Transformation from Within:
Practicing Global Education Through Critical Feminist Pedagogy

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Abstract

This paper examines the transformative role of critical feminist pedagogy as it applies to global experiential learning. I argue that a feminist approach to global education challenges racialized, neoliberal, and colonizing dimensions of higher education. Global experiential learning provides the basis for an interactive or relational form of critical feminist pedagogy within cross-cultural and transnational communities. The methodology for this research is grounded in decolonizing and feminist pedagogies that address multiple levels of engagement within the education process and among students, faculty, and communities. This discussion demonstrates how critical feminist pedagogy effectively addresses societal issues concerning power, privilege, and knowledge production that are evident in the context of rising populism and nativism in the U.S. The analysis in this paper includes a case study of a global experiential learning program in which university students worked with community-based organizations in rural Tanzania. Their pre-departure orientation, assignments, field-based learning, and overall experiences are examined in light of this pedagogical approach. In sum, this pedagogical analysis demonstrates how transnational and feminist practices provide effective ways to construct decolonizing engagement and community-based learning in global education.

Keywords

Critical pedagogy; feminist geography; global experiential learning; Tanzania

Introduction

The 2016 general election and presidential campaign in the United States led to a ground swell of demonstrations and grassroots mobilization on university campuses across the country and elsewhere. Throughout this period, groups organized to protest the racist, xenophobic, homophobic, and misogynist discourses and actions that surfaced as a result of a rise in populist and nativist rhetoric (Gökariksel and Smith, 2017; Moss and Maddrell, 2017). Tensions surrounding intolerance and prejudice on college campuses reflect growing polarization in countries and regions experiencing socio-economic and political divides. Discussions within higher education that challenge these manifestations of conservative extremism on university campuses (Kobayashi et al., 2014; Martin and Brown, 2013; Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, 2009) are evident in debates surrounding free speech and protests by both left-wing and far-right political groups (Sultana, 2018; Moss and Maddrell, 2017). Feminist scholars are among those who contribute to these debates and political actions in order to put pressure on neoliberal institutions to advance progressive change in higher education and society as a whole (Luke and Gore, 1992; Mohanty, 2002). An important part of this work focuses on diverse constructions of the classroom and feminist critical pedagogy as a means of engaging students to uphold equity and inclusion in their own lives and in their communities (Chatterjee, 2009; Luke and Gore, 1992).

Pedagogy and learning experiences that focus on transformational change extend to study abroad and experiential or volunteer education where students are immersed within other societies and cultures (Bringle et al., 2011). The analysis in this paper draws from the practice of global experiential learning, as a critical form of knowledge production that includes interactions with development practitioners, community members, and diverse actors within institutions of higher education (Hartman and Kiely, 2014; Larsen, 2016). In response to conventional study abroad approaches, some contemporary programs, of which critical feminist pedagogy is an example, seek to reframe the Eurocentric and often colonizing model of study abroad or volunteerism. These programs also attempt to decolonize the academy through interrogating "how knowledge is generated, and the ways it is co-(mmo)dified" (Langdon, 2013, 387). Numerous scholars in this field argue for a more critically engaged, community-based partnership among local people, the university, and program coordinators (Crabtree, 2008; Schroeder et al., 2009). Partnerships grounded in this type of global education tend to promote ethics of mutual understanding and reciprocity rather than paternalistic relationships between communities in the Global South and Global North (Larsen, 2016).

This paper examines global learning and education through the lens of critical feminist pedagogies. The discussion demonstrates how this approach is an effective way to interrogate the practice of constructing transparent, inclusive, and non-hierarchical power relations in society. This research also challenges intersectional oppressions such as sexism, racism, and xenophobia in higher education through progressive and radical approaches to globalization. The paper is organized in five sections. In the first section of this paper, I analyze the socio-economic and political aspects of neoliberal higher education that impact cross-cultural discourses and praxis. The second section addresses feminist teaching and pedagogy as a way to incorporate transnational and decolonizing perspectives in the classroom and within a broader learning environment. The third section focuses on my methodological approach to studying feminist pedagogy in the field. The case study of a global experiential education program based in rural Tanzania is analyzed in the fourth section. Finally, the conclusion reinforces how feminist approaches can produce transformative pedagogy in the area of global education. Overall, this discussion adds to current debates within global education surrounding spaces of resistance to colonizing and ethnocentric knowledge production through critical feminist pedagogy.

Neoliberalism in Higher Education and Contemporary Politics

Neoliberalism has profoundly impacted the structures and practices of higher education. Over the past several decades, financial models in higher education have shifted from an emphasis on public support and funding to more corporate practices in what Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) label *academic capitalism*. With reduced public funding, universities are more focused on income-generating models, private and corporate fund raising, and entrepreneurial activities (David and Clegg, 2008; Heyman, 2007). The neoliberal turn in the academy is also linked to populist movements and nativist rhetoric that attack critical and cross-cultural aspects of higher education (Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, 2009; Sultana, 2018). In many cases, critical perspectives on global issues and diverse social identities provide important counter-narratives to this populist rhetoric and extremist conservative viewpoints.

Feminist scholars within geography and other fields critically examine the impact of these conservative and neoliberal trends on higher education and society in general (Chatterjee, 2009; Mountz et al., 2015; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). In particular, efforts by certain disciplines and institutions to naturalize and essentialize social difference and experiences are reflected in what Laliberté et al. (2017) describe as language and actions that contain elements of racism, sexism, and nationalism. Increased emphasis on productivity, efficiency, and private funding in higher education has led to more urgent calls by feminists and other critical scholars to develop strategies that decenter dominant forms of knowledge production and practices.

Under the current political climate in the U.S. and parts of Europe, xenophobic and nativist policies have impacted the overall environment and student experiences in higher education (Kobayashi et al., 2014; Laliberté et al., 2017). For example, the presidential executive order to restrict immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries impacts students and scholars from these countries by creating an environment of fear and uncertainty.[1] These actions have led to increased mobilization and activism on university campuses as international students and scholars raise concerns about traveling abroad for personal or professional reasons (Gökariksel and Smith, 2017).

Pedagogy and teaching have also been subject to what Martin and Brown (2013) refer to as the "violence" of higher education within an increasingly free-market and neoliberal environment. They state that "structural forms of violence or power may be expressed through inequality of opportunity," as well as "symbolic forms of violence stemming from pedagogical intent, content of curriculum, and performance of acquiescence" (Martin and Brown, 2013, 384). For example, in the current political environment, messages regarding gag orders, misinterpretation, and oversight of political statements are often directed at students and faculty of color, as well as international and transgender communities (Ahmed, 2017; Sultana, 2018). These attacks tend to occur in environments within higher education made more hostile by the reactionary messages of hate groups and emboldened racists mentioned in the introduction to this paper.

In sum, higher education remains a dynamic landscape and institution of neoliberal forces with growing dissent from radical and marginalized community members. Feminist scholarship has challenged these forces – not always in unison, but incorporating alternative avenues that offer important resistance to racialized, gendered, and other violent forms of oppression and inequality in the academy (Haraway, 1996; Mohanty, 2002; Moss and Maddrell, 2017; Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey,

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[1] This executive order temporarily banning travel from seven Muslim-majority countries was halted by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in February 2017. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld a subsequent executive order that reinstituted a similar travel ban in June of 2018. These rulings on travel bans for people from designated countries raises questions and uncertainty about future actions and unnecessary questioning and harassment of immigrants from the named countries.

2009). This resistance is linked to pedagogical approaches that are grounded in efforts to decolonize knowledge production. The following discussion focuses on illuminating the main principles associated with critical feminist pedagogy within these global and political contexts.

Critical Feminist Pedagogy

Feminist scholarship has developed the tools to build effective interdisciplinary and critical perspectives that are grounded in diverse theoretical and methodological approaches (Haraway, 1996). This field is also at the forefront of debates concerning social justice and decolonizing theory through epistemological questions about what defines legitimate knowledge and how power is embedded in and constitutive of this knowledge (Ahmed, 2017; Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, 2009). As noted above, barriers to these approaches are evident within the neoliberal institutions of higher education. I argue that critical feminist pedagogy and practice can develop effective strategies to reframe these barriers in order to better understand how the production of knowledge shapes and is influenced by transgressive actions and social change (David and Clegg, 2008; Luke and Gore, 1992; Massey, 2005; Mohanty, 2002).

Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey (2009), Mohanty (2002), and others critique hegemonic forms of knowledge production and particularly the impact of colonial legacies of the Western world in the Global South. In "Under Western Eyes Revisited," Mohanty (2002) highlights how feminist epistemologies and pedagogies offer alternatives to hegemonic Western foundations of feminist research. This approach underscores how decolonizing and transnational feminisms, for example, stand as a model to understand power, privilege, and marginalization. Additional work by feminist scholars such as hooks (1994) emphasizes the importance of pedagogical approaches that incorporate interdisciplinary as well as cross-cultural perspectives to advance this decolonizing agenda. Feminist analyses add to these approaches by examining how the particular works within and across the universal, or how specific contexts operate within broad frameworks of power relations. For example, Haraway (1996, 121) argues for "politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims." Similarly, Mohanty (2002) integrates these social relations and spatial scales in her statement about "the local as specifying and illuminating the universal" (503).

Feminist geography contributes to these pedagogical discussions through its focus on the intersections of spatial processes and social identities (Massey, 2005). Rose (1997) and others, for example, employ the concept of situated knowledge and geographical location as a means of contributing to epistemological debates concerning knowledge production in the academy. Martin and Brown (2013, 382) also describe this field as one that "offers insights into the performative capabilities of place, space, and scale particularly for embodied or everyday forms of activism or resistance." Thus, feminist geographers tend to disrupt the hegemonic disciplinary knowledge production often embedded in traditional approaches to this and other social science disciplines. The global scope of this scholarship also reflects particular locations and epistemologies of dissent that are relevant to critical feminist and decolonizing pedagogy with nuanced analyses of power, place, and social identities (Massey, 2005).

Another aspect of critical feminist pedagogy is praxis, or the process of combining theoretical understandings of issues and concepts with activism or engaged pedagogy, and ethics. The foundations of feminism and related work in the academy are rooted in collaborative and ethical interactions with communities and non-academic groups and individuals (Mohanty, Russo, and Torres, 1991). These strategies are embedded in critical understandings of power and draw from Freire's (1970, 33) work on pedagogy as a means of struggle among the oppressed "to regain their humanity." According to Freire, active participation in and resistance through education becomes a means to liberation through critical

discovery. Similarly, feminist approaches investigate how to "study power and identify ways to mitigate its abuse in the real world" and "avoid introducing biases and exclusions through unexamined assumptions" (Ackerly and True, 2008, 694). Advocacy and ethics thus comprise the fabric of feminist praxis, enhancing scholarly analyses and interrogations of its position in the lives of people.

Korvajärvi and Vuori (2016) use the term *communities of practice* to reflect how groups of people with common interests are brought together to implement change. This concept was developed by Wenger (1999) in his work on connecting knowledge, community, and identity to support learning and practice in the context of "activities, skills and mutual communication during the constant transformative processes" (Korvajärvi and Vuori, 2016, 139). Praxis, ethics, and activism are thus aligned with the institutional position and pedagogies of feminism as a growing influence in higher education and through its work with community groups and practices in diverse geographical contexts.

As discussed here, feminist work has contributed to critical pedagogy in higher education, particularly concerning issues of equality, power relations, and struggle. These approaches bring important perspectives to socio-economic inequality, environmental justice, political activism, and other issues that inform and shape interdisciplinary fields such as feminist studies. Drawing from a rich history of radical and critical pedagogy, feminism has also enriched our understanding of and how transformative knowledge is produced in the classroom and beyond (Luke and Gore, 1992; Mohanty, 2002; Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, 2009). Feminist epistemological frameworks and methodologies that challenge conventional and often hegemonic approaches to social inequality and uneven development influence this knowledge.

The current political climate in the U.S. and Europe has undoubtedly affected our work as scholars and teachers in feminist studies and geography. Courses on globalization, transnational feminism, and activist research take on new meanings and dynamics with the ongoing assault on women, refugees, immigrants, and other marginalized people in the media and society as a whole. Feminist approaches provide opportunities to engage students with issues raised by current protests, such as social movements around racialized forms of police violence, sexual misconduct, and immigration rights on campuses around the country (Kobayashi et al., 2014; Laliberté et al., 2017; Mahtani, 2006). These initiatives also open doors for students to participate in, debate, and analyze the impact of these public acts of protest and mobilization in the context of decolonizing feminist epistemologies and pedagogies.

Teaching and curriculum development within this political context call for theoretically informed, methodologically sound, and pedagogically rigorous approaches. As noted by Chatterjee (2009), antiracist feminist teaching and transformation supports educational literacy as the "translation of various forms of cultural knowledge" (133). She and many other scholars draw from Freire's work on pedagogy and literacy as a critique of conventional models of education, where experts create knowledge that is in turn fed to students. These conventional models disregard the value of individual consciousness which, according to Freire, fails to transform people through emancipatory political practice (Chatterjee, 2009, 135-36). Feminist author and activist hooks (1994) also focuses on teaching students to transgress racism, sexism, and colonial practices to achieve the liberation of critical thinking and freedom. Thus, feminist teaching and pedagogy have the potential to be transformative sites of critical knowledge production in higher education.

In their work on creating a feminist classroom, Laliberté et al. (2017) examine the use of "stealth feminism" in an era of political conservatism and populist rhetoric. They develop strategies that reflect "controversy capital" to incorporate provocative and compelling stories of racism, white privilege, and oppression of LGBTQ+ people in their classrooms. Similarly, Martin and Brown (2013, 382) claim critical interdisciplinary fields such as feminist studies "broaden the space for alternative

imaginings of pedagogy by performatively reworking the relationship between identity, place, emotion, power, knowledge, and practice within the terrain of everyday embodied praxis." These reimaginings and reworkings of pedagogy encourage spaces of everyday activism in university classrooms (Oberhauser, 2007).

Feminist pedagogy also builds on themes of participatory and local knowledge in creating feminist teaching spaces (Cravey and Petit, 2012; Parsi, 2013; Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, 2009). These themes, in turn, reinforce the importance of situated knowledge production in the context of higher education. According to Heyman (2007), feminism challenges the "pedagogy and professional expertise that has traditionally characterized higher education and social scientific thinking about knowledge production" (110). This shift from hierarchical, expert-based learning to participatory models of knowledge production is consistent with the purpose of critical feminist pedagogy, which relocates us and our positionalities in the power dynamics and context of the classroom (University of Kentucky Critical Pedagogy Working Group et al., 2015). Thus, context or spatial dimensions of participatory and transformational education are points of departure and places of investigation for feminist pedagogy and practice.

This discussion examines how critical feminist pedagogy challenges inequalities in the production of knowledge, promotes advocacy, and analyzes axes of power in diverse spaces and across multiple social identities. As outlined here, these approaches are sometimes based on connecting with community groups and organizations that embody anti-racist, decolonizing, and other feminist and social justice issues. The potential for productively engaging in advocacy and university-community partnerships reinforces the notion that "teaching about social change is a necessary part of, yet differs from, doing social change" (Gilbert and Masucci, 2004, 148). The following discussion builds on these aspects of feminist transformative learning as they apply to the context and methodology of a global experiential learning program in sub-Saharan Africa.

Global Experiential Learning: Context and Methodology

The focus of my study is a global experiential learning program involving students from a U.S. public university who were based in Karagwe, Tanzania. I refer to this program as the Tanzania program below. The study examines feminist pedagogy in the context of globally-engaged learning opportunities and practices. The approach to global education in this paper is shown to develop critical thinking that challenges hegemonic and sometimes colonizing neoliberal knowledge production. These trends are especially relevant in light of recent and ongoing evidence of xenophobia and intolerance on campuses and in society at large (Hartman and Kiely, 2014; Sultana, 2018). The field of global experiential learning has grown and developed significantly in the past decades. Initially, Global Service Learning (GSL) was part of a broader movement in global education that focused on the experience of both communities and students who engage in international service work as part of an educational program. GSL has its roots in the framework of International Service Learning (ISL), which links travel, education, and community service as a means of "increasing participants' global awareness and development of humane values, building intercultural understanding and communication, and enhancing civic mindedness and leadership skills" (Crabtree, 2008, 18). According to some critics, ISL has a more "volunteerism" approach versus a non-hierarchical community-based approach of GSL (Bringle et al., 2011; Larsen, 2016).

I employ the term Global Experiential Learning (GEL) to more accurately represent the collaborative and self-reflexive type of pedagogy and practice in the program under study. A GEL framework is part of what Bringle, Hatcher, and Jones (2011) describe as an experience in which students participate in a community-led service activity where they "learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others" (19) in order to develop a sense of global citizenship. Global

Experiential Learning reflects a critical approach to service-learning, which focuses on the concepts of power, privilege, and hegemony. These concepts are deeply rooted in and reflect feminist values and approaches to pedagogy that challenge hegemonic, Western-based approaches to cross-cultural engagement and learning (Mohanty, 2002; Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, 2009). According to Hartman and Kiely (2014), the development of these programs critically engages with how knowledge is produced and constituted through alternative frameworks. GEL also emphasizes the democratization of knowledge with reciprocal partnerships between university groups and community organizations and members. Feminist approaches are highly relevant in these contexts because of their efforts to dislodge hegemonic power relations within and across social, political-economic, and environmental contexts (Parsi, 2013). Moreover, feminist approaches to global experiential learning draw from engagement with cross-cultural issues to develop immersive, non-hierarchical experiences (where possible) that require careful reflection of progressive change among individuals and organizations at local, national, and global scales.

The Tanzania service-learning program was developed by a non-profit organization, Amizade, that has adopted a Fair Trade Learning model of reciprocity and relationship building with community organizations around the world (Hartman, 2016). The organization established similar programs in diverse countries and regions of the world, such as Brazil, Jamaica, and the U.S. Appalachian region. They partner with universities in programs such as this one to recruit students and involve faculty members in leading programs. Amizade also has diverse programs that broadly promote global service-learning and has engaged with various groups in Karagwe through the provision of financial resources, assistance in training teachers, and advocacy on behalf of women's legal status and access to land. (See Newman [2011] for a discussion of women's land rights in Tanzania as part of this organization's outreach.)

The study was based on a one-month program in the rural northwest district of Tanzania, Karagwe in 2015. We also stayed for several days in Kigali, Rwanda, at the beginning and end of the program. Students participated in one semester of pre-departure orientation at their university. The goal of this program was to immerse students from a variety of disciplines and life experiences in a cross-cultural setting. Their socio-economic backgrounds and the interactive structure of this program informed the students' approach to critical global citizenship in what Larsen (2016) refers to as "moral imagination." This is a form of immersive pedagogy where students engaged with themes of power, hegemony, and privilege. The curriculum and structure of this program focused on gender and sustainable development and intensive work with community-based groups and non-governmental organizations that specialized in agriculture, HIV/AIDS awareness, micro-enterprise, and women's advocacy (Oberhauser and Daniels, 2017).

I led this program with a PhD graduate student assistant. We also worked closely with the program coordinator from Karagwe before and during our stay in Tanzania. Our positionalities were instrumental in shaping our experiences with the program. I am a white, middle-class, female-identifying faculty member from a public university who has conducted extensive research in sub-Saharan Africa. The graduate student identifies as a black female who is originally from West Africa and studies cross-cultural communication. These personal identities and experience, along with our onsite collaborator, gave us a level of familiarity with the socio-economic and geographic backgrounds of the case study region and social dynamics of the community.

The methodology for the research entailed participatory and community-based methods that critically examined the role and interaction of the participants, including the students, faculty, non-profit organizations, and community members (Liamputtong, 2010). This approach draws from decolonizing methodology that emphasizes efforts to deconstruct hierarchical relations and historical patterns of exploitation and colonization (Smith, 1999). Several researchers and practitioners in the

field of global education have written extensively about research methods that integrate the principles of critical pedagogy in their engagement with communities and higher education partners (Hartman and Kiely, 2014; Larsen, 2016).

The research design for this project included focus groups, observation, field notes, and in-depth conversations with the program coordinators, members of the community groups, and students. These methods have proven effective in similar studies of study abroad and experiential learning research projects (Hartman and Kiely, 2014; Larsen, 2016; Schroeder et al., 2009). We conducted one focus group with six students who volunteered to participate in this activity. The group discussion was recorded, transcribed, and coded. The themes for the focus group were developed around individual backgrounds and experiences with cross-cultural and global issues. According to Kiely (2005), this approach reveals the respondents' frames of reference and aspects of cross-cultural and global processes that are part of transformational service-learning, or GEL. In addition, we collected documents and images from the program, engaged in participant observation, and visited several communities in the study area as part of the research process. All of these materials were organized and coded using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12. The author obtained IRB approval for collection and analysis of the data at the home institution.

A program such as this involved multiple sources and perspectives to include in the analysis, starting with the initial selection of and orientation for student participants, through the final reflections and follow-up communication. Students were recruited for the Tanzania program through various avenues, in collaboration with the global education office at the home university. These included presentations to geography classes, information sessions, and mailings to undergraduate students in relevant majors. The twelve undergraduate students who were selected represented disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. The students self-identified as women, genderqueer, and men. There were also both African-American and white students in the group.

The pre-departure orientation for this program took place during the spring semester before the summer program. Two themes, gender studies and sustainable development, framed this experience, along with the critical feminist and decolonizing pedagogies outlined above (Oberhauser and Daniels, 2017). These themes were developed and implemented through pre-trip orientation materials, in collaboration with the organization that hosted this program. Specifically, the pre-departure orientation included meetings with the project director and the onsite coordinator, with first-hand insights and exercises that introduced them to onsite accommodations, travel logistics, the Karagwe region, and other relevant issues. The pre-departure work also entailed assigned readings and opportunities for students to reflect on their expectations of the trip, fears, and overall goals for this experience. Observations and assignments from this part of the program provided material for the analysis in this research.

The program itself involved one month in Tanzania when the students enrolled in two academic courses: one that focused on gender and sustainable development, and another course that included a global experiential learning project where students worked with non-profit organizations, community groups, and small businesses in the region. The students' final projects required an extensive reflection piece on their experiences and a report about their actual work with the community organizations. These assignments drew from the readings and other material provided during the program, and constituted another data source for this study. The following section focuses on global experiential learning within the Tanzania program from a critical feminist perspective.

The Tanzania Program: A Feminist Approach to Global Experiential Learning

The Tanzania program was built on efforts to create reciprocal relationships with the host community and specifically local organizations. This approach is in line with GEL, which attempts to

minimize and confront the inherent hierarchies and power dynamics among these groups (Hartman, 2016; Schroeder et al., 2009). In light of these goals, students worked with local organizations in agricultural production, community health programs, micro-enterprise operations, and women's advocacy groups. The groups were selected by the GEL organization prior to our visit, based on needs of the community and previous experience with students from other universities. As stated above, the forms of intervention and collaboration with these groups involve activities such as teacher training, women's advocacy concerning land issues, and financial education.

The students experienced both directly and indirectly the dilemmas of uneven power dynamics, privilege, and social and cultural identities through this global experiential learning program. Specifically, through on-site observation, first-hand experiences with local groups, coursework, and follow-up assignments, they engaged in what Hartman and Kiely (2014, 5) describe as a "community-driven service experience that employs structured, critically reflective practice to better understand common human dignity; self; culture; … socio-economic, political, and environmental issues; power relations; and social responsibility, all in global contexts." The immersive aspects of this program were multi-faceted and thus gave students and community members diverse ways of absorbing and processing their experience.

*Finding*s

Students in the program learned about and worked with the groups highlighted above as a way of gaining greater understanding of and direct experience with operations of community-based organizations and their members. The community group members, in turn, interacted with and also worked alongside the students in tasks such as gardening, weaving, assisting in the health clinic, or developing radio programs. Figures 1 and 2 show students working with these organizations making banana wine at a small agricultural enterprise and with a weaving cooperative. This hands-on approach invoked continuous reflection on issues surrounding white privilege, gender inequality, and uneven development. These interactions were based on initial impressions and challenges regarding communication and cultural issues, such as the inability of some community members to speak English and of U.S. students to speak Kiswahili.

Student reactions to these aspects of the program ranged from reflections on their own positionality to observations about the culture and roles of certain groups. As a whole, student projects and their academic work focused on critical reflexivity and interrogation of their positionality, global forces, activities, and other dimensions of power and privilege within the parameters of a local community. Many of the students were critical, or at least made more aware of, their own positionality and privilege in the context of this community.

One student expressed her impressions about the place and its people in a reflection paper where she wrote:

> Before coming to Africa, I had what most Americans had about what it was like – the impression that most places were poor and underdeveloped and the people were starving. This pre-identified stereotype has been completely abolished. The culture is vibrant and my presence feels more invasive than it does necessary.

Figure 1: Making Banana Wine at Small Enterprise in Karagwe District, Tanzania

Figure 2: Weaving Cooperative in Kayanga, Tanzania

The sentiments of this student reinforce common stereotypes of the "Other" and Africa, putting them in a negative light within a hegemonic and Eurocentric worldview (Langdon, 2013). As the student settled into this community, she began to reflect more on her position and "invasive presence" as an outsider.

> Another student also commented on her own positionality in thinking about sustainable development and local empowerment in this area.

> > The change that development brings should not be defined or categorized as necessary or unnecessary by anyone living outside of that place, especially an American college student. Rather than asserting my privilege and making an uneducated suggestion about what Karagwe needs to develop itself and sustain its development, I would suggest that community members assert their rightful place as determiners in the outcome of their lives.

This statement reflects the student's discomfort as an outsider in promoting the development agenda of the community. She also recognizes the importance of self-determination and community-based approaches in the field of international development. These concepts stem from decolonizing development approaches that were presented in the readings and in class discussions for this program. The readings included selected gender and development literature, in addition to more popular readings such as *Why We Travel* by Iyer (2000) and *To Hell with Good Intentions* by Illich (1968).

> The focus group discussion also illuminated certain impressions and reflections of the students that demonstrated a shift in their initial ideas about women's empowerment and sustainable development more broadly. In response to a question about students' concern about injustices that are inflicted on people and places around the world, one student stated:

> > I think the majority of us who are here are concerned … and are somewhat trying to help, also. Reading a lot of the articles and talking to people on this trip has made us realize that maybe … as foreigners we can't do as much as we want or we shouldn't do as much as we want without causing more problems.

She continued by saying, "Bringing awareness to the issues is important … but at the same time the people who know how to deal with the problems are gonna be people who know about the culture better than us. So, giving support … like monetary or donations can cause problems too." This attitude relates to an assigned reading by Ivan Illich (1968), in which the author criticizes the good intentions of and harm done by people involved in international aid or volunteer work.

> Students shared self-reflexive perspectives on their education and previous ideas about "Africa" throughout the program. In general, their comments represent a preconceived notion of this diverse region as a monolithic culture and geography rather than as a place with distinct geopolitical and social identities. These constructions (and deconstructions) of Eurocentric and hegemonic approaches are better understood and confronted in decolonizing and critical feminist pedagogies (Sudbury and Okazawa-Ray, 2009). Students were also troubled by their negative impressions before the trip and attempted to develop more informed opinions upon arriving in and engaging with the people in this region. Based on the students' interactions with groups in the field and other components of their experience, many of them made efforts to work through and eventually destabilize their privileged notions of hegemony and power. These impressions and the process of decolonization were also supported by material from the assigned readings and frequent discussions throughout the program.

> Other concepts that students grappled with reflect the cultural naiveté, ignorance, and lack of global awareness that permeates mainstream media and popular messages in the U.S., and is reinforced

in popular nativism and ethnocentric views of the "Other" (Gökariksel, 2017). Some of the students related these impressions to their own backgrounds and upbringing. As one student stated:

> Before I came on this trip, my friends and family said some subtle racist things. So I have been using this trip as a way of starting a conversation to point out different perspectives. There is not a lot of diversity in my hometown in West Virginia and so people just don't know. At my workplace, I didn't try to correct those who said racist things about my going to Africa. Some people are just not going to change no matter what you say.

As noted in this quote, the program gave students an opportunity to challenge and dispel some of the myths they had previously encountered regarding racial identities and xenophobic rhetoric of the "Other". In some cases, these attitudes were deeply engrained in their familial and geographic backgrounds.

In addition, students discovered that their ideas about gender identities and the status of women changed after experiencing the lifestyle and livelihoods of people in this region of East Africa. These themes were part of the learning goals and pedagogical approach of the program and were incorporated into the readings, field trips, and assignments. For example, after a discussion and presentation on contemporary life in Rwanda at the beginning of the trip, one student noted the emphasis on gender equality in this country and especially the representation of women in government.

> One thing in Kigali that I saw which contradicted a pre-identified stereotype was women's rights. Women seemed to have similar rights than men. I was amazed with the fact that 70 percent of parliament was filled with women. I also thought Rwanda would still have a lot of segregation and issues, but they seemed to have changed and come a drastically long way after the genocide.

This information gave a more in-depth understanding of women's political roles in Rwanda that contradicted her previous notions of women's rights in this region.

Another example that illustrates the importance of critical approaches in these type of global learning experiences arose during our visit to a regional hospital. We went to the hospital on a few occasions, and several pre-med students in the program worked there for part of their stay. During one meeting, an administrator gave us a full overview and background of the challenges faced by the doctors, nurses, and community they served. He described in detail how the lack of adequate supplies and staff presented significant problems for patients who needed timely and critical care. As part of the program, students cleaned some of the wards and transferred supplies around the hospital. Several of them were concerned about ethical aspects of their involvement, such as the possibility of breaching patient confidentiality and some of the sensitive aspects of providing health care. They also learned more about maternal health care and treatment of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other common diseases in the area. Through this experience, the students gained a more comprehensive view of rural health care in this region of Tanzania.

Through coursework, observations, and engagement with local cultures and political-economic aspects of the community in which we lived, students participating in the program confronted their stereotypes and assumptions about Tanzania and Africa in general. These experiences were framed by scholarship and pedagogy grounded in feminist and critical development studies (Langdon, 2013; Mohanty, 2002). In this context, experiential learning occurred outside of conventional institutions and practices in ways that provided opportunities for students to challenge preconceived ideas and discourses of gender and sustainable development.

Thus, global education and critical feminist pedagogy embedded in a GEL program have the potential to challenge and disrupt the fundamental aspects of knowledge production in systems laden

with unequal power relations, privilege, and a legacy of Western and patriarchal perspectives. Analyzing these hegemonic systems in diverse geopolitical contexts requires developing ways to confront global issues through critical and creative measures of social change. The global education experience in Tanzania illustrates an application of critical feminist pedagogy and engaged learning through decolonizing theories and practice in a developing region. In particular, the data above suggests that this program reframed students' understanding and global awareness of situations and discourses of power and privilege within the field of gender and sustainable development. Approaches such as global experiential learning thus have the potential to provide a platform for critical feminist pedagogy to develop practices that deconstruct and challenge unequal power dynamics and decolonize knowledge production.

Situating Feminist Critical Pedagogy in Contemporary Higher Education

In this period of growing right-wing populism and attacks on progressive ideals, critical analyses of immigration, free expression, gender equality, and LGBTQ+ rights are claiming more attention in higher education (Laliberté et al., 2017; Sultana, 2018). The climate on many university campuses reflects these issues, as students and others from underrepresented and marginalized groups have become the target of attacks based on bigotry, and hate-based actions and rhetoric (Kobayashi et al., 2014; Sultana, 2018). In response, campus activism and demonstrations around the U.S. and across the globe have been organized to speak out and challenge this sometimes violent and threatening rhetoric in support of approaches that reflect ethical practices and social justice.

This politically and socially charged climate provides an opportunity to reexamine the role of feminist approaches to critical scholarship and pedagogy in the neoliberal context of higher education (Moss and Maddrell, 2017). Attacks on academic freedom and efforts to promote social justice on campuses are part of a larger and more contested environment within academic institutions that face severe budget cuts and marginalization of multi-cultural and interdisciplinary programs. As outlined here, feminist studies has a tradition of scholarship, activism, and pedagogy that focuses on dismantling unequal power relations and challenging expressions of privilege based on class, gender, race, sexuality, and other social identities (Maher and Tetreault, 2011; Mohanty, 2002; Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, 2009). The interdisciplinary and critical focus of this field has played an important role in transformative scholarship and pedagogy (Korvajärvi and Vuori, 2016). This paper argues that critical feminist pedagogy reflects a growing need for alternative approaches that emphasize social justice and progressive transformation.

Critical feminist scholarship and pedagogy also offer important perspectives and practices that confront unequal power dynamics and levels of expert knowledge production. Korvajärvi and Vuori's (2016) concept communities of practice reinforces how feminist studies supports and enhances interdisciplinary practices, activities, skills, and communication that advance teaching in shifting academic contexts. They distinguish between local and national level decisions and activities, stating that "GS (Gender Studies) will need its diverse local communities of practice as much as it needs national and transnational networks to become able to transform itself within the turbulence of higher education policies and reorganization" (Korvajärvi and Vuori, 2016, 145). These perspectives are invaluable as faculty and students constantly navigate the neoliberal tides of more restrictive approaches and practices in the academy. In light of the feminist principles of power and privilege highlighted in this program, students are challenged to decolonize their approaches and thinking about globalization and sustainable development.

Feminist pedagogy also enhances critical approaches toward global issues and development among students through experiential learning in global contexts. Increasing attention to pedagogy within social justice and transformative practice in higher education is a strength of feminist activism

and scholarship (Sudbury and Okazawa-Rey, 2009). Drawing from pedagogies of dissent, antiracist, feminist, and other critical approaches, this paper highlights the value of individual consciousness that, according to Chatterjee (2009), can transform people through emancipatory political practice. Thus, the classroom, broadly defined, becomes a space to translate knowledge production into everyday activism that includes decolonizing theories and practices around global citizenship and community development.

The transformative position of feminist critical pedagogy is illustrated here through an approach that includes global experiential learning within transnational and decolonizing methods. In this program, students from a variety of backgrounds experienced cross-cultural engagement and questioned their roles in the world through interaction with women's advocacy groups and other community-based organizations in Tanzania. Their participation in global experiential education also encouraged them to better understand and challenge unequal power relations and privilege across diverse landscapes of socio-economic and political identities.

In conclusion, feminist critical pedagogy challenges neoliberal trends and has the potential to lead transformations from within higher education. Neoliberal practices often disproportionately affect critical scholarship and praxis in the fields of feminist and development studies. Feminist critical pedagogy offers a way to transform these restrictive practices and attitudes through engaged learning within and outside the classroom. Global experiential learning is one approach that critically addresses these forms of power, privilege, and hegemony. The current political climate of right-wing populism and attacks on social justice demonstrates an increasing need for these transformative areas of inquiry and knowledge production. Feminism has an important voice in these discussions within higher education from both global and critical perspectives.

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