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Critical Consciousness Raising About Global Economic Inequality Through Experiential and Emotional Learning

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Abstract

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Keywords

critical consciousness raising, economic inequality, emotional learning, experiential learning, study abroad

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Background: The ability to question global structures and analyze one's own positionality in relation to economic, political, and social forces is essential for college graduates. Although study abroad programs claim to develop students into global citizens, most studies do not critically examine student learning about global inequalities. **Purpose:** This study analyzed the process of critical consciousness raising about economic inequalities through experiential and emotional learning. **Methodology/Approach:** It employed ethnographic observations, in-depth interviews, and written journals of 27 U.S. college students who participated in a Ghana study abroad program in years 2016-2018. Data were analyzed using an inductive thematic approach. **Findings/Conclusions:** Witnessing and being emotionally impacted by unjust global realities allowed students to question their actions and assumptions. Even though they seemed to have become more self-aware of their privilege and positionality, few of them questioned the global structures underlying economic injustice. Despite the limited analysis, they demonstrated inspiration to learn and do more. **Implications:** Moving beyond the education's traditional focus on students' cognitive domain is crucial for critical consciousness raising about social injustice and global interconnections of oppression. Higher education should ensure a critical analysis of economic inequalities both abroad and in their own country.

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Introduction

Moving beyond simple knowledge acquisition to critical consciousness is important when teaching students about topics such as social justice, oppression, and global inequalities. This is especially true for U.S. students who have a general “lack of awareness of America’s place in global economics and politics” (Sewpaul, 2003, p. 298). Paulo Freire’s (1970a, 1970b, 1973) conceptualization of critical consciousness raising is widely recognized as a key method to “achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality” (Freire, 1970b, p. 27). Ideally, students learn how to question and analyze their personal circumstances in relation to historical, economic, political, and social forces (Freire, 1970a). To help students move from what Freire (1973) referred to as “naïve consciousness” to “critical consciousness”, educators need to build “an active, dialogical educational program concerned with social and political responsibility” (p. 19). The outcome of critical consciousness raising thus “involves taking action to change one’s reality once one has become aware of the oppressions and enhancing involvement in community organizing and political action to challenge structural inequities” (Larson & Allen, 2006, p. 508).

The present study examined the process of critical consciousness raising in U.S. college students about economic inequalities through experiential and emotional learning. Through the analysis of the learning experiences of the students who participated in a Ghana study abroad program, we hoped to explore how students learn to “read the world”, that is to name and interpret the structural inequalities (Freire, 1970a), and act on their new consciousness. Guided by the work of Sartre (2001), we view global inequalities as resulting from the colonial and neocolonial forces, which expose less developed parts of the world to ongoing exploitation by more powerful countries. Conquest and control of other people’s lands, implementation of

foreign government structures, exploitation of natural resources, externally controlled unfavorable trade (Chowa et al., 2013), and “the burden of loan repayment on heavily indebted poor countries” (Abram & Cruce, 2007, p. 4) are some of the outcomes.

Experiential and Emotional Learning and Study Abroad Programs

Experiential and emotional learning holds a unique potential in expanding students’ critical consciousness as it requires active involvement with their learning process, and it moves students from just learning about a subject matter to actually understanding it (Dewey, 1938; Weaver, 1998). This type of learning also targets students’ attitudes, judgement, awareness, interests, and emotions that go beyond the classroom including the ability to empathize with feelings and experiences of others (Cramer et al., 2012). As Larsen (2017) asserts, “emotional experiences are not just precursors to understanding, they are forms of understanding themselves” (p. 289). Immersion programs, both international and domestic, are considered one of the most intense forms of experiential and emotional learning (Weaver, 1998).

The principal value of immersion programs is usually described in terms of the development of students’ cultural awareness and skills, including cross-cultural adaptability (Mapp, 2012), cultural humility (Belliveau, 2019; Schuldborg et al., 2012), cultural competence and sensitivity (Boateng & Thompson, 2013). Other literature examines outcomes related to social justice (e.g., Bell et al., 2017; Cannon & Heider, 2012; Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009; Cotten & Thompson, 2017; Larson & Allen, 2006). For example, Larson and Allen (2006) found that Canadian social work students who participated in a short-term study abroad in Mexico experienced a shift in thinking from “attributing individual responsibility for poverty and disadvantage toward broader structural factors” (p. 511). Similarly, a two-week study abroad program in India enhanced Australian students’ understanding of human rights and social justice,

particularly in relation to gender (Bell et al., 2017). Few studies, however, address students' critical consciousness raising in relation to global economic inequality and exploitation.

The Ghana study abroad program incorporated specific experiential and emotional learning components to expose historical, economic, political, and social forces that shape global inequalities. Ghana was one of the major ports for transatlantic slave trade, and students visited the former slave dungeons in the towns of Elmina and Cape Coast (learning about the history of racial oppression during this program was described in Olcoñ, Pulliam & Gilbert, 2019). Being the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence in 1957 from British rule, Ghana is a constitutional democratic system with a differentiated upper, middle and lower class (Vasco & Pierella, 2015). Although poverty in Ghana has declined overall, geographical imbalances of entrenched poverty can be found in rural areas, the Northern region, and severely marginalized communities (Ofori-Boateng, 2015). For example, the Agbogbloshie community, a site near Ghana's capital city, Accra, is one of the largest e-waste dumpsite in the world where over 200,000 tons of electronics and appliances are shipped every year (Akormedi et al., 2013) and a site of extreme disadvantage.

An inherent conflict of study abroad immersion programs in less developed countries is that although considered highly valuable to student learning, can conversely be voyeuristic and exploitive. Harper (2018) questions this contradictory nature of study abroad programs by asking, "can study abroad experiences overcome the hazards of reproducing colonizing orientations to the people and places in which they occur?" (p. 296). Yet, inequality and the impact of neocolonialism has made tourism and hosting educational travelers important to the economies of countries like Ghana. Designing programs that enhance the learning experience for students and simultaneously provide benefits to the host location requires being transparent and

explicit with faculty, stakeholders and particularly students about the inherent tensions and power imbalances. For the present study abroad experience, many years of trusted relationships between local stakeholders and faculty program directors along with continuous acknowledgement of the dilemmas, set the stage for minimizing participation in the very forces of neocolonialism about which the program intends to bring awareness.

Methods

As part of a larger research project, this study is based on data collected from students who participated in a three-week summer Ghana study abroad program, offered collaboratively by two U.S. southern universities in 2016, 2017, and 2018. This study was approved by the ethical review boards at both universities (the names are concealed to protect participants' confidentiality). Designed and taught by two African American professors, the study abroad curriculum focused on the topic of human rights and social justice and included classroom-based and service learning activities selected to enhance emotional and experiential learning; visits to local museums, art markets and non-governmental agencies (NGOs); immersion in the life of a local village; and excursions. Activities included regular group and individual reflections with an emphasis on cognitive, experiential, and emotional domains of learning. Students' pre-travel preparation included participating in group- and individual orientations, learning about cultural humility, and reading a historical novel *Homegoing*, which describes the impact of colonialism and the slave trade over several generations. Subsequent visits to the places described in the book provided students with opportunities for discussion and reflection.

Description of Sample

Over the three years, 39 students enrolled in the program, and 27 consented to participate in the study. The data consist of ethnographic observations in Ghana of 19 students from the first

two years of the program, written journals of 25 of the students (two chose not to share their journals), and 25 student interviews conducted in the United States two to three months after the end of the program (two students could not be reached). The sample was primarily female (89%), social work majors (74%), and undergraduate students (70%). Twelve students were White, 11 were Latino/a, three were Black, and one was Asian American. Student ages ranged from 20 to 46, with 25 as average. The number of students was equally divided between those who had never traveled abroad before, those with some international exposure, and those who had extensive international experiences, including having lived and studied abroad. None of the students had previously visited an African country.

Data Collection

Data were collected by the first author, a Ph.D. student of social work at the time, who identifies as White and an immigrant to the U.S. from Poland and is currently residing in Australia. The second author, an African American professor, established and directed the Ghana program over several years, and the third author, also an African American professor, directed the Ghana program in the three years of data collection.

Ethnographic observations (Creswell, 2018; Emerson et al., 2011) were conducted in Ghana in years 2016 and 2017 with two cohorts of students for a total of seven weeks. By becoming a participant observer (Creswell, 2018), the first author documented student experiences, discussions and interactions during program activities, group meetings, and debriefing circles (totaling over one hundred pages recorded in a Word document). The second source of data were students' written journals, which were required as part of the study abroad course (17 per student). Students had an opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences while in Ghana and overall impression upon finishing the program. Finally, individual, semi-

structured interviews were conducted 60-90 days after return from Ghana. Some of the questions on the interview guide included: “What were your most important experiences in Ghana?” “What was your experience like in terms of learning about social justice?” and “Can you describe any changes you have noticed in yourself since you returned from Ghana (e.g. the way you act or think)?” The interviews ranged from 47 minutes to 1 hour and 34 minutes, with an average length of 61 minutes. They were audio-recorded, transcribed, and returned to study participants for comments and corrections.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and managed through QSR NVivo 12 software. As Braun and Clarke (2006) specify “thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set -be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts - to find repeated patterns of meaning” (p. 86). The authors collaboratively developed the codebook composed of twelve codes, including ‘experiential learning,’ ‘emotional learning,’ ‘comparing living conditions,’ ‘realization of global inequalities and exploitation’, ‘self-critique’ and ‘action.’ Each data source was coded by the first author and reviewed by the team members to include multiple interpretations (Tuckett, 2005). Strategies applied to ensure the rigor and credibility of the analysis included generating an audit trail, data triangulation, and a reflective diary to enhance researcher’s reflexivity (Meyrick, 2006).

Results

This section is meant to portray the process by which U.S. college students were attempting to “read the world” and the self in “the world” as a consequence of the experiential and emotional learning in Ghana. The exposure to global economic inequalities provoked a variety of responses in the students, often contradictory and problematic. We identified four

major themes pertinent to the students' critical consciousness raising: 1) "seeing what is really happening;" 2) awakening to privilege and positionality; 3) interpreting the global reality; and 4) back home.

"Seeing what is Really Happening"

During their time in Ghana, the students saw a range of affluent to poverty-stricken economic conditions, however, for the majority, witnessing the poverty levels of those most disenfranchised was an "eye opening" experience. Many strong emotional reactions followed; students expressed disbelief and anger at the level of global inequalities and appreciation for learning through "being", "seeing" and "feeling."

The experience that seemed to have been the most impactful in raising students' critical consciousness was the visit to the electronic waste dumpsite and market in Agbogbloshie. Densely populated and poverty ridden, the area has received a nickname of "Sodom" due to the constant burning of the old electronics to extract metal. Students talked about the unimaginable challenges faced by people living there including the extreme air contamination, which for many of the students made breathing difficult. Following the visit, a White, graduate student wrote in her journal:

I was blown away by the scene at Agbogbloshie, the world's largest digital dumping site. I have never seen anything like that. The smoke, the smell... I am bewildered by the conditions in which these folks are living.

Being accompanied by a local guide allowed the students to have conversations with the residents, shop in local businesses, and see not only the people's struggles but also their agency and resilience. Describing her experiences in the slums, a White, undergraduate student highlighted the resourcefulness of the local women:

We met with one of the women who makes cloth through the assistance of [local NGO].

Her creations were so beautiful and I loved seeing how that skill she was taught, provided her with an income. We all were so impressed, I believe half of us bought from her.

The experiences of creating personal connections with community members and hearing their stories enhanced student learning about living conditions and economic realities that were very different from their own. Another White, undergraduate student summarized the impact of those connections in the following way: "...seeing the people face to face and hearing their voices... I mean, that is the things that I hold on to".

Finally, students reflected on the meaning of being physically present, of seeing, experiencing, and feeling the impact of what they were learning. As one Latina, undergraduate student put it, the possibility to learn through, "everything I have seen, felt, heard, smelled, touched, and experienced" made the learning very impactful. Students made comparisons between traditional classroom and textbook learning and learning through experience and emotions. Referring to her shock and disbelief at the level of injustice affecting the people living in the slums, a Black, undergraduate student described the difference in the following way:

Because reading about, it's just words on paper. But, in seeing it, physically, you being right in the middle of the situation, actually seeing what is really happening, in front of you. The impact is greater than just reading about it.

The first step to students' critical consciousness raising thus seems to have been the ability to see "what is really happening" and experiencing feelings such as, anger, frustration, disbelief and sadness in face of economic injustice.

Awakening to Privilege and Positionality

Students experienced many “awakenings” to the privileges they have been taking for granted in their personal lives such as education, easy access to food, and ability to travel freely, among others. As one White, graduate student put it: “Definitely more aware that I have some incredible privilege as far as the resources and the education. It's considerably more than a lot of people”. Learning through experiences such as shopping for goods in the local markets, visiting local schools, villages, and NGOs greatly enhanced the students’ ability to understand privilege. Privilege was no longer an abstract term to read about, but something the students were feeling on their own skin: “I think before this trip I kind of knew the definition of privilege from a textbook. But actually experiencing it and being able to point out the certain privileges I have really just brought a whole new meaning to it” (Latina, undergraduate student). Exploring the meaning of privilege also provoked many emotional reactions in the students. Following a visit to a local NGO, where the students learned about the struggles of local women, a White, undergraduate student wrote in the journal:

I have to say, today was hard for me. I really started to see my privilege here, and that is really hard for me. Seeing people make a living by selling goods to people in cars, every day? That is exhausting and such hard work.

Despite these self-reflections on privilege and positionality, students exhibited a sense of entitlement and enacted their privilege in a variety of ways. They frequently complained about lack of or inconsistent air conditioning, hot water or Wi-Fi. Others requested scheduling bus rides outside of rush hours because they were too long and uncomfortable. These and other similar situations exposed students’ inability to extend their intellectual analysis of privilege to their own attitudes and behaviors. As the program went on, most of the students became more

aware of their daily demands and complaints and expanded this self-critique to their lives in the U.S. They increasingly talked about their privileges back home and being inconsiderate in their daily lives, such as never turning off the lights or air conditioning when they leave the house, being wasteful with money, water, and food: “I buy a lot of food and then I eat out a lot so a lot goes to waste. There is a joke among my friends that I buy bananas to watch them turn brown” (Asian, graduate student). Students also started to examine their consumerism tendencies and their implications for other countries, such as the shipments of digital trash:

I think about all the smart phones and electronic devices that I have used and thrown away in the last few years and how it’s getting shipped to other countries when it’s trash and destroying the environment and health of their citizens. I never realized how wasteful I was until today (Asian, graduate student).

Although initially the students’ reflections about privilege were disconnected from their simultaneous enactments of it, they eventually started to consider how their own actions influence the world outside them.

Interpreting the Global Reality

For some students, this program was like breaking bad news about global injustice and inequality. For example, students’ comments included: “I never knew how blissfully ignorant I was about what is going on in the world” (White, undergraduate student) and “I have come to realize on this trip that the struggle for some people is very real” (Black, undergraduate student). Despite being confronted by the magnitude of poverty and social injustice and their own positionality as U.S. citizens, the students’ ability to “read the world” varied. Some students questioned the historical and ongoing impact of colonialism, imperialism, and exploitation, yet some others remained in a mindset of “charity” and “saving”.

Through the lectures with local academics, guided tours and many formal and informal discussions, students became more aware of the ongoing legacy of the historical oppressive forces such as colonialism and slavery on African countries. Moreover, they learned about the neocolonial and exploitative practices countries such as Ghana are subjected too. Asked about the insights about social justice she gained in Ghana, a White, graduate student responded in the following way:

I guess, probably the impact of colonisation and slavery. And all of the tremendous benefits that we have experienced after that happening. And how it resulted in some of the extreme poverty we saw and just how that was all connected. Just really connecting the benefits that we have on a daily, normal basis and the sacrifice that they've had to make. And how difficult it's going to be to ever get on a sort of level playing field.

Some students interpreted the issues they witnessed in Ghana in terms of global economic structures, which continue to exploit developing countries. They believed that the economic problems that exist in many countries in Africa are the responsibility of Western countries. As one Latina, undergraduate student summarized: “Economics are a priority especially when our trading systems exploits impoverished people, and it steals from and prevents people from accumulating wealth in their own country”.

Students also started to move beyond their U.S.-centric tendencies: “This was an experience I wouldn’t trade for anything. Before this trip I didn’t even think about issues outside of the United States” (Latina, undergraduate student). Finally, although they believed that poverty was more “hidden” back home, some students started to make connections between what they witnessed in Ghana to the economic inequalities in the U.S. For example, one White undergraduate student commented in the interview:

Seeing the differences and being able to draw the comparisons to how they relate to our society here. I feel like Agboglobloshie was really powerful, just seeing the levels of poverty and how they live. But then also remembering that it's not so different from a lot of the conditions that people are in here. We just kind of push it to the back of our mind and tend to ignore it.

Nevertheless, the majority of the students did not engage in an analysis of the causes of the global economic inequalities and tended to have a solution-orientation to the issues they witnessed in Ghana. Many used a language focused on “helping”, “making a difference”, and non-profits. They overstressed the potential role of outsiders, including themselves, in creating potential solutions. Describing how grateful she felt for her learning experiences in Ghana, a Latina, undergraduate student made this statement in her journal: “I hope that everyone else had a life changing experience as I did. I plan to come back in the future to see these people again and continue to make a difference in their lives”. The belief that students “made” a difference in the lives of Ghanaians and that they can continue to do so portrays the highly problematic mentality of paternalism and “White saving”:

An interesting conversation that I had with a classmate was around this white saviour mentality. I have noticed that I sometimes get this attitude that I am going to travel to a poor part of the world and save you with all my grand ideas for your life and throw money at you. This, I'm learning, is imperialistic in nature (White, undergraduate student).

Although some students, as seen in this case, were able to recognize their imperialistic, White saviour attitudes, most struggled to reach that realization.

Back Home

The process of consciousness raising, which for many students started in Ghana, continued upon return home. In their post-return journal entries and interviews, students described feeling both, despairing and inspired by their experiences in Ghana. They talked about the need to continue learning and making changes in their lives and to taking action, for example, by spreading awareness about what they saw. Students also shared about the emotional processing they had to do upon the arrival in the U.S. to reconcile their new understanding of the world and their day-to-day life.

Many students felt the need to spread awareness about what they saw and experienced in Ghana. Some reported planning to take on advocacy roles and positions upon graduation and shifting professional focus towards macro issues: “I could totally see myself being involved in international human rights, and that kind of got me thinking about more macro issues” (White, undergraduate student). Several of them developed an interest in policy work to further social justice: “Now I’m very set on pursuing a career in justice. And creating policies that are more equal. And so that’s kind of what’s changed quite a bit” (Latina, undergraduate student). Many felt the need to become more active in social justice issues:

I came back wanting to be more involved and wanting to learn more. Because you can only do so much by just watching. You actually have to be part of it. That's really something that sparked me and actually getting active about the issues (Latina, undergraduate student).

In addition to feeling inspired and planning to shift their professional focus, students also talked about personal changes they have been implementing such as becoming mindful about spending

money. They tried to teach others in their personal circles about what they have learned, which at times resulted in tensions and clashes:

Two weeks ago, I went camping and there was so much food being wasted and that was really frustrating for me....And it's caused arguments, even with close friends. I'm just like 'why are you wasting that?' And it's just like they don't understand that (Latina, undergraduate student).

The emotional learning continued upon return home. Students described the variety of emotions they continued feeling upon return home, such as anger, sadness, and despair, often expressed through crying. As one Latina, undergraduate student wrote in her final journal entry:

It feels so strange to be back "home." I woke up before the sun was even out this morning and I felt so much sadness in my heart. I cried for a very long time while still in bed, reflecting on my journey in Ghana....

The word "intense" was frequently used by the students to describe their experiences in Ghana. A lot of processing had to take place, both in Ghana and back home, to let the "intensity" settle down and understand with more clarity what they saw, felt, and experienced, and what they should do next.

Discussion

The findings highlight various aspects of critical consciousness raising about global economic inequalities in U.S college students who participated in a study abroad program in Ghana. Emotional and experiential learning elements, embedded in every aspect of the student experience, were essential in this process. Students emphasized the value of learning beyond the traditional classroom and the ability to be physically present, to witness, and to be emotionally impacted by the unjust global realities. As Langstraat and Bowdon (2011) summarized,

“emotions, rather than ‘spoilers’ in practices of meaning-making that cloud judgment, are in fact integral to the development of critical consciousness” (p. 9). In discussing how to “transform ugly Americans into engaged global citizens,” Rotabi et al. (2006, p. 451) pointed to similar patterns: “Students who embrace this experience fully find their American value systems challenged. Some students even begin to reflect on very deep questions about their own consumption of resources, in the context of sustainable development and environmental justice” (pp. 461-462).

Even though these types of short-term study abroad programs in less developed countries have the potential of “bursting bubbles” (Macías, 2013, p. 322) and encouraging significant paradigms shifts, there are many complexities involved. Despite growing in critical consciousness, students, particularly those who were White, were at risk of falling into the White saviour complex: “This idea that it is the role of the White outsider to ‘lift’ the poor and oppressed in developing countries” (Straubhaar, 2015, p. 384). It is possible that this attitude is related to limited analysis of global inequality that the students exhibited. Even though the students seemed to have become more self-aware of their personal privilege and positionality as U.S. citizens, few of them questioned the global root causes of economic injustice. In examining the impact of a study abroad program in Bolivia, Harper (2018) similarly found that participating Canadian students have not explored social justice related issues in depth and consistency and focused primarily on personal growth. As Giroux (2017) argues, this is a reflection of a general lack of social justice discourse in higher education:

We increasingly live in societies based on the vocabulary of 'choice' and a denial of reality - a denial of massive inequality, social disparities, the irresponsible concentration

of power in relatively few hands, and a growing machinery of social and civil death (p. 1).

Because short-term study abroad programs allow only for a limited engagement with host communities, they may not be able to correct for the ingrained ideologies of ‘choice’ and thus “may perpetuate existing systems of power and privilege” (Fisher & Grettenberger, 2015, p. 566). Indeed, as Onyenekwu et al. (2017) warn, study abroad literature and promotional materials of African countries often reinforce the “prevailing and pathological view of continental Africa” (p. 69).

Nevertheless, critical consciousness raising is developmental, progressive, and, we hope, ongoing. Exposure to experiential and emotional learning opportunities about global economic inequalities produces the milieu through which students can: 1) engage in the challenging and confronting work of growing their understanding of their and others’ positionality in the world; 2) process the experiential and emotional learning in a generative manner; 3) build new understanding progressively; and 4) apply their new understanding of the causes of economic conditions to both, person and professional actions. Although there was no sense of completion, all study participants experienced many “critical consciousness epiphanies” and demonstrated some growth along the continuum. In fact, students’ progress toward critical consciousness seems to be marked by inspiration to learn and do more.

Future research should examine the long-term impact of study abroad programs designed to expand student critical consciousness. We recommended longitudinal studies that would examine whether students who participate in those types of programs go on to engage in social justice orientated action in their professionally and/or personal lives.

Implications

The purposive sampling methods and focus on students from two universities only, both located in the southern United States, may limit the generalizability of the results. Also, most of the students were social work majors, a discipline already steeped in social justice related issues. The study's sample was predominantly White and Latino, and we did not compare student-learning experiences across racial/ethnic groups nor ascertain long-term impacts of the program on the students. Despite these limitations, we believe this study points to some important implications.

Study abroad programs, especially those offered in less developed countries, need to be designed in a way that names and analyses issues of colonialism, imperialism, and exploitation, and ensures critical reflection and dialogue (Razack, 2009). Concepts such as inequality and exploitation need to be emotionally processed and internalized by the learner to grasp their full meaning and implication. Skilled dialogue facilitation and tools such as novels, films, and personal stories, can serve as powerful tools to enhance student understanding and cultivate a commitment to anti-oppressive action. Students need to be warned, however, against “white saviour industrial complex”, which, as writer Teju Cole (2012) explains, “is not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege.” The role of emotions in critical consciousness raising thus is not about “sentimentality,” which Cole (2012) further cautions against, but moved to action against global economic inequalities. Activism needs to be grounded in an analysis of American foreign policy and our own complicity in global systems of oppression. Moreover, genuine, deep, engagement with local communities helps to prevent the “circus-like quality” of cultural immersions (Cramer et al., 2012, p. 9) and facilitates reciprocal learning. As Shepard (2003) explained, “to develop consciousness, understanding, and [social]

action ... relationships must be central to our pedagogical approach and respectful dialogue, ideally within the community setting” (p. 45).

Finally, students should also learn about the way economic injustice plays out in the U.S. and often in their own neighborhood. Fostering critical consciousness involves engagement in local social justice dialogue and initiatives including action oriented student projects As Warren (2019) pointed out, “experiential education has potential to advance justice especially as it applies to community engagement through service learning” (p. 5). While keeping in mind global inequalities, students start their anti-oppressive practice by working collaboratively with local communities in “advocating for changes within one's home country to impact poverty and injustice in the world” (Abram & Cruce, 2007, p. 3).

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