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Introduction: Special Issue on Listening to and Learning from Partners and Host Communities: Amplifying Marginalized Voices in Global Learning

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Abstract

In early April of 2020, amidst astoundingly sudden suffering and disease, the novelist Arundhati Roy challenged the world with a provocative article, asking: Could the pandemic be a portal to better possibilities? Might we shed, “our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas,” leaving those things behind? Moving beyond the pandemic moment, might we walk “lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it”? Over the past two years, driven in part by the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, scholars and practitioners have proposed, reviewed, and refined articles centered on the theme of this Special Issue, “Listening to and Learning from Partners and Host Communities: Amplifying Marginalized Voices in Global Learning.” We see, through these examples, that another world is possible – and that our colleagues and networks are leveraging global education in processes and toward outcomes that transgress the limited colonial and unidirectional models that have been preeminent. Global education is being instrumentalized toward ends that support the co-creation of more just, inclusive, and sustainable communities.

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Thirty-one authors and co-authors, over a third of them situated in the Global South, have contributed eight articles that systematically demonstrate processes for learning from and amplifying historically marginalized voices in global learning. The result is a clearer light shining on the next steps the education abroad sector must take, if it wishes to live up to its ideals of contributing to a more just, peaceful, equitable, and sustainable world.

Abstract in French

Au début du mois d'avril 2020, et au milieu de souffrance et de maladie très stupéfiantes soudaines, le romancier Arundhati Roy avait mis le monde avec un article provocant en question, en demandant: la pandémie pouvait-elle être un portail aux possibilités meilleures ? Pouvons-nous diffuser, "nos préjugés et la haine, notre avarice, nos banques de données et les idées mortes derrière : en laissant ces choses-là derrière ? En mouvant au-delà pendant la pandémie, pouvons-nous marcher lentement, avec moins de bagages, prêt à imaginer un autre monde, et à y combattre ? Au cours de deux dernières années, entraînés d'une part, par la perturbation de la pandémie de COVID-19?, des savants et praticiens ont proposé : révisé et réforme les articles focalisés sur le thème de cet problème spécial, Ecouter à et apprendre des communautés des associés et hôtes Amplifiant des voix marginalisées dans l'Apprendre global. A partir de ces exemples, nous voyons, qu'un autre monde est possible – et que nos collègues et réseaux utilisent beaucoup d'influence en éducation globale dans de processus afin d'obtenir des résultats qui transgressent de modèles coloniaux et unidirectionnels limités qui ont été prééminents, L'éducation globale est en train d'être instrumentalisée vers de fins qui appuient la Co-création des communautés plus justes, inclusives, et soutenables. Trente-un auteurs et co-auteurs, sur un tiers d'eux situés dans le sud global, ont contribué huit articles qui ont démontré systématiquement de processus d'apprendre de voix historiquement marginalisées en apprendre global. Le résultat est une lumière plus brillante pour des prochaines étapes de l'éducation que de secteur plus élargi doit prendre s'il souhaite vivre selon ses idéaux de contribuer à un monde plus juste, paisible équitable et soutenable.

Our Thinking and Approach to This Issue

This special Issue of Frontiers started as a hopeful project and what has been reinforced through the eight articles is that hope and cross-border collaboration are critical to the success of this work. The great diversity of voices representing and complicating the notions of learner, knowledge creator and

community member spans the U.S. and Canada as well as twelve host-community countries (Kenya, India, Ecuador, Honduras, Ghana, The Dominican Republic, Rwanda, Thailand, Panama, Costa Rica, and Nepal). It is exciting for us to highlight that of the thirty-one authors and co-editors of this volume, twelve are situated in the Global South. Simultaneously, we recognize that we as individuals, along with our institutions and the education abroad sector as a whole, must do more to recognize and respect Global South leadership. This Issue is a compendium of critical reflection that brings new impetus to the notion of education abroad. Articles represent an evolution beyond the neocolonial practices of education abroad where the sponsors framed programs to benefit them, to the detriment of the local communities. We centered this Special Issue with the idea that one of the main goals for global education, and the focus here is primarily on education abroad, should be to work towards building just, inclusive, and sustainable communities. In other words, **all education abroad can and should be viewed as an opportunity for structural and community change toward greater justice**. All eight articles reflect that orientation.

We are countering a narrative that has remained persistent in the field. As Buckner and Stein (2019) point out, internationalization within higher education has remained depoliticized and dehistoricized. Depoliticization has the effect of reinscribing hegemonic narratives, thus making education abroad a tool of the state (Reily & Senders, 2009) and, frequently, a colonial exercise (Ogden, 2007). It is not surprising then, to note that the US education abroad sector's focus on outcomes has primarily been concerned with outcomes that ultimately locate inside the US. Over time outcomes have shifted from institutional outcomes to student learning outcomes (Buckner & Stein, 2019), but even with that shift the focus is predominantly on US students and institutions. The approach of this special edition has been to encourage a more profound shift to assess partner and host community learning and outcomes.

Education abroad has made progress in being much more critical of and reflective about how students learn, who has access to study abroad, curricular integration, how intervention happens with students before, during, and after an education abroad experience, support for traditionally underrepresented students in education abroad, the commodification of higher/international education and decolonizing education abroad (Adkins & Messerly, 2019; Brewer et al., 2019; Brewer & Ogden, 2019; Contreras et al., 2020; Hartman et al., 2020;

Vande Berg et al., 2009; Zemach-Bersin, 2012) as well as challenging and redefining the concept of global citizenship (Andreotti & de Souza, 2012; Lewin, 2009; Hartman et al., 2018; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). These critically-informed reforms underway point toward a more profound reorientation. What we see in this Special Issue is a new narrative bolstered by voices that have often been left at the margins. What is evident across all the case studies and research projects is that it takes on-going, persistent grappling to do this work well.

All global education stakeholders—US institutions, students, faculty, and off-campus partners—must question who the learners are and who the knowledge creators are, “opening the door for epistemic disobedience that transgresses colonialist understandings of knowledge and relationships” (Santiago-Ortiz, J., 2018, p. 52). As we cite a civic engagement journal in the preceding sentence, we are reminded of Reilly and Senders (2009) injunction to, “begin simply—by replacing the rhetoric of “internationality” with one that is more realistic and more productive: we are all co-inhabitants of a single planet” (p. 250). Coloniality and systemic racism have frequently followed national projects and nationalizing borders, but the work of advancing cultural humility, respect for one another and the planet, and building peace by pieces through connection across perceived difference is not an inherently international project; it is a global project. Though this collection of articles features international partnerships, it is important to note here that considerable work has advanced to liberate global education from the notion that one must cross a national border to learn meaningfully about critical concepts, values, and practices such as cultural humility or critical global citizenship (Alonso García & Longo, 2013, 2015, 2017; Battistoni et al., 2009; Hartman et al., 2018; Sobania, 2015).

Whether abroad or domestically, when global education leaders and professionals fail to listen to and learn from historically excluded and/or minoritized partners and stakeholders, education abroad becomes part of the hegemonic project of globalizing higher education that unfortunately can be, “an accessory to entrenching Eurocentric knowledge creation and western practices of knowledge dissemination” (Unkule, 2019, p. 12), to say nothing of failing to disrupt dominant Anglo-American ways of thinking and being. When diverse and historically marginalized voices and perspectives are not part of dialogue, exchange, and co-creation of programming, education abroad fails to reach its “original mission of promoting intercultural learning and

intercivilizational dialogue” (2019, p. 12). This is true not only from epistemic and ontological perspectives. As this Issue makes abundantly clear, listening to the interests and desires of host community members frequently forwards desires for host community economic development – as opposed to a common model where US-based organizations, institutions, and companies capture most of the expended funds (Hartman, 2015; Larsen, 2015).

We the Co-Editors

Who we are, what has shaped our thinking and our own narratives feels imminently relevant in this introduction. It is important that we develop our own self-awareness as co-editors about where we are positioned in relation to our work, our communities and our roles as practitioners, educators, and scholars and how we utilize institutional resources. What has shaped and drawn us here matters and calls for our own continuous self-reflection and -examination.

Samantha Brandauer

My academic and career trajectories have been shaped by the importance that crossing cultures and learning language have played in my own life. While I approach this work as someone who embodies the “traditional” American study abroad student: white, privileged, Cisgendered and heterosexual, my life and actual identity formation have been more complex.

Key moments for me were starting middle school in Germany with no previous language knowledge, a summer homestay with a French family, study abroad for a semester as an undergraduate in Cameroon, a teaching Fulbright in Austria – all experiences that were just a part of my life, an indicator of my privilege and a deep influence on my notions of identity. Through all of this I honed my intercultural skills, especially empathy and humility, by also being a language and cultural outsider. My subsequent studies in intercultural communication gave me theory and language to unpack those experiences and led me to understand more complex issues tied to equity and belonging. All of this drew me to my life-long passion for and career in international education.

I have served as Associate Provost and Executive Director of the Center for Global Study and Engagement at Dickinson College for the last 6.5 years. Dickinson is an institution with a long and unwavering commitment to education abroad including a significant investment in infrastructure, human

resources, and reciprocal partnerships around the world. Thus, I currently lead a diverse, global team with staff and faculty in Brazil, Cameroon, China, Argentina, England, France, Italy, Germany, Russia, and Spain. It is the relationship with these incredible individuals who feel and guide the impact of U.S. study abroad students in their own local communities every day that have most influenced my thinking, filled me with hope and compelled me to challenge whose voices get heard and why and whose do not. They inspired much of the initial thinking on this Special Issue, and I sought out collaborators and co-conspirators (a.k.a. co-editors) of this Special Issue who were positioned to expand the conversation and offer their unique perspectives.

Teku T. Teku

My first experience working with a study abroad program was in 1997, when as a postgraduate student at the University of Yaoundé I, I was invited to assist students from the United States, participating in the Dickinson College study abroad program in Cameroon. I was later selected in 1998 to spend a year at Dickinson College as an exchange student, where I met students from all continents. Upon return to Cameroon in 1999, I was called to work with the Dickinson in Cameroon program, as Program Associate. I performed that role until 2007, when I was hired as Resident Director of Dickinson in Cameroon.

Between 1997 and 2018, therefore, I had the occasion of interacting and socializing with over two hundred students from more than seven higher education institutions in the United States, who participated in various programs organized by Dickinson College in Cameroon. I worked with American students from various socio-economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, differing sexual orientations and colors. My work ranged from arranging host families to performing other administrative chores. Within this period, I attended capacity building meetings in Spain, France, and the United States. With over twenty years of experience in international education, I have seen the pertinence of cultural diversity, inclusiveness, equity, and global dialogue in education abroad. My web of interactions with students and faculty on study abroad has evidently shaped my appreciation of various articles in this Special Issue.

Eric Hartman

Before I began working with education abroad programming, I was grounded in participatory approaches to community and civic engagement. As

an undergraduate at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, I volunteered with and learned from a rural youth tutoring initiative while taking coursework in Appalachian Regional History. That place-based combination of theory and practice helped me understand the national and global processes that led analysts to label Appalachia as an “internal colony” in the 1960s and 70s (Billings, 2016). I also had a formative opportunity to study abroad in Glasgow, Scotland, through Lock Haven. Those two experiences were catalytic in understanding and complicating my White, rural roots.

Soon thereafter, I served as a graduate assistant in the Office of Service-Learning at the University of Nebraska, where I supported a faculty member’s political science course on migration, connecting students with local agency requests for language exchange partners. The course and community helped me understand Lincoln, Nebraska, as the cultural crossroads that it is, repeatedly recognized among the top twenty US cities for refugee relocation per capita (Pipher, 2002).

I carried this combination of theory and practice to advance place-based learning and civic action into my part-time role with Amizade in the early 2000s. Founded in 1994 as a grassroots organization connecting people across cultures through collaborative community development, working with Amizade brought me into relationship with communities in Bolivia, Germany/Poland, Ghana, Jamaica, The Navajo (Dine) Nation, Northern Ireland, and Tanzania. I also again undertook collaborations with refugee community support and inclusion, at this point in Pittsburgh. Since that time, I have been repeatedly returning to two themes of inquiry and practice as a scholar and administrator. First, what is (robust, critical, thick) global citizenship; how do we encourage more of it and how do we know when we have it? Second, how can community-campus partnerships be designed, implemented, and continuously improved to best serve the interests of all involved stakeholders, and particularly off-campus stakeholders and community members?

Súlia Folli

We would like to acknowledge and thank our co-editor Sulia Folli, who helped us create the call for articles for this Special Issue. Sulia is a Brazilian national who has worked for several U.S. based study abroad providers in São Paulo, Brazil and currently serves as Resident Director of the CET program there.

As an undergraduate, she studied abroad in Vancouver, Canada. Her experiences and background were important in shaping this Special Issue.

Key Questions and Goals

This Special Issue shifts focus to ensure host community members outside of the US, many of whom are community organizers and/or community-engaged education abroad professionals themselves, have space to “write back” their ideas, experiences, research and/or work with education abroad programs, students, and faculty. With more and different voices in these conversations, our collective responsibilities to build more just, inclusive, and sustainable communities and partnerships can be re-imagined and re-charted to step forward together. It feels particularly resonant coming out of a global pandemic that for a time halted student mobility, forcing reflection and perhaps transformation in education abroad, while shining a light on the inequalities and injustices that are intertwined with our undeniable global interdependence. What we see across this Special Issue is that when we truly engage with, center, and amplify host community and marginalized voices it is impossible to not view education abroad through this lens of interdependence. That lens leads us to shift practices and think more deeply about “how we operate ethically within the communities and systems of which we are part and which support us” (Hartman & Brandauer, 2022).

As we wrote the call, we had a particular vision of community(-ies) that is aspirational, future-forward, and co-created. Communities are understood as both geographic locations (e.g., the community of Carlisle, PA) and coalitions of shared interests (e.g., the community of Pennsylvanians who support global education) (Hartman, Kiely, Boettcher, & Friedrichs, 2018). Within the campus-community internationalization and global learning discourses, for the purposes of this Special Issue, we see the following communities: (a) campus-connected students, staff, and faculty and (b) individuals and organizations present in geographic locations where higher education institutions send students for global learning experiences, including locations abroad. The articles illustrate how new communities can be formed when these two distinct types of communities work together in intentional, aspirationally reciprocal ways and build meaningful, lasting relationships with one another.

The articles in this volume make progress on the following key questions:

- How does the field of education abroad contribute to building just, inclusive, sustainable, and equitable communities?
 - How do we understand these complex concepts and co-create definitions across the many identities, cultures, communities, institutions, and countries with whom we collaborate?
 - How do we measure our progress?
- Whose voices should we be listening to – and how? What have been the constructs, barriers, and power dynamics within education abroad that have prioritized certain voices over others? What methodologies or program structures remedy that?
- If we intend to stimulate community and education abroad practices that develop a counter-narrative to colonial (re-)formation processes, how do we interrogate the epistemic injustice of knowledge and experiences?
- How do we challenge US students and faculty in education abroad to break free from dichotomous thinking that aims to fix or interfere with new local communities and instead shift to an approach that is more horizontal and challenges traditional understandings of knowledge and relationships?
- How do we shift the frame of education abroad to allow us to sit with the tensions of difference *and* interdependence?
- How can attentiveness to predominant economic, risk, liability, and contracting models in education abroad open new spaces for recognizing, remunerating, and amplifying historically marginalized voices and perspectives?
- How might the above questions shape education practice around:
 - Training, orientations and reflections for US-based faculty and students as well as for local staff and partners abroad?
 - Community engagement or experiential learning components?
 - Curriculum development and integration?
 - Economic models and resource allocation?

We asked authors to consider theoretical frameworks, methodologies, key concepts, and approaches across disciplines including but not limited to: Epistemic Justice, Decolonial/Postcolonial Critical Pedagogy, Fair Trade Learning, Intercultural Praxis. We sought critical and intersectional approaches grounded in historical structures and theories that “might provide a more holistic approach to the realities communities face, while also working toward breaking hierarchies in the relationship between students, teachers, and community” (Santiago-Ortiz, 2018, p. 47).

This was an ambitious set of goals, questions, and frameworks and yet most were addressed with methodical approaches that give concrete examples of and reflections on how to build better programs and more equitable partnerships.

Overview of Articles

We hope you are as excited to read, reflect on and learn from these eight articles as we have been. Though each contribution is unique in approach and theoretical framework, they share a common view that by, purposefully listening to community residents, better education abroad programs can be built upon stronger, more agile relationships with greater reciprocal benefits for local community residents and visiting students alike.

Different methodologies are used across these articles with five written formally as case studies and the other three articles as an autoethnography, a research project with a survey, and an ethnographic research project. They provide a roadmap forward and focus on critical-reflection, process, and learning. What emerges is a volume rich with examples of how the field of education abroad contributes to building just, inclusive, sustainable, and equitable communities. Across the articles the following threads weave throughout:

- We must continually examine power dynamics in all education abroad relationships.
- Disruption is a desirable outcome if we are to see truly meaningful change.
- We are interdependent.
- Values of equity must be explicit and operationalized throughout all elements of a program.
- Building the relationships needed to sustain just and inclusive partnerships requires everyone to be comfortable with complexity and open to connecting.
- Host community members are central to the work of education abroad; ask for their input and perspectives and listen to and act on their answers.
- Listening to and learning from partners and host communities is ongoing, complex, and critical.
- We must continuously disrupt colonial narratives of who creates knowledge and be able to simultaneously understand ourselves as teachers, learners, and community members.

In *African Homestays and Community Engagement: A Case Study on Reciprocity and Neocolonialism*, we see an evolution from neocolonial relationships to equity, reciprocity, and inclusiveness of host communities in education abroad. The case study provides examples of how a program can disrupt dynamics of social class at the community level and encourage homestay families to understand themselves as teachers and collaborators. The authors reinforce the idea that education abroad programs should provide varied and scaffolded approaches to collecting feedback and co-producing knowledge.

Can We Picture Equity? Critically Examining Cross-Cultural Short-Term Project Collaborations presents a program that uniquely addresses the equity challenges common in short-term research projects in education abroad. The authors examine equity by “studying up” and “studying us”. Not “studying others”. Early conversations between participating groups that outline what each group has to contribute in terms of time, expertise, material resources and what each group stands to gain through the project’s completion, serve toward meeting the project’s goals of equity, fairness and integrity. This case study also used the tools of photography and storytelling to get at issues of equity and to create shared experiences. These authors leave us with a key question: “In what ways can verticality in expertise be distinguished from verticality in social power, such that the former can be put to use as a resource in collaborative and equity-focused educational programming?”

Essential Participants: Centering the Experiences of Southern Hosts in Global Service-Learning Pedagogy and Practice by using an intersectional lens across global service-learning (GSL) literature, critical disability theory and critical pedagogy, is a call to center hosts in all aspects of global service-learning. While both authors are situated in the Global North, they conducted surveys with host families in Ecuador, Honduras, Ghana, The Dominican Republic, and Rwanda “to better understand their experiences of, expectations of, and hopes for GSL. They offer tools and suggestions for “educators to center the voices, desires and motivations of Southern hosts in all of their GSL preparations” including not only students but the hosts themselves.

Leveraging Foreign Higher Education Institutional Affiliation to Support Preservation of Local Knowledge and Fight Displacement in Thailand highlights the mutual benefits of collaboration and inclusion in education abroad.

Through a multi-sited ethnographic research project in Thailand, the author demonstrates that by participating in education abroad programs, host communities not only have economic benefits but also preserve local knowledge, learn about other cultures, and leverage this knowledge and affiliations in negotiations with local government over land use and the rights of communities. If education abroad is viewed as a unidirectional process, not an interactive dialectic that only measures the impact on U.S. participants, we silence the agency of our host communities in this process. Instead, she concludes by “shifting the discourse towards host community impacts expands knowledge on study abroad, allowing for important new terrains of knowledge, critical for equitable and reciprocal program development”.

An Indigenous Intercambio Program: Empowering underrepresented STEM students to participate in scientific and cultural exchange through study abroad (Panama) is a hopeful and powerful case study that takes the reader through a program model that simultaneously lifts up and empowers marginalized U.S. based Native American and Latinx students and host community members in Panama. This article sheds light on how “power dynamics are always at play, although they are often ignored or discounted” in education abroad. A truly equitable study abroad experience for both the visiting students and the host communities means these dynamics must be recognized and addressed head on as much as possible. By using Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as a framework in a program geared toward STEM students, this program critically challenges who creates knowledge, particularly looking through both the lens of Western science and the indigenous ways of knowing about the land and place. This case study complicates and expands notions of community in education abroad. The program model encourages students and hosts from marginalized communities to share issues that they are both facing and work together towards mutually beneficial solutions.

In *Reimagining risk management: decolonizing crisis response through holistic partnership building in education abroad (Ecuador)* a team, with members based in the U.S. and Ecuador, reimagines a response to COVID-19 through “continued dialogue and self-directed creative reflection techniques.” They share what they learned by working together as partners, examining their biases, and redefining their priorities to seek more “holistic relationships that prioritize education, growth and justice for all,” as related to risk management.

The authors provide guidance for education abroad professionals to decolonize risk management.

In *The Power of Listening: Host Community Members' Perspectives of a Field Research Education Abroad Program in Costa Rica* the authors start with a question, "How do community members view education abroad students' presence in their community?" They point out that this is a seemingly simple question that does not get asked enough and is still mostly missing from the education abroad research. By asking this question through a series of structured interviews of community members and listening to the answers, they discover "the importance of meaningful relationships where both sides are heard and with reciprocal benefits for both community members and visiting university students." They advocate that beyond listening, we must incorporate host community perspectives into all elements of the program from design to assessment.

Authentic Collaboration and Active Commitment to Equity: An Evolving Case of Centering Marginalized Voices in Education Abroad (Nepal), "provides a conceptual framework for centering typically marginalized voices..." The authors adeptly use dialogue across their binational co-instructor team to show how they are working toward "making our values on equity explicit and operationalized through all elements of the program design. Through this case study they demonstrate that this work often requires pushing against dominant structures in education abroad and student and host communities. It is only through concerted efforts to amplify marginalized voices and shared and deep experiences across communities that we can decolonize and reimagine education abroad.

Conclusion: What We Have Learned and Future Forward Pathways

As co-editors, we have learned a great deal throughout the process of building this Special Issue. We learned from each other as we crafted the questions for the call across three continents and cultures. We grappled with the meanings of words and concepts together. One of our guiding questions was to whom is education abroad offering the possibility of global citizenship? Perhaps a better question would have foregone the controversial language of global citizenship and instead inquired about the aspirational phenomena at the

heart of human rights and liberatory thinking: **what processes of global education might support expanded agency, dignity, choice, and opportunity for all involved stakeholders? How could such processes help us heal, build community, and reimagine shared possibilities for global interdependence that honors both dignity and diversity.** These eight articles illustrate through stories, dialogues, pictures, critical reflections, deep listening, and a willingness to reimagine that global education can transgress its colonial roots and be instrumentalized toward greater justice, inclusion, and sustainability if education institutions and professionals recognize their own power, positionality, and responsibilities to partner communities (Hartman et al., 2018; Brandauer & Berends, 2020).

The case studies in this journal light a path forward for education abroad that gives institutions, students, and communities all over the world exciting strategies and examples for mutually beneficial global education pedagogy and partnerships. There is much more work to be done.

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