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Authentic Collaboration and Active Commitment to Equity: An Evolving Case of Centering Marginalized Voices in Education Abroad

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Abstract

Nepal: Community, Technology and Sustainability brings together cohorts of US-based university students and Nepalese university students in a hybrid online/mobility program that supports intercultural, interdisciplinary, community-engaged, project-based learning. The program seeks to adopt a decolonial pedagogical model that centers the Nepali co-instructors, students, and host community partners as critical knowledge holders, sovereigns of their own development, and co-producers of the educational experience. This article provides a conceptual framework for centering typically marginalized voices, a description of the program and an edited version of a dialogue between several of the course co-instructors. Our major findings are that to achieve these ends, the values of decolonialization and equitable voice must be built into all elements of the program; that this requires pushing against many conventions of

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education abroad programming and, in some cases, community practices; and that this push can yield transformative outcomes for students, instructors, and communities.

Abstract in Nepali

नेपाल: कम्युनिटी, टेक्नोलोजी र सस्टेनेबिलिटीले अन्तरसांस्कृतिक, अन्तरविषयक, सामुदाय संलग्न परियोजनामा आधारित सिकाई मोडेल प्रयोग गरी हाइब्रिड अनलाइन/गतिशिलता कार्यक्रममार्फत अमेरिकाका विश्वविद्यालयका विद्यार्थीहरू र नेपालका विश्वविद्यालयका विद्यार्थीलाई एकै ठाउँमा ल्याउँछ । यो कार्यक्रमले विऔपनिवेशिक (डीकोलोनिअल) शिक्षण सिकाई मोडेल प्रयोग गर्दछ जसले नेपाली सह-शिक्षक, विद्यार्थी, र आयोजक सामुदाय नै ज्ञानका महत्वपूर्ण धारक हुन्, आफ्नो विकासको लागि सार्वभौम हुन्छन् र शैक्षिक अनुभवका सह-निर्माता हुन् भन्ने विषयलाई जोड दिन्छ । यस लेखले सीमान्तकृत आवाजलाई केन्द्रित गर्ने अवधारणाको रूपरेखा, कार्यक्रमको विवरण र निर्देशित पाठ्यक्रम पढाउने धेरै सह-प्रशिक्षकसँगको संवादको सम्पादित संस्करण प्रस्तुत गर्छ । यी लक्ष्यहरू प्राप्त गर्न कार्यक्रमका सबै तहमा विऔपनिवेशिक र समानताका आवाजका मूल्य तथा मान्यता जोडिनुपर्छ; यसका लागि विदेशमा शिक्षा प्राप्त गर्ने कार्यक्रमका परम्परा र केही अवस्थामा, सामुदायिक अभ्यासविरुद्ध केही कदम चालिनु पर्छ, र यस्ता कदमले विद्यार्थी, प्रशिक्षक र समुदायका लागि परिवर्तनकारी परिणामहरू ल्याउन सक्छन भन्ने यस आलेखको निष्कर्ष हो ।

Keywords:

Nepal, decolonial pedagogy, project-based learning, rural community development, educational equity

Introduction

Upon seeing the call for manuscripts for this edition of *Frontiers*, we were excited about the opportunity to reflect on our program, “Nepal: Community, Technology and Sustainability” within this framework. University of California, Davis (UC Davis) professors Nancy Erbstein (Education) and Jonathan London (Human Ecology), who shared a longstanding commitment to youth leadership in the US and Nepal, initiated program development and brought in Nepalese organization Hands On Institute co-founders Samrat Katwal and Bijaya Poudel, trained in sustainable development and anthropology, respectively. We also worked initially with then UC Davis Professor Deb Niemeier (Engineering). This binational program is directed towards the goals of both transformative student learning and progressive community development.

Nepal: Community, Technology and Sustainability brings together cohorts of UC Davis students and students from several Nepalese universities in a hybrid online/mobility program that supports intercultural, interdisciplinary, community-engaged, project-based learning. This program addresses multiple student learning objectives:

- Increase global education participation by under-represented student populations, including Nepali students reflecting national diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, caste, and socio-economic status, and UC Davis students from STEM majors, low-income households, our first-generation college-going and community college transfer populations, and racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds;
- Build student capacity to ethically collaborate across disciplines, global North/South divides, campus-community boundaries, and social hierarchies on solutions-oriented research and practice;
- Support under-served student populations to recognize and tap their strengths, build global partnerships, and inform postgraduate work and educational opportunities;
- Honor grassroots expertise and experience, without romanticizing real challenges associated with rural life, globalization, migration, and differential experiences based on caste, race/ethnicity, class, and immigration status;
- Support efforts in the partner village to pursue locally initiated, ongoing community development efforts.

This program has run twice and filled to capacity with thirty-six students, roughly half from UC Davis, half based in Nepal. UC Davis and Nepalese university student evaluations highly rated the academic and personal growth and transformations achieved through the program because of its unique combination of cultural learning, authentic international relationship-building and practical transdisciplinary skill building and application. Some UC Davis students have returned to Nepal and pursued further studies related to their experiences; some Nepali students have joined related international study for short- or long-term periods (including at UC Davis). Many UC Davis and Nepali students report having received postgraduate employment or fellowships in part as a result of their experiences, and most have maintained contact with peers and faculty via social media even years later. Locally we have seen follow-

up on several projects by community partners. Unfortunately, our most recent program cycle has been delayed by COVID-19.

In what follows we build a conceptual framework for centering typically marginalized voices, present a description of the program, and share an edited version of a dialogue between several of the course co-instructors. We conclude by offering reflections on how the program can offer some valuable lessons for those seeking to develop or enhance liberatory education abroad programs. Our major findings are that to achieve these ends, the values of decolonialization and equitable voice must be built into all elements of the program; that this requires pushing against many conventions of education abroad programming and, in some cases, community practices; and that this push can yield transformative outcomes for students, instructors, and communities.

Decolonizing Education abroad

We situate our efforts to center typically marginalized voices in education abroad within ongoing debates over the nature of colonialism, including its manifestations in the concepts of decolonialism and post-colonialism. As these are represented by large and growing canons (e.g., Fanon, 1963; Memmi, 1993; Said, 1979, 1993; Spivak, 2003; Tuck & Yang, 2012) we confine ourselves to drawing briefly on some of the key concepts relevant to our case of education abroad.

At its most basic level, colonialism describes a relationship of domination between two groups of people that extracts value of land and labor (Memmi, 1993). Under the logics of colonialism, the colonizer imposes a system of rule that subjects the colonized to the loss of sovereignty over their physical, ecological, political, economic, social, and cultural systems and resources (Veracini, 2010.) Colonialism entails both material and symbolic expressions of violence and extraction governed by colonial institutions, language, and discourses (Spivak, 2003; Wolfe, 2007). Its grounding in systems of control links colonialism to imperialism, defined by Edward Said (1993, p. 8) as, “The practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory” and “an ongoing contest between north and south, metropolis and periphery, white and native (1993, p. 8).” In turn, Said links the attitudes of imperialism, when practiced by European (and Euro-American) nations to Orientalism, which “was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, West, “us”) and the

strange (the Orient, the East, "them") (1979, p. 40). Orientalism provides the discursive justification for the colonial and imperial world order.

Decolonial movements have risen to confront the legacies and continued practices of colonialism and imperialism throughout the Global South in Latin America, Africa, South and Southeast Asia (Fanon, 1963). While much of this has entailed political action in revolutionary struggle, there has also been a critical element of symbolic and discursive struggle to decolonize minds and restore a sense of humanity, dignity, and self-sovereignty (Byrd, 2011; Daigle & Ramirez, 2019). The expression of this discursive front has been waged in the field of post-colonial theory that focus on deconstructing the narratives, notions of identity, and cultural categories that underwrite colonialism (Spivak, 2003). While this discursive approach is viewed as beneficial, there are also important critiques in more recent indigenous scholarship of a solely symbolic dimension to decolonization. This proclaims that decolonization is not merely a metaphor and demands material action to return land and resources to indigenous control (e.g., Tuck & Yang 2012). Without this core focus on material sovereignty, decolonial scholarship and practices can mask the true violence of colonialism and provide too easy of a "settler move towards innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3)."

In this paper, in the relationships between the two US-based and the two Nepal-based authors, and in the education abroad program as a whole, we seek to avoid this "move to innocence" and instead confront both the material and the symbolic dimensions of power at play in our practices. We intend to highlight ways in which our program bears legacies of colonialism, but nevertheless strives towards decolonialism, in keeping with the efforts of others who are focused on authentic community engaged global learning (e.g., Hartman et al., 2018; Moreno, 2021), as well as re-envisioning the dynamics of international educational program planning and participation (e.g. Christian et al., 2021; Hartman, 2015; Hartman et al., 2020; Ohito et al., 2021). We also document activity inspired by feminist and indigenous learning and knowledge production paradigms (e.g., Assié-Lumumba, 2017; Four Arrows, 2016; hooks, 2003), which offer guidance toward moving beyond an analysis ultimately centered around colonialism (even if de- or post-) to begin imagining and building different types of relationships and structures that value creative thinking, mutual respect, interconnectedness, and sustainability. To do so, we highlight how we contended with the traditional hierarchies of knowledge,

identity, decision-making, instructor and student participation and resource control that characterize relationships between universities in the global North and education abroad programs in the global South. In their place, we portray our dedicated if imperfect efforts to center historically marginalized voices-- as expressed by the Nepali co-instructors, students typically under-represented in global North study abroad programs (e.g., those who identify as first-generation students, Black, Indigenous and People of Color), Nepali students and the residents of the partner community of Machhapuchhre-- and build on an ethos of equity, care, and connection. We argue that this process of recentering and reimagining must occur throughout all dimensions of the program, including the structure, curriculum, pedagogy, distribution of resources, community partner engagement, the constitution of the student cohorts, and the dynamics within the teaching team.

Program Background and Description

While formal program planning launched in 2015, this program is rooted in longstanding activity. The UC Davis faculty-members spent time in Nepal in the late 1980s and early 1990s working with local NGOs in community-based education in nearby areas and maintained connections in-country during the intervening time. They re-initiated direct work in Nepal in 2015, at which time they developed a close working partnership with Hands On Institute, several local NGOs, and several Nepalese universities. The Hands On Institute leaders had been working in global education for several years and had directed several education abroad programs with a social justice orientation in another region of the country. Soon after developing this partnership, the joint instructor team established a relationship with a diversity of leaders in the rural village of Machhapuchhre, the eventual host community for the program. Machhapuchhre is a multi-ethnic community of about 1800 residents in the middle hills of Nepal, located about one hour's drive from the country's second largest city of Pokhara. Its major economic bases are agriculture, international remittances, and tourism. We explored several potential community sites, looking not only at logistical issues but the presence of ongoing locally-driven efforts to which student capacities might add some value in ways that would be locally sustainable. One of the Hands On Institute's co-directors grew up in the same region as this village, providing important knowledge of the local social, economic, and political context. Hands On Institute continued to maintain a

close connection with leaders in Machhapuchhre for the two years leading up to the programs and in the intervening years between the sessions.

During the program planning period, the instructor team worked intensively with a diverse array of village leaders to develop a set of projects that aligned with local development priorities. The selection process integrated several criteria. In addition to being based on a list generated by village leaders, the projects also needed to be feasible in the short amount of time available for the program (three and half months of planning and student preparation and two weeks of implementation), matched with the type and level of skills of university students and a relatively low cost. The program provides a project budget to support the students' work as well as a donation for the village committee in charge of the given projects (e.g., the mothers' committee developing the culture and history museum.)

The structure of the program has several important components. First, it is comprised of two student cohorts: one based at UC Davis and the other drawn from multiple Nepalese universities. Although it is officially a UC Davis program, both cohorts of students are considered full and equal participants. The outreach and enrollment processes are carefully designed to recruit a diverse student membership. At UC Davis, the course is advertised across all disciplines and through networks designed to support populations under-represented in education abroad, such as first-generation college-going students. While per campus policy UC Davis students enroll on a "first come, first served" basis (with mechanisms to ensure STEM, social sciences, and humanities representation), Nepali students are selected through an application process designed to build a cohort that is diverse in terms of ethnicity, caste, geographic origins, gender, linguistic and academic disciplines, and leadership and community engagement experience. To make this rich diversity truly an asset, the program emphasizes on-going processes of reflection on how to create and maintain equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students (as described further below). Program costs are relatively low for UC Davis education abroad, and qualifying students receive financial aid. Nepali student costs are supported by UC Davis student fees.

This program's approach to achieving a transformative impact draws from several pedagogical and community development principles. The program helps students prepare to live and work in an interconnected world through

intensive international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary experiences. The international dimension derives not only from UC Davis student travel abroad but also the multinational/multicultural nature of each student cohort and the collaboration and co-learning of Nepalese university students with their UC Davis peers, which provides all students the benefit of a truly global encounter. This is facilitated by guiding both cohorts of students in a process of developing “cultural humility” (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Murray-Garcia & Tervalon, 2017), a reflexive approach to working, learning and accountability across cultural differences that attends to dynamics of power.

Students engage in intercultural sharing activities, in which they present important elements of their identities through food, dance, song, and stories. They also co-construct group agreements that guide what they need to collaborate effectively and equitably, tapping and comparing the agreements they develop initially as separate (both UC Davis and Nepalese) cohorts. Over time, as student relationships deepen, they explore their varied experiences of privilege and oppression in their home countries and communities. All students also learn from the diverse cultures in Machhapuchhre that include multiple ethnic groups with important dynamics related to gender, class, caste, age, and education.

The interdisciplinary aspect of the program provides students skills that can facilitate collaborative, transdisciplinary action upon global challenges, such as qualitative and quantitative research, digital mapping and design, and marketing, as well as project management, cross-disciplinary teamwork, conflict resolution, and intercultural communication. This skill-building is supported by a problem-based learning methodology (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2005) which emphasizes the experiential learning involved in navigating the different phases of their projects from concept to execution to assessment. In sum, the program supports students as humble yet empowered learners who appreciate how much they can accomplish through equitable, ethical, and effective collaboration amongst themselves and with community partners.

The program’s community development approach also draws from several sources of principles and practice. It pays particular attention to power dynamics both between the students and village residents and leaders and within the village itself. The program emphasizes cross-cultural ethical thinking and action, helping students work with village hosts in respectful and

constructive ways and avoid problems of the external “savior” syndrome of community development (Ashdown et al., 2021; Balzer & Heidebrecht, 2017; Frey, 2016). The colonial legacy of international development in Nepal and elsewhere (Duffield & Hewitt, 2013) is one that UC Davis students are called to confront, as well as urban-based and/or highly educated Nepalis who also learned important lessons about listening to and supporting local priorities as opposed to imposing outside development models on residents. Students gain core community development capacities such as cross-cultural communication, group facilitation, multi-disciplinary and community-engaged research (Hartman, 2015; Peters et al., 2004)

To achieve these learning and community development goals, the program facilitates a multi-stage educational process. The program first engages student cohorts at UC Davis and in Nepal in parallel, linked learning experiences that are designed to build content knowledge, skills, and relationships necessary to succeed in their community-engaged, project-based learning. A fall quarter seminar introduces UC Davis students to fundamental knowledge of Nepal’s history, politics, economy, and culture. Nepali students have several day-long fall workshops (scheduled around an important holiday season) on team-building, issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion and project development. Students are placed in interdisciplinary and intercultural teams with the range of skills needed for their projects. The joint UC Davis-Nepali student teams meet virtually throughout the fall to develop their project plans in a guided step-by-step process that reflects asset-based, participatory methods. The time difference requires dedicated early morning and late-night meetings

During this fall phase, UC Davis faculty take a lead on campus-based course design and instruction, with input from the Nepali instructor team and, in the second session, a Nepali TA who was a student participant in Cohort 1 and subsequently enrolled at UC Davis as a graduate student. They collaborate with Nepali instructors on the design and implementation of most Nepal-based workshops. The Nepali instructors take a lead on sustaining engagement with community-based leaders and local project leads to maintain key relationships and monitor what are inevitably shifting local circumstances and interests. Each project team has one of the four primary instructors as a coach with access to the other three instructors for specialized support as needed.

In addition, the instructors support student engagement with others who can lend ad hoc expertise during fall planning. UC Davis students identify campus faculty or staff with expertise that can inform their project planning and also meet Nepali UC Davis students. Nepali students are connected by Hands On Institute to Nepali subject-area experts as mentors, as well as the Machhapuchhre-based project leads. The Nepal-based mentors are available to offer insights about promising models, strategies to avoid common pitfalls, and directions to relevant resources. Village liaisons serve as a point of contact to help guide the project to align with local needs and resources. These two latter relationships are managed by the Nepalese students and represent a crucial contribution to the program. Course faculty, U.S. campus-based mentors, Nepal-based mentors, and Machhapuchhre contacts help teams develop effective and culturally appropriate project designs via student-initiated consultation.

The instructor team established strong relationships with multiple Nepalese universities that would eventually recruit their students to participate in the program and help shape the curriculum to align with their educational goals. All these relationships formed a dense network that enriched the program and allowed it to meet its envisioned goals for transformative student learning and community development.

The in-country component of the program takes place during the three-week UC Davis winter intersession. During an initial three-day orientation in Nepal's capital city, Kathmandu, all students meet in person, participate in cultural sharing and team- and skill-building activities, and further specify their project plans. They also take field trips with local experts in Nepalese cultures and histories of community development, and all project teams meet with their local mentors.

This orientation period is followed by 10 days in the village. This component of the program involves introductions to village committees associated with the different projects (such as the village health committee sponsoring the students' project to redesign the birth and delivery room at the local health post) and another round of revisions to the project plans based on dialogues with their host collaborators. Students stay at a local lodge and in local family homestays. While staying primarily at the lodge reduces the opportunity for cultural immersion experiences, this allows students to work together on their projects at all hours of the day as well as to engage in inter-cultural

learning with their peers, coaching from their instructors, and group reflection. Each day begins with a check in on the daily project plan, followed by student-structured time on their projects. In the evenings students return to the lodge for a debrief and critical reflection on their experiences, as well as cultural exchange activities. Students take on responsibility for the group's collective welfare, for example, rotating through the roles of "Minister of Time" (keeping activities track), "Minister of Health" (helping to monitor well-being and encouraging self-care), "Minister of Happiness" (finding ways to help the group have fun, celebrate accomplishments, and maintain positive relationships), and making daily entries in the group journal.

The projects have a strong equity and inclusion emphasis, providing benefit for historically-marginalized ethnic groups, women, and low-income families. As one example, in the most recent year student groups worked on two projects to support development of homestay options for tourists and other visitors to the community. One partnered with a group of residents from two relatively privileged ethnic groups that had already launched their business, and the other team worked with a Dalit community (made up occupational castes traditionally considered "untouchable") that was developing a homestay enterprise plan. In both cases students worked carefully with community partners and instructors to amplify each group's unique assets and navigate local, national, and international dynamics of power in ways that centered the interests of those most typically marginalized in ways they desired.

The program works carefully to support sustainable community development processes as opposed to a "one and done" approach. This is crucial, because even though the program has made a commitment to work with the village for at least 6 years (3 programs every other year), ultimately local residents and leaders have to own and support the projects themselves. One way the program has sought to achieve this is by providing student project deliverables that the local residents can adapt to their own uses: for example, providing the prototype for a solar fruit and vegetable dryer that local carpenters adapted to construct primarily from low-cost locally-sourced materials. Another important step was facilitating connections between local project liaisons and community members and national mentors, so they could continue to develop their relationships as they deem useful. Other projects have informed funding requests to local leadership as part of budgeting processes (for example, developing digital maps to guide the repair of earthquake

damaged irrigation canals and co-designing a local museum space with a Mothers Group to display objects which have uses and histories that are rapidly being lost).

Towards the end of the village stay students meet with their local project partners to present and finalize their deliverables. This is followed by a village-wide ceremony in which students present to village residents and leaders. The ceremony often also includes cultural sharing (dances and songs) by both the students and local residents. These presentations are important as professional development opportunities for the students and local accountability mechanisms, as well as celebrations and expressions of gratitude by both students and residents. Student project deliverables exemplify the interdisciplinary problem-based learning principles of the program. All documentation is provided in both English and Nepali, in accessible language and formats. For online tools, local leaders are identified as the site administrators to sustain maintenance.

The final three days of the program are spent back in Kathmandu. The student teams produce posters that summarize their project methods, findings, and recommendations. These are formatted as conference posters that the students can use to showcase their learning in future academic conferences and as part of their professional development. In fact, several students presented their posters at the UC Davis Undergraduate Research Symposium (most recently including Nepalese team mates virtually). Several Nepalese students have translated their village projects into graduate theses.

The program concludes in Kathmandu with a final event and celebration in which the students present their projects as well as reflections on the learning and development process to an audience of professors from their universities, the Nepalese project mentors, alumni of the past programs, and leaders from institutions such as Fulbright Nepal, the US Embassy, and non-governmental organizations working in the fields of rural community development. By the end of the program, the UC Davis and Nepali students, who began as two separate cohorts located on opposite sides of the planet, have developed friendships that span cultural and spatial divides, a deep appreciation for the power and complexity of intercultural, interdisciplinary and community collaboration, and work that supports community strengthening efforts. Via social media we can see that not only are UC Davis and Nepali university students maintaining

friendships, but students are staying in touch with village residents who are online. In addition, village residents are sustaining communication with the instructors.

Amplifying Marginalized Voices in Education Abroad

The Nepal Community, Technology and Sustainability program has placed historically marginalized voices—for example, those of host country students, community partners, and typically under-represented populations with these constituencies and in US education abroad programs-- at the core of the structure and pedagogy of the program. To provide our perspectives on why and how we have achieved some positive outcomes, we present excerpts of a dialogue among three of the co-instructors of the course and authors of this manuscript—Bijaya, Jonathan, and Nancy (unfortunately challenges associated with COVID-19 and the monsoon affected our ability to include Samrat in the recorded dialogue, but Bijaya aimed to include his ideas). We reflected on the process through which we designed the program, the challenges experienced along the way and the benefits of aspiring toward what we considered a liberatory approach.

We began by noting the key foundational values that undergirded every element of the program.

BP: Maybe the first thing is that we had a common interest or common maybe values working with the marginalized communities

NE: I agree that was a really important starting point ... that we really share these values around equity and inclusion was so critical.

JL: Yeah. Yeah. And that kind of was the foundation that allowed us to then make all these other decisions about students and community partners. Every one of those selection points had the same kind of values. So, all of the program elements lined up.

One of the crucial elements in any educational program is the composition of the teaching team. In our case, this was interdisciplinary, intercultural, and international. UC Davis faculty-members brought expertise in education, youth development and community development and the Hands On

Institute directors brought expertise in anthropology and development studies; all of us brought extensive experience working with youth. In contrast to a typical and hierarchical division of labor in which the US-based university professors provide the content and the in-country team provide logistics, this program employed a collaborative model of co-instructors in which each member brought their own unique contributions to the overall pedagogical approach.

Bijaya, commented on how unusual this arrangement is compared to the typical arrangements in their international partnerships.

I think your--I don't know how to say but your openness - especially your openness to us and even to Nepalese students - also breaks a lot of barriers. And even for us, getting a title of co-instructor-- for example. We have worked with other universities before as well. Sometimes we also felt like people do not really give the space on that. So, I think you have all provided us this space to use our knowledge, to contribute as an instructor and even designing the program which is also very unique to us. To us, the UC Davis program was not only a program: it was our program. I think this is also a very important aspect of this program because we never got this title before with other programs. We are recognized to have important knowledge. This program promoted equality among organizers.

Nancy responded to Bijaya's comments by reflecting on the indispensable quality of Hands On Institute's local knowledge and cultural savvy.

I'm glad you said something about that because that's really such an important element of this program. I mean, it really is our program collectively. There's no way that Jonathan and I could have designed and run this program. It very much was a collective effort.

Jonathan echoed this:

All of the really subtle politics within the village, there's no way we would've been remotely able to [navigate] what you guys did... even with Nancy's language skills. It would've been a very surface-level kind of way to engage. So that was a very important part of the partnership we really valued throughout.

The selection of the students was another crucial venue for manifesting the program's values on diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and interconnection and movement away from extractive educational practices. In Nepal, instead of prioritizing only students from the elite universities with high-performing records and the best English language skills, the program recruited through a wide variety of university and non-governmental organization networks to ensure diversity of participants in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, class, caste, language, geography, and discipline. In addition to application essays, the selection process included an in-person group interview in which prospective students participated in activities to assess their capacities for working creatively and cooperatively on problem solving and to demonstrate their genuine interest in the program. While this process resulted in some tension with university partners who would have preferred to select their own students to fill the program, it also produced an extremely diverse cohort with opportunities for students to learn from and contribute their own unique talents.

JL: I mean look at some of these discomfort points. I mean you guys did the interviews with the Nepali students but in a traditional [program], you might've selected just the top students-- the most academically accomplished and those with the best English. But you really set up a situation where you weren't just picking the standard students. You really were picking those that had a value of cooperation...

Because the program was required to accept students on a first-come, first-served basis in the United States (although eventually was able to do so across the categories of social sciences/humanities and STEM fields), to ensure diversity in the cohort, we relied on extensive outreach to student populations typically under-represented in education abroad, including transfer students, international students, and first generation college-going students. By holding down the costs and keeping the travel portion relatively short, we were able to make the program more accessible to lower-income students and to students who could not participate in extended time away. Finally, our program's emphasis on respectful, equitable community engagement attracted a diversity of students.

Nancy commented on the benefits of this intentional recruitment.

[W]e worked really hard at a design to also get a racially, ethnically and socio-economically diverse group of students from UC Davis to

participate. That was really intentional, and I know it was really valuable, partly because I remember both times we ran the program, the Nepali students looked at the photos of the UC Davis students and said, "Where are the Americans?" [laughter]. Because they weren't all white. And it was really, really important that we were able to bring a much more representative group of UC Davis students in terms of their racial and ethnic backgrounds, how they had grown up, their families' wealth and things like that. So, then we could have a diverse group of Nepali students and a diverse group of UC Davis students too connecting with each other and exploring dynamics of social justice.

The program also manifested its decolonizing values in the structure of its relationships with the host community, the village of Machhapuchhre. In contrast with a standard education abroad model where the community serves as a passive site where the instructors communicate their own knowledge, in this case, a diversity of community members' knowledge was also highly valued. Similarly, in contrast with the international development paradigm that simply imports global North and/or urban knowledge to benefit needy villagers, in this case the students were there to support the agency of local residents across ethnic, gender and caste backgrounds on their own prioritized projects and learn from them.

NE: So, we kind of challenged [the expected paradigm] both ways, right? We challenged the development model because we weren't coming there with a big focus on giving people money and resources. But we also weren't there like many education abroad programs to just extract learning and not give anything back to the community either. So, we're trying to kind of walk a middle path there in some ways.

BP: And also, at the Institute we also believe in the learning from the local people - learning about their skill. For example, by learning from the Dalit community or learning from the local people this is also about not only learning for us, but it is also we're telling them that they also have something to give to the world and appreciating their culture and their practices because I know people with this globalization and all, people are living in inferiority. They consider foreigners to be superior. They consider people living in the urban spaces to be superior. And people living in village are trying to practice the traditional way of living like

farming and all. And when people from outside come and learn from them it is also empowering to them. I think it's a big gesture.

Finally, the program highlighted and supported the voice of the students as agents in their own learning. We accomplished this through a project-based and experiential learning model, set up in contrast to what Brazilian popular educator Paulo Freire (1996) calls the “banking model” in which the knowledge of the teacher is deposited in the presumed empty head of the students.

JL: We set it up as this project-based learning where we weren't just saying, "Okay. Here's the project. Now just go do it." They had to invest themselves in it and come up with their own ideas and we gave them a lot of latitude to figure things out. And then I think they really owned it and committed to it in a way that if it had just been some activities and a report and a paper it would've been very different. But everyone was so personally invested in it.

As illustrated in this dialogue, the theme of amplifying marginalized voices was woven throughout the program from the relationships between the instructors, the interactions within and between the UC Davis and Nepalese student cohorts, and between the program and the residents and leaders from the host village. In the conclusion section, we reflect on these program elements and how they can contribute to the vital field of global education.

Conclusion

The content, pedagogy, program development process and structure of Nepal: Community, Technology and Sustainability reflect a concerted effort to decolonize and reimagine education abroad through amplifying typically marginalized voices. While we are mindful of Tuck and Yang's (2012) warning not to accept progressive practices as actual decolonialization, we do make a modest claim that they represent successes in shifting some degree of symbolic and material resources from the global North to global South.

As illustrated above, we placed decolonial values at the program's core and aimed to align all elements with them. In many cases, this required pushing back on conventional ways of designing and managing education abroad programs: for example, designation (and equitable compensation) of its bi-national team as co-instructors, enrolling a hybrid UC Davis and Nepalese

student cohort (the latter with no tuition charged) with intersectional diversity and access to typically underrepresented student populations, to providing preparatory seminars that countered the Orientalist gaze on Nepal with a political and humanized vision, to repositioning the host community from merely program site to a source of crucial educational knowledge and decision-making about the kinds of projects that would be implemented there. In all cases, we sought to position the Nepali members not as sites of extraction but as full and complex partners, whose knowledge is valued and resourced accordingly.

What made the program successful was starting with making our values on equity explicit and operationalized through all elements of the program design. It was not enough to profess these values, we had to ensure that that they were infused in the program structure, curriculum, and pedagogy, oriented the multi-layered relationships between and among the co-instructors, the students, and the people of Machhapuchhre, and guided us through instances of tension in these relationships. As one important example, while the typical program community development model may have drawn us to work only with the dominant leaders of the village, we decided to develop a collaboration with the historically-marginalized Dalit community as a project partner. We were gratified not only by the value of the project (an outreach plan and set of marketing materials for a village homestay enterprise) to the students and the Dalit community, but the apparent eventual embrace of the enterprise by the village leadership led by other dominant ethnic groups. Likewise, we were pleased that the faculty at one of the elite universities that had sought to have the program enroll all of their students eventually appreciated the way that the diverse cohort helped broaden the educational experience of their students.

This is not to say that the program did not experience unresolvable tensions. For example, the local homestay committee would have preferred us to stay additional nights instead of staying mostly in the local hotel, but we had to balance the needs of our students to work together in teams throughout the day and evenings instead of being with host families. On the project side, despite multiple attempts, we were unable to fully engage the village youth and young adults in the program as hoped due to competing priorities among the youth organizations. Likewise, one of the student projects on women's entrepreneurship struggled to overcome the cultural and material barriers experienced by local women due to a lack of land ownership and the pressure of domestic responsibilities. And of course, the inability to run the course due to

COVID-19 has upended our plans for a two-year program cycle and sustained commitments to the village. Nonetheless, we feel gratified that our basic model of international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary education abroad programming has offered some promising practices in centering voices typically marginalized in education abroad.

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