities to make a difference” (p. 450).

The GCE classroom as a critical public sphere has the potential to be a place wherein modes of critical dialogue about global issues can occur, and forms of social action can be broadened. It is a space for the uncomfortable conversations, especially about the most controversial issues. It is a democratic arena where the skills and importance of dialogue across differences are upheld. It can be a safe space where the inherent power dynamics between students can be unpacked, leading towards the process of healing and trust building that is necessary to forge alliances. Concurrently, students from historically marginalized and disenfranchised groups will also need access to exclusive spaces to share experiences, mobilize and heal with people from similar backgrounds and understandings. The critical public sphere is a much-needed space where students can engage with current events and society’s most controversial issues, both taboo and undesirable topics for many teacher-training programs. This critical public sphere should consist of both physical and digital spaces where democratic sharing of knowledge, debate and mobilization takes place and should endeavour to foster networks of local and global solidarity with community groups, social movements, workers’ organizations, universities and other public global spheres necessary for collective social action. These are the jumping points from where the knowledge and awareness of establishing more connections are created.

Critical Global Citizenship Education for Universities: Lessons from Los Angeles

To conclude, the self-study of the UCLA GCE course unearthed some important themes for university students, educators and administrators to consider and contextualize when devising their own critical global citizenship education programs and courses. The caustic nature of authoritarian education, the pervasive impact of neoliberalism on society and the impending force of nationalist populism demand a radical reframing of universities and teacher education towards global awareness and solutions for the world’s most pressing problems. Critical global citizenship education can be viewed as a significant model of teaching and learning that is fundamental to today’s global societies. It has the potential to be a form of global problem posing and problem resolving education. It is a model of citizenship education that fosters the knowledge, virtues and skills—in sum, global consciousness—necessary to understand and deconstruct the impacts and opportunities of globalization, and to disrupt local-global power dynamics towards developing an expansion of loyalty to humanity and our planet, and the action needed to sustain both. Grounded in interconnectedness, interdisciplinary and intersectionality, it should be a form of learning for a critical and systems understanding of the contractions of globalization necessary to cultivate a moral outrage in learners that can lead to a transformative citizenship. It can provide a space for political courage, social imagination
and social responsibility—a “politics of the future” to counter the “politics of the past.” It is a critical reflectivity in self and social complicity that nurtures an ethics of sustainable change and vigilance against destructive behaviours and policies. This praxis of GCE should be directed towards empowering marginalized and disenfranchised communities, who are often the most adversely affected by globalization, a goal that can be realized by developing models for justice and equity that are grounding in building compassion and solidarity—dare I say, love—with others within and across localities. Overall, critical global citizenship education must strive for an expansion of citizenship through teaching, learning and research for action that struggles to create models of engagement for counter-hegemonic globalization that is indispensable to challenging significant threats as well as creating sustainable and subversive alternatives to environmental, political, social and cultural injustices in the world.

As an institution purportedly grounded in notions of public good, it is crucial that the university be part of the solution to global crises, not part of the problem. I call on universities to adopt projects dedicated to models of critical global citizenship education. The present study offers pedagogical themes from a self-study of teaching university GCE specific to Los Angeles. Although this article was meant to ignite a pursuit of teaching and programming for critical GCE for students and educators concerned with the state of the world and with teaching and learning, it is not offering standardized and transferable pedagogies of GCE. Thus, any model of GCE must originate from the experiences of those within particular contexts, organized around how global society impacts specific local contexts, and vice versa. Therefore, research is needed to locate, analyze, expand upon and innovate similar models of critical GCE within given localities. Moreover, as crucial institutions necessary to create pedagogy and public awareness of and solutions to social and environmental injustices, schools and departments of education must consider more closely the role, benefits as well as challenges GCE can have for current and future teachers, specifically the possibilities of critical and transformative models and approaches to GCE. Additionally, for any critical GCE to be successful, teachers and instructors must be given ample support in their endeavours and empowered as central actors who have the responsibility to educate new generations of learners. After all, teachers are crucial in shaping learners’ worldviews of the global challenges that learners will face. Critical GCE also has significant implications for the mission, values and contours of leadership in education as well as other important sectors, which can offer approaches to leadership that are more ethical, empowering, global and socio-eco justice-orientated. A commitment to pedagogies of critical GCE is a commitment to illuminating a critical consciousness in learners necessary to transform existing inequities and toxic local and global relations. It is a sophisticated and nuanced comprehension of the world. Critical global citizenship education provides a process of teaching and learning that pulls back the curtain on the world’s problems, provoking an interconnectedness and social onus that makes global problems difficult to ignore while simultaneously conceiving solidarities and solutions.
References


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Leadership for Social Justice through the Lens of Self-Identified, Racially and Other-Privileged Leaders

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Abstract: This study explores leadership for social justice from the perspective of school principals who identify as privileged. Furman’s (2012) Praxis-Dimension-Capacities Framework of leadership for social justice is used to explore the perspective of four white, middle-class female school administrators, who self-identify as social justice leaders and as privileged in relation to the students, families and communities they serve. Drawing on critical pedagogies, with a focus on critical race theory and critical whiteness studies, in-depth interviews were conducted with four administrators in the Toronto District School Board to explore how this demographic of administrators understands and enacts the five dimensions presented in this framework. Findings suggest that despite having a strong commitment to enact transformative leadership for social justice, participants have an underdeveloped sense of how their white privilege informs their understandings of leadership for social justice. This resulted in the re-centering of whiteness, the perpetuation of oppressive systems and relations, the engagement in ‘safe’ notions of transformative change and benefitting from systems that promote individual status over collective solidarity. Centering critiques of whiteness and other forms of privilege is a necessary component of leadership preparation and development. This study suggests that further exploration is required to explore how leaders with various and intersecting privileges enact leadership for social justice, to inform how we understand the limits and possibilities of educational leadership for social justice.

Introduction

Schooling has often been described as a colonizing structure (Dei & Kempf, 2006; McGovern, 2000) that reproduces social injustice (Freire, 1998). One example is the predominance of white, middle-class educators and their role in creating and maintaining
inequitable patterns of achievement and opportunity based on social class and race (Picower, 2009).

While efforts need to be made to change the demographic of both teachers and leaders in schools to better reflect the student demographic, it is also imperative that all educators engage in the ongoing interrogation of their intersecting forms of privilege and power as an important attempt to counteract the hegemonic structures that dominate schooling practices. This study will focus specifically on how educational leaders’ understanding of their racial and other privileges influence their leadership for social justice.

Leadership for social justice identifies and responds to structural barriers to equitable schooling that result in differential access, opportunity and experiences for students who have been traditionally marginalized within and outside of education systems (Shields, 2004; Marshall, Young, & Moll, 2010; Furman, 2012). Furman (2012) states that “these persistent inequalities demand new approaches to transformative action in schools and, thus, new approaches to educational leadership” (p. 212). The growing field of leadership for social justice (used interchangeably with leadership for social justice in this study) provides specific practices used by leaders to promote social justice as well as the beliefs, values and capacities that underlie them (Furman, 2012). The literature is sparse on how the social identities of administrators influence their leadership for social justice, especially leaders with greater relative power and privilege compared to the students and families they work with. How might leaders’ awareness of the power and privilege afforded by their identities inform their practices of leadership for social justice? How might opportunities for dialogue, professional learning and leadership preparation be constructed differently to acknowledge and disrupt our access to power and privilege depending on our social identities? This study explores the ways in which educational leaders, who self-identify as privileged, social justice leaders, make sense of their leadership practices. In particular, this study will center the participants’ racial acknowledgement of power and privilege (and intersections with social class and faith) and explore how these understandings challenge or maintain racial and other hierarchies.

Leadership for Social Justice

Social justice is an umbrella term that remains highly elusive in that it is complex, evolving and has multiple meanings (McMahon, 2010; Furman, 2012). Meanings of social justice also differ depending on the theoretical stance from which they are constructed. From a positivist, neo-liberal perspective, social justice is defined as equity of outcomes designed to reduce the social costs associated with inequities, without challenging the underlying structures or programs, and while assuming that all members of society want the same things (Shahjahan, 2011). Critical theories focus on the lived experiences of marginalized groups and inequities in educational opportunities, experiences and outcomes (Furman, 2012, p. 194). The intention here is to both identify and eliminate marginalization in schools and transform inequitable power relations beyond schools (Theoharis, 2007).

Leadership is seen as critical to the success of students from diverse backgrounds (Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Like social justice, there are many examples of critical leadership theories that fall under the umbrella term leadership for social justice. These include, but are not limited to: transformative leadership (Shields, 2003;
Leadership for social justice 

Brown, 2006), inclusive leadership (Ryan, 2006), critical race leadership (Lopez, 2003), critical ecological leadership (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004), feminist leadership (Blackmore, 1999; Grogan, 2002), communitarian leadership (Shields, 2003), culturally responsive urban school leadership (Johnson, 2006), critical spirituality leadership (Dantley, 2003), dialogic leadership (Shields, 2004), advocacy leadership (Anderson, 2009) and democratic leadership (Woods, 2005). While theorists initially identified with a more specific type of critical pedagogy, many in the field of educational administration are now positioning themselves more generally as advocates for social justice, perhaps because of the growing recognition of the intersectionality of social identities, and perhaps to gain strength in numbers and common language (Ryan & Rottmann, 2009). One potential danger in the generalization of social justice is that the very ‘difference’ (i.e., social identities) that necessitates a social justice approach is rendered invisible in search of a ‘toolkit’ for social justice leaders (Furman, 2012). The generalization and the specificity need to be held in tension, and despite these differences in approach and focus, leadership for social justice is often concerned with identifying and challenging inequities in schooling outcomes and opportunities, with a focus on historically marginalized groups who are underrepresented and underserved in schools.

Several studies have explored the need for leadership for social justice (Skrla & Sheurich, 2001; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marshall et al., 2010), the affective domain of this type of leadership with a focus on attitudes, beliefs, values and identities (Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Theoharis, 2008; Dantley, 2010) and the practice of leadership for social justice in various settings (Theoharis, 2007; Kose, 2007). Some studies describe the personal and interpersonal characteristics of leaders for social justice. For example, Theoharis (2008) notes three key findings that are important to the identity of social justice administrators: arrogant humility, passionate leadership and a tenacious commitment to social justice (p. 3). Dantley (2005) maintains that a psychology of critical self-reflection is necessary for social justice leaders in which the leaders come to terms with their own identity (p. 503). Furman (2012) notes that several studies examining the identity of social justice leaders indicate that “stubborn persistence”, courage and commitment are common findings particularly because of the barriers and resistance that must be faced to practice social justice in schools (p. 196). ‘Identity’ here is based on personal attributes and individual identities as leaders, rather than socially constructed, collective identities. Other studies explore the role of leaders in challenging systemic issues (Shields, 2004; Rottmann, 2007; Portelli & Campbell-Stephens, 2009; Furman, 2012). Conceptions of leadership for social justice also move beyond notions of hierarchy and legal authority vested in individuals (Ryan, 2010, pp. 1-2) and some view leadership as collectives, ideas, processes or sets of relationships, such as certain notions of shared and distributed leadership and hierarchical power structures that allow for more voices to influence decision-making processes (Ryan, 2010, pp. 2-3).

There are also a number of challenges to leading for social justice, some of which include: deficit thinking that is prevalent in most educational settings (Theoharis, 2007); neoliberal and bureaucratic policy environments that intensify social inequalities and which make leading for social justice difficult (Ryan & Rottmann, 2009; Saldivia & Anderson, 2016); leadership preparation programs that focus on the technical as opposed to moral or political realms in education (Theoharis, 2007); and, among leadership programs that do focus on social justice, a lack of a coherent theory of action for social justice (Saldivia & Anderson, 2016).
Social Identities, Privilege and Whiteness

In the realms of sociology, psychology, politics and education, several studies describe the relationship between privilege and social identity (McIntosh, 1992; Black & Stone, 2005). Critical social psychology describes identity as a social construction that is learned through interactions with others and the world, and that has a strong impact on who we become (Allen & Rosatto, 2009, p. 175). Critical pedagogy centers notions of power and privilege in its understandings of identity and differentiates between the identities of those who are privileged (who see themselves as normal and “human”) and those who are oppressed (who see themselves as “alien” and “other” in reference to the privileged who are normal) (Tatum, 1997). Black and Stone (2005) draw on common elements of the scholarship on privilege to prescribe its five core components:

First, privilege is a special advantage that is neither common nor universal; second, it is granted, not earned or brought into being by one’s individual effort or talent; third, privilege is a right or entitlement that is related to preferred status or rank; fourth, privilege is exercised for the benefit of the recipient and to the exclusion of detriment of others; and finally, a privileged status is often outside the awareness of a person possessing it. (p. 244)

Social privilege exists on the basis of complex and intersecting social identities, such as race, gender, ability, class, faith/religion, age and sexuality and the relative distance of these identities to dominant identities and power (Black and Stone, 2005, pp. 243-244).

Complexities with identity mirror complexities associated with acknowledging and naming privilege. Curry-Stevens (2007) notes that defining who is privileged can prove difficult because focusing on one form of privilege may negate other forms of oppression (pp. 36-37). For example, Fellows and Razack (1998) describe the “race to innocence” in which privileged persons overlook their privilege in order to be constructed as oppressed.

Hobgood (2000) asserts that the social and economic separation that the privileged experience from the majority of the population leads to an ignorance that stems from their lack of contact with the lived realities of the average and more vulnerable citizens. This ignorance can lead to an arrogance rooted in the assumption that the world works for the majority in much the same way that it works for them, the privileged. In commenting on white privilege specifically, McIntosh (1997) explains:

Most Whites believe that they are nice, kind, caring, and benevolent people who have worked hard to obtain their wealth and status (Gallagher, 1997). They seem to have little consciousness of how many people of color distrust and fear them (hooks, 1990). Also, they are unaware, or repress awareness, of their day-to-day privileges, let alone what was done historically to procure the privileges that come with being White in a society built by White racism. (p. 175)
Privilege and oppression are fluid and contextual concepts, in part because we have multiple and intersecting identities that either serve to magnify experiences of privilege or oppression (McIntosh, 1997, p. 37). Razack (1998) describes the “universal construction” of privilege, which asserts that we are in fact all privileged and all oppressed as a result of our multiple and intersecting identities (p. 47), but that pluralizing privilege should not result in a rush to complexity in which a desire to acknowledge multiple forms of oppression deflects from the attention that needs to be paid to issues of race that are often ignored (Crosby, 1997).

In education, concepts of privilege and social identities have been explored in the context of preparing pre-service teachers in education (Matias & Mackey, 2015; Allen & Rossatto, 2009; Page, 2009), teaching secondary school students about privilege (Nurenberg, 2011), the Privilege Identity Exploration Model that examines psychological defenses which occur when discussing privilege (Watt, 2007) and teaching about privilege in adult education settings (Underiner, 2000; Van Gorder, 2007; Curry-Stevens, 2007). There is also a growing body of research on pedagogy for the privileged, which is summed up here:

The terms “pedagogy for the non-poor” (Evans, Evans, & Kennedy, 1995), “whiteness studies” (Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong, 1997; Helfand & Lippin, 2002; Katz, 2003); “pedagogy of the oppressor” (Kimmel, 2002; Schacht, n.d.; Schapiro, 2001); or more generally, “education for the privileged” (Goodman, 2001) collectively define a new task to be added to transformative education’s strategic tool kit—one that intentionally seeks to engage privileged learners in workshops and classrooms and to assist in their transformation as allies in the struggle for social justice.” (Curry-Stevens, 2007, p. 33)

Pedagogy for the privileged has political and practical applications in education. At a political level is the question of whether the privileged should be involved in the process of liberation as allies in the struggle for justice. Curry-Stevens (2007) suggests that pedagogy for the privileged draws on Freire’s (1998) theory of critical consciousness and Mezirow’s (1991) theory on transformative learning because it focuses on counter-hegemonic pedagogy for social justice; however, it is different from these approaches in that it distinguishes the needs of those who are privileged and who require different supports to deepen their commitment to, and involvement in, social justice (p. 34). While Freire (1998) believes that oppressors, by definition cannot initiate liberating education, Curry-Stevens (2007) responds to this claim by asserting the need to “place the needs of the privileged learner on par with the needs of the oppressed” (p. 53). While she acknowledges that efforts to work against hegemonic structures can be challenged by pedagogy for the privileged, they can also be powerful political tools to change oppressive structures if approached consciously (p. 53). Rothenberg and Scully (in Curry-Stevens, 2007) further assert that they (the privileged) “form a cadre of potential allies for social change… particularly by bringing their relative power to bear and by making the surprising move of advocating against their apparent self-interest” (p. 34).
Placing the needs of the privileged on par with the needs of the oppressed is a dangerous line of thinking because it serves to re-center instead of critique privilege, while masking it as anti-oppression or anti-racism work, thereby perpetuating the invisibility of the violence, oppression and trauma inflicted on marginalized and racialized groups. This thinking also makes the false assumption that our collective oppression, and therefore our collective liberation are separate, isolated experiences and ends. The focus then turns to individual self-interest instead of collective solidarity and community. Since hegemony dehumanizes all of us (hooks, 2003), collective action is required and “those who persist in the struggle are awarded with an increasingly multiracial and multicultural existence” (Tatum, 1997, p. 109).

While this study could have explored privilege with regards to social class or faith, racial privilege was deliberately centered because of the elusive ways it operates through invisibility and normalization. For example, one of the participants in this study made no mention of her racial privilege, while all four participants reflected on their class, and, where applicable, faith privilege. Racial privilege in this study is conceptualized as intimately connected with other forms of privilege. At a practical level, pedagogy for racially privileged leaders is concerned with the complexities and nuances in practices dedicated to the transformation of privileged leaders. However, caution must be exercised to center a critique of white privilege, and not whiteness itself.

**Conceptual Framework**

This study explores the phenomena of leadership for social justice and privileged identities from a critical theory perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Apple, 2006). Critical theory is concerned with how power is constructed in human relations, how democracy is subverted and how domination takes place (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 71). Through self-reflection, individuals come to understand how their values, beliefs and attitudes are socially constructed by their environments and social identities, and how unexamined private beliefs and public opinions are shaped by dominant discourses (p. 72). Critical theory asserts that reality is a social construction, thereby rendering the notion of objective reality a falsity (p. 71). Schools are therefore sites of a “consequential struggle between social reproduction and the emancipatory interests of students who have been historically marginalized by schooling” (2014). From a critical theory perspective, this study will examine the relationship between an awareness of privilege and leadership for social justice. In particular, the study will answer the following research question: How do administrators who self-identify as privileged practice leadership for social justice in their schools?

Within the context of critical theories, this study will focus more intentionally, although not exclusively, on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS). DeCuir and Dixon (2004) describe CRT using five tenets: 1) counter Storytelling (stories that counter the dominant narrative about racialized groups); 2) permanence of racism (racism is a permanent part of our lived experiences that may be conscious or unconscious, and continues to re-emerge in new and different ways); 3) whiteness as property (a property right that includes policies and practices that reinforce white supremacy); 4) interest convergence (concessions that do not disrupt the normal ways of life); and 5) a critique of Liberalism (i.e., a critique of colour-blindness, the myth of neutrality and meritocracy,
incremental change, etc.). CWS examines the ways in which whiteness and white privilege have become institutionalized and identifies the social arrangements and systemic factors that contribute to its continued dominance (Giroux & McLaren, 1994; Rodriguez, 2000). CWS has served to challenge the ways whiteness is normalized, invisible and colourless (Rodriguez, 2000), allowing the denial of a racial hierarchy and the accompanying privileges afforded to individuals and through group memberships that are unearned and unacknowledged (Kincheloe & Steinberg 1997). Robin DiAngelo (2011) describes the racial insulation that white folks experience that causes them to expect racial comfort and react defensively to racial stress, otherwise known as white fragility. Defensive reactions include both outward displays of emotions (e.g., anger, guilt, fear, etc.) and behaviours such as silence, argumentation and leaving a stress-induced situation (DiAngelo, 2011). While much of the work on Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies comes out in the United States, this study explores the voices and experiences of four administrators in Toronto, Canada, where ‘diversity’ includes people of a much broader spectrum of ethno-racial identities.

To avoid a positivist approach to leadership for social justice, caution needs be taken that its foundations are not essentialized, that its practices are not reduced to prescriptive or technical formulae, and that it is viewed as dynamic, complex and context-specific (Bogotch, 2002 as cited in Furman, 2012, p.196). With this caution in mind, the model for leadership for social justice to be used in this paper is called the Praxis-Dimensions-Capacities Framework that was developed by Furman (2012). This model is premised on three central concepts: praxis (involving both reflection and action), multiple dimensions (listed below) and the need for leaders to develop the capacity for both reflection and action under each of these dimensions. According to Furman (2012):

The nested model simultaneously suggests the uniqueness of praxis at each level (e.g., capacities for praxis at the interpersonal level will differ from those at the communal level) and the interdependence of the levels (e.g., capacities at the interpersonal level depend on previously developed capacities at the personal level). Thus, the nested model represents the gestalt of leadership for social justice as praxis across multiple dimensions but also that this praxis can be understood in more detail by considering the specific nature of reflection and action in each dimension. (p. 204)

Drawing on the theories of praxis from Freire (2002) and others, Furman (2012) defines praxis as the “continual interplay between reflection and action” (p. 203). Following is a list of the dimensions in the Praxis-Dimensions-Capacities Framework as well as the capacities for reflection and action that leaders need to develop in each dimension.

1. Personal

Reflection: Involves deep, critical and honest self-reflection about biases and stereotypes related to race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, faith, and other social identifiers. In addition, leaders need to reflect on their “shadow side”, which includes self-esteem, power and control, competitiveness, etc.

Action: Leaders need to act on the self-knowledge and reflection to transform themselves as leaders. This could involve guided reflections/journals and cultural autobiographies that inform leadership growth plans.
2. Interpersonal

Reflection: Focuses on building trusting and caring relationships with all stakeholders across all social demographics. Self-knowledge is needed here about one’s interaction and communication style that potentially marginalizes or silences others’ voices. Knowledge about cultural differences in beliefs, norms and values is important to honour different ways of knowing and to prevent deficit thinking. Finally, knowledge of interpersonal styles is important to foster open and honest communication.

Action: Involves the proactive practice of interpersonal communication that involves care, respect, trust, open and clear communication and active listening. Many of the skills developed in the personal dimension are a prerequisite for this dimension.

3. Communal

Reflection: Involves building community across cultural groups through inclusive and democratic processes. This requires an intimate knowledge of the communities and cultures connected to the school, as well as an understanding of democratic practices and inclusive practices.

Action: Proactively creating opportunities for multiple voices (that are traditionally marginalized) to be heard through democratic processes for dialogue and decision-making. Many of the skills developed in the interpersonal dimension are a prerequisite for this dimension.

4. Systemic

Reflection: “Praxis in the systemic dimension includes assessing, critiquing, and working to transform the system, at the school and district levels, in the interest of social justice and learning for all children” (Furman, 2012, p. 210). Reflection here includes developing a critical consciousness or ethic of care regarding systemic issues of inequity. It also includes a review of current school practices including classroom teaching from a pedagogy of social justice.

Action: This involves a deep commitment to and persistence in removing barriers and injustices in the face of resistance, as well as engaging others in this work. This could include professional learning and curriculum rooted in social justice.

5. Ecological

Reflection: Involves an awareness that schools and school-related social justice issues operate within a larger socio-political, economic and environmental context of injustice, oppression and sustainability.

Action: Involves designing pedagogical experiences for students and teachers to further explore these broader issues, especially in the context of their local environments.
While this framework was initially designed for administrator preparation programs, it will be used in this context as a model of developing and deepening understandings of leadership for social justice for racially privileged leaders. Given the large number of school administrators who are privileged in relation to the students and families they serve, there is insufficient literature in educational administration on the connection between an awareness of one’s social privilege and the practice of leadership for social justice. The Praxis-Dimensions-Capacities Framework (Furman, 2012) of leadership for social justice does not take into account the social positionality of the leader, which inevitably influences how leadership for social justice is understood and practiced. This study will take a closer look at how self-identified, racially privileged leaders engage the Praxis-Dimensions-Capacities Framework (Furman, 2012).

The findings in this study explore common themes from participant responses under each of the sub-sections. Due to a limited sample size and a variance in participant responses, themes are generated for further exploration under each of the five components of the Praxis-Dimension-Capacities Framework (Furman, 2012) from the perspective of a self-identified, privileged leader. Figure 2 below demonstrates an analysis of the Praxis-Dimensions-Capacities Framework (Furman, 2012) analyzed from the lens of critical pedagogy, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS).
Methods

Racial privilege and leadership for social justice are both highly complex terms and when brought together in the context of a study, other dimensions of complexity are added. As a result, qualitative methods were chosen to “work with and through the complexity, rather than around or in spite of it” (Schram, 2003, p. 6). Inherent in this complexity are the assumptions and preconceived notions that I bring to this area of study (Schram, 2003). There are three points that will help to contextualize my relationship to this study. First, I am a qualitative researcher by nature, which means: I search to uncover taken-for-granted assumptions; I believe in posing questions and highlighting complex, subjective realities over providing definitive, objective answers; and I am comfortable with a changing structure and purpose of my research as I uncover new knowledge based on participant responses and readings (Schram, 2003). Second, I am an educator who is deeply committed to the dispositions and processes of social justice as much as I am committed to its content, therefore I have engaged in what Kirby and McKenna (1989) refer to as the self-interview to uncover conceptual baggage (i.e. thoughts, feelings, personal history and experiences) brought to the research question and process throughout the study. Third, being a critical researcher, my goal in research is to critique and challenge the status quo through transformation and empowerment (Merriam, 2009). I believe in the tradition of activist research, which is used to better understand the root causes of inequality and strategies
for transforming current practices are developed in conjunction with the participants in
the study (Apple, 1994 in Theoharis, 2008).

As a South Asian woman, I have reflected deeply on how experiences of racial injustice
have shaped my commitment to social justice, and the relative racial privilege and access I
have as a model minority and in relation to Black and Indigenous colleagues. However, I
am also extremely interested in learning how white administrators become interested in,
and advocate for, leadership for social justice. Over time, my focus changed from finding
participants who were privileged administrators to finding participants who self-identified as
privileged, because it became important to me to understand how the participants
understood their privilege and its connection to their leadership. Purposeful sampling
techniques were used to generate “information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2002
as cited in Merriam, 2009, pp. 77-78) as well as snowball sampling (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998
as cited in Merriam, 2009), for one participant. Four elementary school administrators in the
TDSB were chosen for this study based on the following selection criteria: a) they were an
administrator in a public, elementary school (vice-principal or principal); b) they had
discussions with me previously about the social privileges they have in relation to the
students and families they serve; and c) they demonstrated practices in the previously
stated framework of leadership for social justice including the personal, interpersonal,
communal, systemic and ecological dimensions.

The method of data collection relied on in-depth interviews conducted as
“conversations with a purpose” (Dexter, 1970 as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 88). This method
was chosen because it was the best fit for the nature of this study – how self-identified,
privileged administrators come to understand and interpret their privilege and the influences
on their leadership for social justice practices. Merriam (2009) states that interviewing is
necessary when we cannot observe how people feel or how they interpret the world around
them. The initial interview questions were refined to ensure that they were open-ended and
included a mixture of experience and behaviour questions, opinions and values questions,
feeling and knowledge questions and background/demographic questions (Patton, 2002 in
Merriam 2009). The interviews were semi-structured in that the interview started with a
specific guide of questions and probes that were used flexibly and as needed throughout
the interview (Merriam, 2009). A pilot interview was conducted with a colleague prior to the
formal interviews to gauge the flow of the interview and to tweak questions as needed.

A transformative interview method was employed to “intentionally challenge and
change the understandings of participants” (Merriam, 2009, p. 92). All of the participants
commented on the fact that this interview made them think about their practice in more
nuanced ways and was therapeutic in nature. Three of the participants continued the
conversations or conducted their own research on conceptions of privilege following the
interview. Another aspect that contributes to the complexity of this study is my relationship
with the participants. I am a teacher who works with and for three of the four participants in
this study, which may have influenced the level of comfort and openness of my participants
in this process. In my opinion, my relationship with the participants added to the ease with which they could share their thoughts, feelings and experiences, but there may have been areas that were not explored because of our relationship.

Furman’s (2012) Praxis-Dimensions-Capacities Framework was used as a starting point to inform the interview questions and data analysis. However, examples within each of the dimensions emerged that required further exploration. At this point, I used the constant comparative method of data analysis (also known as grounded theory) because it is “compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 as cited in Merriam 2009, p. 199). Categories were formed and re-formed at the various stages of coding: open coding (creation of large, expansive categories), axial coding (relating categories and their properties to each other) and selective coding (development of core category and hypotheses for suggested links between categories or properties) (Merriam 2009). The literature review was completed after the first coding of data and played a key role in re-coding the data. Initially, coding and analysis was explored through the lens of critical pedagogy but an inadequate naming and exploration of racial privilege among participants prompted an exploration and recoding of the data through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies. In the discussion section, findings were re-coded once again within the framework of the Praxis-Dimension-Capacities Framework (Furman, 2012) using participant responses and the literature review.

Findings

Three of the four participants in this study were vice-principals and one was a principal. Two participants had been administrators for one year, one participant had been an administrator for 7 years, and one participant had come back to administration after a leave. All four administrators work in schools in the Toronto District School Board, and three of the four work in settings with a higher percentage of families living at or below the poverty line and a wide range of ethno-racial diversity. The final participant is an administrator in a middle-upper class school with less ethno-racial diversity.

One purpose of this study was to understand the awareness of participants’ privilege in relation to the students and families they serve. Participants were asked to describe the similarities and differences between them and the students/families they serve in relation to social identities to understand how they conceptualize difference and privilege. Table 1 depicts how each of the four participants explains differences and similarities between their social identities and those of the students and families they serve.

Table 1 highlights that understandings of similarities and differences in identity and privilege differ among the participants. All four of the participants are white women who were born in Canada and grew up in two-parent households. They vary in ethnicity, faith (Christian and/or Jewish), first language, parents’ levels of education (grade 8 to post-graduate), family income levels growing up (working class to upper class) and how long
their family has been in Canada (newcomers to several generations). Of particular importance is that while all four of the participants identify as white, P1 did not name her racial privilege in the interview. Yet, all four participants commented on their (current) class privilege, and where applicable, their faith privilege. It is also noteworthy that all four participants described personal or familial experiences or memories of oppression (i.e., religious persecution, first/second generation experiences, etc.) in describing their understanding of oppression. Two of the participants acknowledged significant differences and complexities in their comparison. All four participants did not identify on the basis of sexuality, gender identity or ability. These are also areas that require greater exploration in the literature on leadership for social justice. Notwithstanding the variance in expressions of privilege, common elements emerged from the data on the development of an awareness of privilege and the practice of leadership for social justice, which includes the barriers, strategies and supports required to further develop as social justice leaders.

As Bogotch (2002) reminds us, there is no one right or objective model of leadership for social justice, and that models change as contexts and people change (p. 196). Nonetheless, themes have emerged from the findings that allow for a blending of an awareness of privilege and leadership for social justice practices. Each dimension of the Praxis-Dimension-Capacities Framework (Furman, 2012) will describe reflection and action from the perspective of self-identified, privileged leaders and be analyzed through the lens of critical pedagogy, with a focus on CRT and CWS.

**Personal**

This study explored the critical and honest self-reflection that is central to this dimension and included the following reflections and actions to be developed in privileged leaders:

**Reflection for Privileged Leaders**

This involves understanding the double consciousness of the oppressed, reflecting on the oppressor’s role in creating problematic identities for the oppressed (hooks, 1990, as cited in Allen & Rossatto, 2009) and developing multiple consciousness based on multiple and intersecting identities. The following quote from P3 highlights an awareness of multiple consciousness:

I see the biggest difference between us is that you look at me and you look at them and...you don’t see, I mean diversity is everywhere, but you don’t see that diversity on my face or in my person and I do feel that I come from a place of privilege and I do feel that my students don’t have or are working towards those same opportunities, but still have a long way to go. So in that way I see the struggles that they are facing. The parents of my students were doctors and lawyers and pharmacists back in their home country and they come here and they’re not working – and if they are working, they’re working at Tim Hortons or McDonald’s or very low-income jobs. Whereas with my parents, when they came here, they gave up their jobs but they were able to step into jobs that gave them the money to live in a house rather than an apartment and me going to university was never a question. The money was there and it was gonna happen.
Multiple consciousness involves reflecting on “difference” and the complexities of multiple and intersecting identities, but with an approach that normalizes difference instead of viewing it as something that needs to be celebrated or pathologized (Shields, 2004). All four participants acknowledged their subjectivity, which encouraged them to question the taken-for-granted assumptions that are intimately connected with their racial and/or class privilege (Allen & Rossatto, 2009). As students’ and families’ lived experiences were revealed to participants that differed from their own lived experiences (both as an administrator and as a teacher), all four participants shared their desire to understand and reflect upon, instead of judge or pathologize, differences. For example, P3 stated:

I loved getting to know these kids and for seeing them for who they were and understanding where they were coming from and it was an entirely different world. These kids were so new to Canada, like days in Canada, and every day was a different type of challenge for me to understand and every day caused me to reflect on who I was – a day would come where the kids would pee outside because they don’t use toilets. They’ve never used a toilet and then I’m thinking – I’m thinking about that, I’m processing that like wow, what do you mean? And it just made the whole earth, the whole world feel so much smaller to see that this was happening in Toronto and I’d never even thought about it. And how do I process that without judgment?

Cognitive and emotional reflection is required to overcome cognitive and emotional dissonance (Jansz & Timmers, 2002; Gorsky, 2009). Participants demonstrated a range of responses including guilt and shame for having greater privilege in relation to others, yet limited awareness of, and reflection on, their racial bias. Participant reactions to guilt included not knowing what to do with the feeling to a willingness to work through the discomfort instead of repressing the emotions or shutting down in the process. Feelings of guilt for racial, class and faith privilege indicate participant understandings of themselves as individuals who are either good or bad, rather than as part of a more complex system of intersecting oppressions from which they benefit (DiAngelo, 2012). P2s reflections indicate an individualized response to racial and class privilege:

But I guess also being comfortable in your own skin, not feeling like I’m going to be judged because I’m white. And that for me, the guilt, has been a thing my whole life. And not just white, but white and middle-upper class. My parents are both still alive. I always have them to fall back on. So, you know, being ok with that over time...being ok to say it, being ok to say I’ve had extreme privilege and still working with people who haven’t...working with people who as a family make less than $25,000 a year but still being able to connect, putting aside the barriers and being able to connect on you know, what are we going to do to work together and not from this place of I want to help you or I want to assist you. And I think this is something I’ve come to realize working in an urban setting and an urban school board...no matter which school you went to or which title you have, that you can have a very rich life, you can have amazing ideas, you can be phenomenal at certain skills and it doesn’t matter where you
come from. And we have to push past all of that and we have to see that people who live in poverty live an extremely rich life. I have to be okay with getting to a point where I see things differently and I see my role differently, and that can be really tough.

At the beginning of the quote, P2 notes some discomfort with being judged for being white (an example of racial protection, insulation and comfort), while at the end of this quote, P2 articulates an understanding that her lens of students and families needed adjustment to be of greater service (a more responsible response to her racial privilege). P2 articulates how difficult it is “see things differently”, which indicates an awareness of a lens of the world that is informed by her positionality. However, P2 was the only participant to explore racial privilege and discomfort this explicitly. The absence of participant reflection on racial privilege may speak to the universalism that is central to whiteness and white privilege, which fails to acknowledge Whiteness as an identity, thereby maintaining a racial order (DiAngelo, 2011).

In the literature on engaging pre-service teachers in conversations about whiteness, Yep (2007) and Ringrose (2007) both advocate for moments of struggle as they may lead to potential critical engagement. As Zingsheim and Goltz (2011) argue, “Pedagogies of whiteness are characterized by affect, conflict, discomfort, and risk” (p. 219). In speaking of class privilege, two participants voiced that in addition to allowing for discomfort with cognitive and emotional dissonance, leaders for social justice are able to turn challenges into opportunities and problems into new beginnings. However, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) caution that privileged leaders need to practice being in conflict and discomfort without prematurely looking to solve the problem to overcome their own dissonance. This is especially important in the context of race to ensure that what start off as conversations about race do not end up re-centering the needs and experiences of white people (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). This is a negative consequence of centering white racism instead of whiteness (Sleeter, 2001). Furthermore, while race and social class are intimately connected, conversations about privilege must be confronted within the context of anti-racism to ensure that conversations about race do not turn into safer conversations about gender and social class when racial ascription and the complicity in racial inequity become too ‘uncomfortable’ to talk about.

Finally, participants demonstrated an activist identity and all four participants identified social justice as a central aspect of their identity as an educational administrator and beyond. Of the four participants, two named their racial and class privilege and discussed growing up in households that were social justice-minded with parents who made deliberate choices to question and give up this privilege. P2 remarks:

And I remember growing up and asking why I couldn’t go to this club that all my friends went to – this prestigious sports club where they all took swimming and skating lessons. My parents would say ‘because that club excludes people who are black or people who are Jewish’. So I feel like from this very early age I grew up in sort of this left-leaning household, even though I was from a very white, privileged, upper-class neighbourhood.
The other two participants spoke about experiences in pre-service teaching or in professional development settings that caused them to engage with social difference in critical and transformative ways. What was not named in these experiences was a focus on whiteness ideology, however there were some references to learning about class privilege. In speaking about the relationships between students and teachers, Matias (2013) notes that without a focus on whiteness ideology (both by white teachers and racialized teachers who have internalized whiteness ideology), racial liberation for racialized students is not explicitly bound to the racial liberation of their teachers. The challenge here is that “they may problematically assume the ‘white savior’ role, hoping to liberate [urban] students of color without realizing their own racial culpability in maintaining whiteness as (perhaps unwitting) subscribers to white savior mentality” (Matias 2013 as cited in Matias & Mackey, 2015). Therefore, social action needs to be constructed from the vantage point of interdependent liberation.

Action for Privileged Learners

Participants described engaging in activities to further self-reflection such as centering their privilege in their journal writing and actively thinking about how their privilege impacts their leadership styles. Other activities that were named involved engaging in critical dialogues with colleagues about power and privilege, learning with and from people with different lived experiences and keeping informed about current socio-political issues and conflicts.

As well, all four participants noted that they struggled with finding the balance between their personal and professional lives in their attempts to lead for social justice. Participants discussed examples of self-care they engaged in to be able to welcome and engage the discomfort that arises from cognitive and emotional dissonance (e.g., meditation, being in nature, strong support networks, critical friends, etc.). However, none of the participants noted the privilege that is associated with being able to engage in self-care practices or the recognition that many of the students and families they connect with have more limited access to any of the self-care supports that were suggested. Three participants named the inability to navigate cognitive and emotional dissonance as the number one barrier to why other leaders may not engage in leadership for social justice. At the risk of re-centering the needs of those already in power (school administrators and white school administrators), which is often done at the expense of the needs of students and families, systemic supports are required for leaders to be expected to engage in anti-racist work. Self-care needs to be redefined to negotiate the ambiguity and discomfort with anti-racist work, while shifting the focus away from individualized understandings and responses and towards a systemic analysis of white supremacy and other systems of oppression.

Interpersonal

The development of trusting and caring relationships and the self-knowledge about one’s communication style that is central to this dimension can include the following reflections and actions to be developed in privileged leaders:
Reflection for Privileged Leaders

Self-reflection involves questioning whether an ethic of care and a sense of responsibility to students is constructed from a paternalistic, charity model of benevolence that addresses the material and socio-emotional effects of the problem, or from a transformative, liberatory stance that attends to socio-political, economic, moral and historic causes of the problem. Reflection is also required to understand how issues of power and privilege have negatively impacted marginalized communities, and how as leaders who represent power and privilege, respect and acceptance into historically marginalized and racialized communities must be earned. Of particular interest to this study was an awareness of administrators that the communities they entered were already established and that because of their racial, class and faith privilege, trust had to be earned from students, parents and community partners. There is a keen awareness that trust and acceptance cannot be expected as P3 notes:

I think I work really hard. It’s a priority for me to find other ways to communicate to them that I understand something of their social identity because it can’t be seen to be written on my face. So I make conscious decisions for instance to learn phrases in the language, to dress when in traditional cultural attire when we have events at the school. I bring my children to school, my own children to this school and involve them, because I am aware that when they look at me...I need to show them, I need to explicitly demonstrate that I understand that I have a different identity than they do, but that I want to feel included in what they’re doing. And for me, I want to appeal to their hearts and for me the way to do that has been to make the efforts – those are conscious decisions that I make. It’s about bringing yourself into the heart of what’s already happening in the community. It’s about building connection and for me the easiest way to do that is from mother to mother. That’s a tool that I use and I know that when you are a mother, that’s probably the most important thing – most people define themselves that way when you become a mother. And so I’m able to do that when I involve my family and teach my children to speak a few words in their language. So, it opens their arms more to envelop me into their world – and that’s what I want.

While P3’s comments demonstrate an awareness of the need to build trust, they raise some concerns. Building trusting and caring relationships to feel included in marginalized and racialized groups to which you do not belong, re-centers the needs of the privileged to maintain a sense of comfort and safety. This is evident in phrases such as, “I want to feel included” or, “So it opens their arms to envelop me into their world – and that’s what I want”. Building trusting and caring relationships must center the needs of marginalized and racialized students and families. This means that leaders must account for historical mistrust and the myriad of ways both within and outside of schools that the safety and comfort of parents and students are compromised daily. In doing so, trust-building requires a sustained commitment to de-centering the need for comfort and safety of the white leader.
Participants also demonstrated varying but limited degrees of reflection on how their sense of self was informed by their relationships with students and families. Most of their reflection centered on how they viewed students and families. Despite working to challenge deficit thinking, maintaining a gaze on students and families continues to situate both the problem and the solution with the Other instead of focusing on one’s complicity in systems that maintain hierarchal power structures. Kumashiro (2000) suggests the importance of moving beyond the Self/Other binary in critical approaches, and suggests that we can learn much from a queer, poststructural approach:

I do not mean that we should see the Self in the Other, or the Self as the Other, but that we should deconstruct the Self/Other binary. We might look, for example at how our normalcy needs, even as it negates, the Other, as heterosexuality does the homosexual Other (Fuss, 1991) or literary Whiteness, the Black shadow (Morrison, 1992)...And then we might ask, how does this knowledge come to bear on my sense of self? By changing how we read normalcy and Otherness, we can change how we read Others and ourselves. (p. 45)

Leaders must challenge their understandings of themselves in relation to students and families with less relative power and privilege by reflecting on how otherness constructs, maintains and protects the Self. For example, white leaders might ask themselves how the construction of racial innocence and virtuosity or the expectation of racial comfort influences their actions and beliefs as leaders. Once again, a focus on the individual cannot be a substitute for identifying and challenging systemic inequities and ideologies (such as individualism) that benefit white, middle-class and other-privileged leaders.

Action for Privileged Learners

This involves the recognition that there are multiple ways of understanding and demonstrating concepts such as trust and care in relationships and actively learning about them from multiple perspectives. Three participants discussed the importance of being able to dialogue across difference and address controversial and sensitive issues. They described skills they have used such as suspending judgement, being aware of one’s immediate reactions, and listening beyond words. The skills mentioned by participants are important to address differences in opinion among people with similar privilege. They do not, however, address the skills needed to dialogue across difference in which there are racial and other power imbalances. For example, white leaders may need to learn skills such as identifying and responding to racial microaggressions (e.g., overlooked the contributions of a racialized person) as Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo and Rivera (2009) suggest that the success or failure of facilitating difficult dialogues related to race is indirectly linked to the ability to recognize racial microaggressions.

These three participants also commented on how important it is for them to talk less and listen more. P2 remarked: “People who look like me need to learn when to talk and to talk less. Our voices are heard enough. We need to make spaces for other voices.” Ratcliffe (2005) suggests that rhetorical listening can be used to identify troubled identifications with gender and whiteness in order to facilitate cross-cultural communication on any topic, as it examines how whiteness functions as an ‘invisible’ racial category and accounts for complexities in the political and ethical positions of rhetoric.
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Communal

The creation of democratic and inclusive processes that build community across cultural groups can include the following reflections and actions to be developed in privileged leaders. ‘Culture’ needs to be defined broadly here, including complex, fluid and intersecting aspects of social identities.

Reflection for Privileged Leaders

All four participants discussed what they have learned about, from and with the community and families with different lived experiences both personally and as educators. They also discussed how they have come to value different perspectives on schooling, parenting and child development. P1 identifies how an unknowability of the Other (Ellsworth, 1997 as cited in Kumashiro, 2000) has informed her leadership:

I may not in fact know what is in the best interest of the students in my school. Their experiences with the world are so different from mine. I will only ever know some of my students to a degree, maybe all of the students for different reasons. So I can’t make all of the decisions. There’s no sense in that. I have to involve parents and students and make the decisions collectively...and be willing to learn new things. And if there is something that is way off, then I have to step in.

However, P1 demonstrates a safe notion of ‘knowing students’ that does not fundamentally challenge her practice or what constitutes ‘knowledge’. For example, “stepping in if something is way off” suggests that there are limits to acceptable knowledge and notions of parent engagement, reinforcing structures and discourses that allow administrators to determine the boundaries of normative schooling processes. P1’s initial attempts to involve different perspectives is an example of interest convergence (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004), in which inclusion may be supported because it is beneficial to a professional identity and social cohesion. Privileged leaders require skills and training to embrace and learn from broader notions of schooling, parenting and child development that may disrupt normative schooling practices.

Furthermore, none of the participants discussed the importance of creating democratic processes from critical perspectives. Critical democratic processes would identify and challenge: (un)intentionally promoting dominant narratives of the Other; positioning a member of the Other as the expert of that group; and creating false binaries between the privileged and the Other that essentialize the Other in ways that diminish the complexity and nuances between and within groups (Kumashiro, 2000).

Action for Privileged Learners

Three of the four participants identified themselves as a connector, or matchmaker of people, ideas and resources. What was common among all three participants in relation to the matchmaker identity was their desire to draw on the strengths and interests of multiple stakeholders while maintaining a focus on an equity-related goal. The following quote by P4 demonstrates the matchmaker identity in the context of building a common vision:
What I like doing is, I like to work with people’s strength and around their weaknesses. I like to create an environment where there is a lot of possibility and energy, almost like a matchmaker. I think that part of my role is to make connections between people and ideas and resources that maybe otherwise wouldn’t happen. So, I’m kind of – I’m both a sequential and a random thinker – so sometimes my thought process isn’t always apparent to other people. But I see things that other people don’t necessarily see as connections. So I see part of my role is to articulate the joint vision of the people I’m working with and then help make it happen.

Too narrow a focus on the privileged leader risks perpetuating the false assumption that different stakeholders (many of whom are students, families and community partners who are racialized and marginalized) do not have the skills to identify their own strengths and to connect those strengths to others’ strengths and to common goals, which are features of deficit thinking. This is in contrast to another participant who discussed welcoming parents into the school to share their expertise with students and staff on a variety of topics, given that a large portion of the parents and guardians were internationally educated without access to stable work in Toronto. Caution must be exercised in not reinscribing a racial or other order that is connected to the perceived ability of a subordinated group to contribute to knowledge, and instead seek to acknowledge and honour the knowledge(s) of all families and students and co-construct new knowledge. Two participants noted that matchmaking was especially important when it brokered social and cultural capital to allow students who are marginalized in and by the system greater access and opportunities.

All four participants also viewed their role as inclusive leaders (Ryan, 2006). In particular, participants discussed advocating for inclusion, nurturing dialogue and adopting inclusive decision-making practices (Ryan, 2006). P4 shares her experiences:

So, there was a lot of concern about gangs and violence and a lot of bad press about the neighbourhood and so the way I entered the school was I asked for a day to interview people. And so, I interviewed various staff members, some students I think, some parents…it was very exciting to be in a new situation where I didn’t know all the answers and to learn about the community, to learn from the community, that’s what made the job interesting. I knew how to teach, but to be in an environment where…not only was I so different from the people I was working with, but the people were so different from each other — and trying to negotiate the potential conflict and trying to bring people together to work for a common goal. Where I started after I did my interviews was, what do we all agree on? And that’s how we started to move forward. We agreed that our kids were fabulous. We agreed that they had lots of talent. We agreed that education for many of them was going to be an opening of possibilities for them and that the potential is limitless — so those kinds of things we agreed on, so then it was just trying to figure out how to negotiate relationships so that we can actually move forward in one direction.
The challenge with inclusive decision-making is that it may assume neutrality and render white privilege and class privilege invisible. To “learn about the community” and “to learn from the community” are relational approaches that involve speaking directly to families, students and partners in the community and centering their voices. The communal approach to this model must actively de-center the overwhelming power of the school, the administrators and the teachers by actively promoting the voices of students, families and community partners in decision-making and learning practices.

Critical democratic perspectives would also be important to consider in relationships between and within students, educators, families and community partners. This requires vigilant awareness of who is being represented and how, and a commitment to intervening to create more truly democratic spaces (i.e., actively creating avenues and opportunities for the most marginalized voices to be heard). This must also happen with an understanding of the ways in which internalized and horizontal oppression operates between and within racialized groups, given that each group, although still a part of the oppressed population, has its own histories and is affected by systems of oppression in unique ways (Takaki, 2008). Finally, it involves structural and systemic mechanisms, policies and practices that support leaders (and hold them accountable to) engaging critical democratic processes.

**Systemic**

The goals of assessing, critiquing and working to transform the system are central to this dimension and can include the following reflections and actions to be developed in privileged leaders:

**Reflection for Privileged Leaders**

Reflection at a system level involves questioning how normative practices have contributed to inequitable outcomes and opportunities for marginalized and racialized populations and how to use and expand one’s locus of control to create more equitable and inclusive schooling practices. All of the participants mentioned the importance of regular reflection of the students’ and families’ experiences, opportunities and outcomes. P4 reflects on the impact of schooling on the life trajectory of students:

> I see what we do as being potentially very harmful or potentially very helpful. So I see my role as principal as creating a humane environment in which we are doing as little harm as possible (because I think schools can be harmful places) and where we’re creating a sense of possibility in everybody who crosses our doors or hears about us or know us... It’s recognizing that how a child is treated in a school may change the direction of a child’s life.

This description is an example of a normative practice that has contributed to inequitable outcomes by focusing on the individual level instead of the systemic level. It speaks to the ways in which ‘harm to students’ was positioned in the data as a challenge to interpersonal shortcomings of educators in the building (an individualized approach), rather than as institutionalized and systemic shortcomings giving rise to the conditions for poor interpersonal relationships. This one example by P1 highlights an attempt to focus on more underlying ideologies, but still focuses on the individual teacher:
And that’s a huge part of who I am and how I question especially those kids who aren’t doing well, who aren’t motivated. I’m always questioning – what is it? What would make them want to be here? What do we need to do differently? Why hasn’t that teacher discovered it yet and what does that teacher need to be able to discover it? What haven’t I done yet to support this child or support this teacher in supporting this child?

Of interest, is that participants identified very few systemic policies and practices at the level of the school board or Ministry of Education that affect student outcomes and experiences. For example, one participant described supporting a newcomer and racialized family in understanding and advocating for their rights in the special education process, despite the fact that the family was advocating against the participant’s peers. However, there was no mention of their role in naming and working to transform unjust board or Ministry practices such as: streaming, the disproportionate suspensions and expulsions of racialized male students; opportunity gaps that result in achievement gaps on the basis of race and social class; limited opportunities for students to explore and affirm their racial and other identities; and, policies, practices and structures that do not center anti-racism and anti-oppression.

One explanation for this is that challenging systemic structures from which one benefits can have a direct, and often negative effect on a leader’s well-being, sense of self and professional advancement. This speaks to Freire’s (1998) notion of false generosity that focuses on ‘saving people’ instead of ‘transforming systems’ from which one benefits and is therefore invested in. For example, in reflecting on the potential limitations of privileged leaders in promoting social justice for students with less privilege, P3 states:

I will never, ever, ever, ever go through what they’re going through simply because of the way that they appear – the way they look, because they look so completely different to the people who make the decisions in this city – and I do look like the people who make the decisions in this city. And they need people who look like them in positions of power. And I feel, I wish I didn’t look this way sometimes because I want to be a role model for these students and I feel I can be a role model to a certain point and then it just stops, because I feel like I will never really understand that last little bit.

Here, P3 acknowledges the importance of students seeing themselves in those who hold positions of power and the limitations she poses as a white leader. However, the desire for P3 to be a role model is an example of false generosity in that it positions allyship as an identity and badge of honour, instead of an act towards collective liberation. Furthermore, there is no mention of working in solidarity with racialized leaders to recognize, challenge and change hiring and promotion practices to account for a greater representation of leaders to reflect the students, families and communities they serve. That would be an example of Freire’s (1998) notion of ‘true generosity’, in which white administrators demonstrate a willingness to give up one’s status and safety and join in solidarity with racialized leaders to struggle collaboratively against the policies and practices that maintain oppression.
Action for Privileged Learners

Participants shared strategies for changing the mindsets of teachers in their schools. All four of the participants expressed the need to regularly break the silence with their staff that maintains oppression by engaging in courageous conversations (Singleton & Linton, 2006), P1 states:

Because we’re through with the silences – that’s what’s created so many inequities in the world – and that’s how voices have been lost and people have been broken. It’s about speaking up, and it takes courage. It’s about having those conversations and fighting those fights that you need to fight.

Participants noted that using identity-based data about students and families that explores gaps in opportunity, achievement, well-being and engagement, helps to initiate and sustain difficult conversations because it is perceived as ‘objective information’. The following quote by P1 describes how data can be used as an instructional tool to develop more responsive teaching practices and challenge deficit thinking:

I learned to let the data do the talking and let the data start those conversations and then through understanding data, that’s when you get a sense. When you ask them for their input on that data, that’s where you start to hear a lot of their beliefs and a lot of their perceptions and a lot of their needs. So I often, often refer to data…data about the students we’re serving, data about the community we’re serving, but also data about current research.

All four participants also talked about bringing in “outside experts” on equity and social justice to talk about issues that they did not feel knowledgeable enough to speak about or that might lead to the misrepresentation of a population. They also felt that staff would better receive certain messages if it were not coming from someone in authority and rather a peer.

Interestingly, most of the systemic actions mentioned by participants involved within-school initiatives, such as providing professional learning opportunities that engage courageous conversations (Singleton & Linton, 2006) around race, class, faith, gender, sexuality and ability and advocating for more time and resources for teachers to reflect on, analyze and develop social justice curriculum. As stated above, participants did not engage in critiquing or challenging inequitable policies and practices at the level of the school board and/or Ministry of Education that lead to more equitable outcomes for all students. These activities challenge the power, status, safety and well-being of white and other-privileged administrators. One participant alluded to the subversive ways in which she challenges the system by asking probing questions and looking for lateral support among colleagues who are administrators in more affluent parts of the city.
Ecological

Creating an awareness that schools and school-related issues operate within a larger socio-political, economic and environmental context of injustice and oppression is central to this dimension and can include the following reflections and actions to be developed in privileged leaders:

Reflection for Privileged Leaders

All four participants demonstrated an understanding of how local, national and international events and politics influence student achievement, well-being and engagement. P3’s quote demonstrates an understanding that students’ experiences in schools are influenced by larger, unjust social and economic realities:

The minute I stepped into the role of teacher or educator where it was my role to teach these children and prepare them for the life they’re going to have, that’s when to me, it became so much more than charity. And I still didn’t conceive of it as social justice – I just thought – I want the best future possible for these little people sitting on my carpet and what do I need to do to make that happen? And then start thinking about what needs to change – what needs to change in Toronto, in Ontario, in Canada, in the world for these kids to make their future the one they deserve to have?

There were significant differences in how participants conceptualized the influence of larger socio-political factors on student achievement and well-being. For example, while one participant essentialized the experience of poverty in the city, two participants discussed the need to understand the experiences of newcomers living in poverty as they often differ from those who experience generational poverty. The fourth participant spoke about “the colour of poverty” in the city, making explicit links between social class and race. However, there was no mention among the four participants of how historical contexts might influence the achievement, well-being and engagement of students and families, such as the (continued) influences of colonialism, segregated and residential schools, etc.

Furthermore, there was limited reflection among the four participants on their complicity in systems of oppression beyond their role as school leaders. For example, there was limited reflection on how white supremacy (e.g., remaining silent in the face of interpersonal or systemic racism, normalizing white experiences, etc.) and capitalism (e.g., what they choose to buy/own, etc.) operate in their personal lives beyond the school.

Action for Privileged Learners

This involves creating experiences for students and teachers to explore larger, socio-political issues that include an exploration of how we contribute to and perpetuate inequities. Three of the four participants discussed their role as centering the community in the curriculum and infusing issues of equity and social justice into curriculum planning and professional learning opportunities for staff. P2 explains her primary role as a social justice instructional leader in the following quote:
I consider myself the curriculum leader at the school. I’m very involved with the students and so I’m able to still see first-hand what the leadership is that I offer because I can follow it right through – because I look at the student work, I look at what’s happening, I look at what’s going on in the classroom and so I’m constantly trying to learn as much as I can so that I can guide the school in its pathway towards learning more about social justice....So by participating in and supporting things like community walks, faith walks, getting the community into the school as much as possible – I see that as a big part of my role as being a leader for social justice and for them to understand the demographics of the student population and really digging into that and understanding what it means.

All four participants discussed the importance of inviting the community into the school and creating partnerships with local and international community agencies. Two of the principals noted that they were committed to supporting students and families in advocating for their rights outside of the board. One participant described supporting families in the community by addressing standard of living concerns in an apartment building. Three participants discussed the need to keep abreast with local and global news with an understanding of the ways in which the media misrepresents people and stories, along with an eye for stories that broaden and challenge dominant narratives of marginalized and racialized students.

Conclusion

Privileged leaders have an important role to play in transforming inequitable and oppressive schooling practices, policies, discourse and relationships. This study explored how four, self-identified privileged leaders (white, middle-class) practice leadership for social justice as explored in the Praxis-Dimension-Capacities Framework (Furman, 2012) and analyzed through the lens of critical pedagogy, CRT and CWS. Participant interviews provided examples of all five sections of the Praxis-Dimension-Capacities Framework (Furman, 2012) and similar to the framework, findings in this study should be understood as both unique praxis in each dimension and as an interdependent system.

Findings suggest that social justice leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to enacting transformative leadership but have an underdeveloped sense of how their white privilege informs understandings of their leadership. First, there is limited awareness of how their whiteness operates in invisible ways to correlate with normalcy. Many examples of their reflection and action focus on how to understand and improve conditions for the Other, with limited analysis of the reframing and unlearning needed to understand their complicity in, and benefit from, white privilege and white supremacy. Social justice leadership therefore, needs to explicitly name, explore and respond to systems of oppression instead of simply trying to learn about the Other. Second, social justice leadership for privileged leaders cannot serve to re-center the experiences, feelings and beliefs of dominant groups in an effort to support their learning and unlearning towards more transformative notions of leadership. White leaders (and white educators more broadly) would benefit from constructing new white identities that center a critique of whiteness, by: exploring their investments in a system of racism; exploring ways in which whiteness constructs innocence
and virtue and maintains a sense of comfort; making visible that which is intended to be invisible; and, to guard against manifestations of whiteness, such as the white saviour. Third, white leaders engaging in social justice leadership need strategies to dialogue and facilitate dialogues across difference in ways that account for power differences and racial hierarchies between and among different stakeholder groups. This requires a complex and nuanced understanding of the ways in which white privilege operates (e.g., microaggressions, white fragility, internalized oppression of subordinated groups, etc.), or these strategies run the risk of being ‘safe’ discussions that perpetuate oppressive relationships, discourses, policies and practices.

Fourth, leaders for social justice must continue to guard against the insidious ways that deficit, blame-the-victim thinking creeps into educational discourse. This requires a commitment to the ongoing unlearning that accompanies learning and relearning. Fifth, in describing their reflections and actions on addressing systemic barriers, the administrators in this study named within-school systemic foci (e.g., professional learning for teachers) and ecological foci (i.e., supporting families with challenges beyond schooling). However, limited examples were provided in naming and challenging systemic barriers within the school board or within the Ministry of Education, which may have a direct effect on the leaders’ professional well-being and advancement. As stated above, white administrators committed to challenging oppression demonstrate a willingness to give up their status and join in solidarity with racialized leaders and communities to struggle collaboratively against the policies and practices that maintain oppression.

Sixth, white leaders need to be comfortable with not knowing, and recognize that their incomplete and partial truths require that they hold their proposed solutions tentatively and resist the urge to find immediate solutions to avoid discomfort. Finally, participants made little mention of how white privilege operates in other parts of their lives. White leaders are encouraged to blur the lines between their professional and personal selves and develop a gaze to how white privilege operates in and through them, beyond their roles as administrators. Developing this gaze at a personal level deepens the gaze at a professional level, and guards against adopting a critique of whiteness for professional mobility or to satisfy a job requirement.

Given that only four participants were interviewed for this study, more research is required to be in dialogue with ideas presented here. Furthermore, research is also required to explore how leaders with various and intersecting social privileges understand and practice leadership for social justice. This research will help provide a more thorough understanding of leadership for social justice as a social construction based on socially constructed identities. For example, findings from these interviews did not speak to role of spirituality in leadership for social justice (Dantley, 2003) or teaching for wholeness and healing (hooks, 2003).

This study prompts some important questions. First, which of these findings are applicable to leaders with different intersections of privilege? Understandings of leadership for social justice cannot be neutral. Therefore, it is incumbent upon researchers and practitioners to not only contextualize leadership for social justice on the basis of who we are leading (e.g. racialized students), and where we are leading (e.g., urban school districts), but also on the basis of who is leading (the social identities of our leaders). Developing a greater awareness of how the identities of social justice leaders inform
their understanding and practice of leadership for social justice will allow for more focused praxis (reflection and action) based on who is leading. This presents an interesting tension and opportunity: research that explores social justice leadership from the perspectives of leaders with different, intersecting identities needs to be held tenuously to avoid essentializing identities, yet it also needs to be explored more deeply and rigorously to broaden our understandings of the limitations and possibilities of leadership for social justice. Furthermore, the field of leadership for social justice would benefit from an analysis of different critical and post-cultural theoretical frameworks (e.g., critical queer studies, critical disability studies, anti-colonial frameworks, etc.). The purpose here is not to generate a toolkit of best practices in social justice leadership. The purpose is to explore conflicts and opportunities and to center change, ambiguity and discomfort in our very understandings of social justice leadership. This requires a recognition of the partiality and unfinishedness of any theory and its subsequent analysis.

Another question to consider is: how might these findings apply to privileged leaders who do not identify as social justice leaders? In exploring how self-identified privileged leaders understand social justice leadership, we can further understand how the processes of normalization of white experience and thought, and the tendency to render it invisible, are enacted in leadership. This knowledge should have a direct effect on leadership preparation programs and professional learning opportunities for administrators. Not only should these programs and learning opportunities center critiques of various and intersecting forms of privilege, educational leaders should be expected to engage in learning/unlearning opportunities related to their specific experiences of privilege. Systemic policies, programs and structures need to support this type of professional preparation and development, along with the corresponding changes in hiring and promotion practices.
References


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## APPENDIX

### Table 1

| Participant 1 (P1) (Vice Principal – 1 year) | - Named more similarities than differences on the basis of family income level (growing up). Named class privilege in relation to students now.  
- No mention of difference in experience on the basis of race.  
- Similarities on the basis of the newcomer experience (English language learners, cultural and language barriers for parental). |
| Participant 2 (P2) (Vice Principal – 1 year) | - *Currently works in a predominantly white, middle-upper class school. The descriptors below are in relation to working with multiple ethnicities and generally lower-income communities:*  
- Named and described privilege on the basis of race and class and intersections between these social identifiers (i.e. family-owned cottage)  
- Similarities on the basis of social issues (gender, bullying, etc.)  
- Has some understanding of the issues of newcomers because she is married to someone of a different race who came to Canada at an early age as a refugee |
| Participant 3 (P3) (Vice Principal – 5 years with break in between years 3-4) | - Parents were immigrants, so can connect with parents on the newcomer experience (i.e. parents who want a better life for their children and place a high value on education).  
- Parents experienced religious persecution and can connect with students and families on discrimination on the basis of religion/faith.  
- Acknowledgment of privilege on the basis of race and ethnicity and its connection to privilege on the basis of class (i.e. different levels of access to employment partially based on racial and ethnic differences) |
| Participant 4 (P4) (Principal – 7 years) | - Parents experienced religious persecution and can connect with students and families on the basis of religion/faith discrimination.  
- Participant notes that many newcomer families were probably of a similar class in their home country but different upon their arrival in Canada.  
- Difference on the basis of time in Canada – participant is a second-generation.  
- Canadian and many students and families are newcomers.  
- Difference on the basis of class between participant and students who are also second- or third-generation Canadians.  
- Acknowledgment of difference on the basis of race and ethnicity. |
Author Biography

Dr. Vidya Shah teaches in the Faculty of Education at York University in the Master of Leadership and Community Engagement Program and the Initial Teacher Education Program. She has also taught courses in the Professional Master’s Program in Educational Leadership at the University of Western Ontario. She received her Doctorate in Educational Administration from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto and her research explores contributing factors to district reform for equity. Vidya has worked in the Model Schools for Inner Cities Program in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and was a primary, junior and intermediate classroom teacher in the TDSB. She is actively involved in education-related community initiatives and works closely with parents and community partners to mobilize research education and support educational reform.