

Critical Literacy: Engaging Students to Enhance Cultural Humility in Study Abroad

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Abstract: Focusing on the intersection of study abroad, critical literacy, and cultural humility, this article establishes a framework for the development of study abroad programs that meet thoughtfully established educational objectives while not harming the communities that are visited. The authors contend that the emphasis of study abroad programs (in particular, short-term programs) should follow certain ethical guidelines and should focus on mutually beneficial relationships between the learning of the students and the good of the community. The face of study abroad has changed in recent years, shifting from students spending a semester abroad to much greater participation in short-term (eight weeks or less) programs. This article provides a context for developing short-term programs with concrete learning objectives and using critical literacy as a foundation to encourage students in the development of cultural humility. The authors share examples from their own experiences and discuss some best practices for developing respectful programs that do not cause harm to the communities or people that are visited by students.

Keywords: study abroad, critical literacy, popular education, cultural humility, voluntourism

Focusing on the intersection of study abroad, critical literacy, and cultural humility, this article establishes a framework for the development of study abroad programs that meet thoughtfully established educational objectives while not harming the communities that are visited. The authors contend that the emphasis of study abroad programs (in particular, short-term programs) should follow certain ethical guidelines and should focus on mutually beneficial relationships between the goals of learning for the students and the good of the community. The framework outlined in this article intersects the principles of critical literacy and cultural humility.

The face of study abroad has changed tremendously, having shifted from participation in semester-long programs to more short-term, faculty-led programs. In 2016-2017, approximately 332,000 students participated in a for-credit experience abroad, representing almost 11 percent of all undergraduate students and a 2.3 percent increase over 2015-2016 (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2018). Students from the social sciences represent 17.2 percent of all students studying abroad, an increase of 2.7 percent over the previous year (IIE, 2018). Growth in short-term programs (defined as summer term or eight weeks or less) is responsible for much of the increase; semester- or year-long program participation is declining (Redden, 2018). Programs to Europe continue to dominate the landscape, representing 54.7 percent of all students studying abroad (Redden, 2018).

A total of 332,727 students studied abroad for credit in 2016-17 (IIE, 2018). In the Open Doors report, the IIE (2018) estimated that about 10.9 percent of all undergraduate students and 16 percent of those earning bachelor's degrees study abroad at some point in their undergraduate careers. Therefore, it is essential that programming emphasizes transformation, moving students

from a “view from the veranda” (Ogden, 2008) to a deeper understanding of the effects of globalization and the impact of US policies abroad. Another important component of ethically educating students about global issues is helping them understand their place in the world, while avoiding replicating colonialism in a new, updated version (neocolonialism) through “voluntourism” or service-oriented global partnerships.

The authors wish to situate themselves within the context of this work. The first author’s (Loya) journey to embrace cultural humility occurred on both personal and professional levels. Growing up in the Midwest, exposure to others was limited. Her social work education occurred during a time when cultural competence was only beginning to be discussed and workshops simply reinforced stereotypes about others. Two events occurred in her life that set her on the path to a deeper understanding of difference. The first was marrying a man from Mexico and navigating differences in orientation to time, culinary likes and dislikes, and language barriers through differences in level of vocabulary. The professional event occurred upon her first study abroad program, which was assigned to her in the context of teaching a semester-long course; the two-week travel component was integrated into the learning. The program that had been developed for an interdisciplinary honors course was a learning experience for Loya. Service projects in rural communities in Costa Rica included painting a church and a clinic and digging ditches for a culvert. In and of themselves, these projects might be worthwhile; however, virtually no interaction with the local community took place. The projects did not occur alongside the community; rather, they were strictly *for* the community.

Additionally, on this program was one faculty leader (Loya), a second leader (a staff member in the Honors Program), the honors program coordinator and her eight-year-old son, and the study abroad coordinator (because she had never been to Costa Rica). These dynamics turned the program into much more of a tour than an academic endeavor, where most of the interactions with locals occurred in highly-touristed areas, and cultural excursions involved visiting tourist attractions. The faculty leader inherently felt that this approach was not comfortable for her and embarked upon a fact-finding visit to Costa Rica later that summer. She interviewed four agencies and chose the Institute for Central American Development and Studies (ICADS) as her future partner agency (primarily due to their emphasis on social justice) when developing a program for social work students the following year.

The second author (Peters) holds a master’s degree in education and a master’s degree in territorial rural development. She has spent close to a decade living in Central America, where she worked in study abroad programs and volunteered in communities of immigrants. She recently taught a course called Global Perspectives at Valparaiso University. Peters was the Assistant Director of ICADS (which hosts short-term and semester-long internship programs) during the development and first years of the social work study abroad program described above. The education provided to students at ICADS is based on the principles of popular education as outlined by Paulo Freire (2003). Program activities prioritize the following: exposure to real local people and natural environments, including home stays with lower-middle-class families; visits with farmers, workers, community organizations and marginalized groups; and an emphasis on critical analysis. Students are encouraged to be active in their own learning and to actively participate in sociodramas, sculpting, and other activities related to popular education

techniques (for more information on these and other popular education techniques, see Burke & Arnold, 1983). Peters incorporated personal cultural reflection into the programs at ICADS—work which was complemented by Peters’ knowledge of the concept of cultural humility. At ICADS, the goal of learning is to come to a change in behavior based on authentic interactions with local people; this is not something that can be easily replicated from one semester or program to the next, but working on personal reflection and cultural humility helps students engage the local context in their own unique way during each program.

An effective program focuses on pre-travel, during-travel, and post-travel outcomes. When considering travel within the context of a developing country, the responsibility to “do no harm” takes on additional meaning. The standards for short-term programs, as developed by The Forum on Education Abroad (The Forum, 2015), help faculty leaders offer ethically based, educationally focused, learning-rich programs. The Forum’s consideration for developing a quality program includes establishing clear goals and learning objectives, having an academic framework to guide the development of learning, engaging in fair and ethical recruitment and selection of students, providing adequate and ongoing preparation and support, articulating clear guidelines for student behavior (and the consequences for violations), and being oriented toward the safety and well-being of participants (making risk managers very happy). However, even within Standard Two in the Standards of Good Practice as established by The Forum (2015) is a questionable statement: “The organization’s mission, goals, and operations prioritize *student learning and development* [emphasis added]” (p. 4). On the face of it, the focus on student learning makes sense. However, how often does student learning and development cause harm to a community? The authors contend that we should be asking the question about benefits to the community *first*, and then incorporating student learning. A mutually beneficial relationship between student learning and the community will be more likely to happen if the concepts of cultural humility and critical literacy are incorporated.

An example of this mutually beneficial relationship and prioritizing the community is how ICADS semester students conduct field research or carry out internships with community organizations. These research projects and internships must not be developed before the student has arrived in the country, as they must be determined based on current community needs. Students are expected to adapt their projects and expectations to the situation on the ground. For example, a student who is interested in learning about climate change can listen carefully to the argument of a coffee cooperative that climate change mitigation projects have cost them more money without significantly reducing their carbon footprint, and then adjust his or her research project to explore this challenge. For a short-term program such as the one described in this paper, program activities are developed with the communities. For example, if the program would like to visit a rural school, the visit will be conducted with a school already in partnership with ICADS, and the school will determine the content of the visit—like a dance presentation by the children—regardless of the ideal visit content as determined by the university. The faculty leader must be able to help students make connections and express learning about these experiences, which are not canned, but rather relational and sometimes spontaneous.

In order to achieve this, the program must include background information given through pre-departure meetings, orientation sessions, readings, discussions, and lectures that help the

students to contextualize their experiences. This highlights the importance of having a partner on the ground who understands the context and knows how to introduce this context to students.

Voluntourism and Service Learning

In 1968, Ivan Illich gave an impassioned speech to the Conference on Inter-American Student Projects (CIASP) titled, “To Hell with Good Intentions” (Illich, 1994). Illich’s speech, even though delivered over 50 years ago, remains very relevant in today’s context of service-focused study abroad programs as well as mission trips sponsored by religious bodies. Illich pointed out that the purpose of these programs is often to sell the American way of life (Illich, 1994). He stated that we, as United Statesians, are the “products of an American society of achievers and consumers . . . ‘salesmen’ for a delusive ballet in the ideals of democracy, equal opportunity and free enterprise among people who haven’t the possibility of profiting from these” (Illich, 1994, p. 316). All too often, service-focused programs and mission trips do not require participants to think critically about the root causes of poverty, the United States’ involvement in global politics, or the lasting effects of colonization.

Many short-term study abroad programs include a component of service. Baker-Boosamra, Guevara, and Balfour (2006) explored the possibility that service learning projects (as well-meaning as most are) can create and perpetuate dependency within communities. Service learning must include intentional mutuality and should emphasize critical reflection by participants about global issues, mutuality, power and privilege, and economic and global realities. Baker-Boosamra et al. (2006) believe that the process of deep critical reflection about power relationships is of critical importance. Any service learning project should be forged with a spirit of mutuality and collaboration, and with a critical view toward the short- and long-term impact. An example of unintended consequences was made clear to students on one program abroad. Within a squatter’s community, where most houses were made of “found” materials, stood six very nice houses. These houses had been built by a well-meaning mission group that was sponsored by a United Statesian church. These houses created challenges within the community for those who benefitted from them. The community was ostracized and accused of converting to the denomination that built the houses, just to get a new house. In this highly Catholic context, many challenges arose for the recipients of the homes.

Freidus (2017) explored poverty and orphan tourism in Malawi and stated that “voluntourists frequently leave with superficial understandings of poverty and culture” (p. 1307). While volunteers went to Malawi with lofty goals, these were spurred on by the “imagery of a needy, poor third-world country needing intervention” (Freidus, 2017, p. 1307). It is often assumed that developing countries need what the United States has to offer. The economics of orphan tourism have actually created a ripple effect of negative consequences. Many of the children in Malawian orphanages have extended family networks, whether biological or fictive kin. These children may be placed in orphanages simply *because* of the influx of money that comes with voluntourism. Freidus (2017) also points out that simply seeing or visiting another culture does not equal knowing about another culture. In her qualitative study, voluntourists talked about how they had bonded with the children, even in the short time they were present. However, no mention was made regarding the impact on the children’s development due to the coming and

going of multiple volunteers, who bond with them and then move on, never to be seen again. Freidus (2017) points out that “the desire to do good and actually doing good do not always align” (p. 1317). The concerns she raised were an increased racialized superiority, as “White Americans are deemed experts and able to lead Malawians to a better life” (Freidus, 2017, p. 1317). However, the context for the definition of “a better life is often defined by Western metrics” (Freidus, 2017, p. 1317). Voluntourists rarely explore colonial history, the consequences of decolonization, the impact of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the influence of structural adjustments and neoliberalism. Encouraging people living in poverty to pursue the “American dream” ignores “structural and political constraints” (Freidus, 2017, p. 1317), such as high unemployment rates that will preclude them finding a job that can help pull them out of poverty. Students and faculty must be aware of our own privilege, and as faculty, always keep at the forefront that “our challenge [is] to preserve our fundamental mission to engage students in intellectual and intercultural experiences without falling back on a colonial discourse that is concerned with elitism and consumption” (Freidus, 2017, p. 36).

During a recent study abroad program, a documentarian from the university’s Communications Studies Department traveled with the group. He filmed the two-week program, and then the editing and creation of the documentary was a semester-long project for him and his students. During the actual filming, there were some issues with a microphone. Therefore, some of the students’ comments were recreated once we were home. One student reflected on our trip up the Sixaola River, which forms the border between Panama and Costa Rica, to an indigenous reserve. In her comment, the student talked about the impact the trip had on her—facing her fear of being in a canoe in the middle of a river—but also about the way it made her explore her own privilege. The student is a self-identifying minority (Mexican-American), is a woman, and shared that she grew up in poverty. However, the trip to the indigenous reserve made her examine her own privilege; she stated that she had never felt that she had privilege, but this activity and the overall program helped her recognize her privilege and gave her a different context of analysis. Although the comments occurred several weeks after our return home, the student was obviously grappling with the concept of her own privilege. This type of insight would be impossible in a classroom.

Critical Literacy

The authors of this article see critical literacy, paired with cultural humility, as a potential response to the above-described ethical challenges. Critical literacy is a concept that goes beyond the idea of critical thinking; rather, according to Mitchell (2008), critical literacy challenges students to “examine both the historical precedents of the social problems addressed in their [programs] and the impact of their personal action/inaction in maintaining and transforming these problems” (p. 54). In practice, this kind of critical literacy requires both reflection and action in the Freirean tradition of consciousness-raising (Freire, 2003).

McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) describe four main principles of critical literacy: focusing on issues of power in order to transform them; recognizing and unpacking the complexity of a problem (problematizing); using dynamic and adaptable teaching techniques; and examining multiple perspectives. They provide examples of literally reading texts (hence critical *literacy*)

and asking questions about whose voices are not represented in those texts, analyzing the main purpose and power relationships behind a text, considering alternative ways to understand the information, and using techniques that are relevant in each context (rather than imposing learning techniques from other contexts). These principles can also be used to approach the reading of an experiential text, such as the experiences within a study abroad program.

In fact, critical literacy in study abroad takes on a new urgency and relevance, precisely because it is experiential education. Not only are students learning about how bananas are grown, for example, but they may be living in Costa Rica with a host family headed by a woman who was born on a banana plantation to a plantation worker. Or students may be texting their parents back home using a cell phone with a chip produced at the Intel plant in Costa Rica. However, this plant no longer provides thousands of jobs to Costa Ricans because it was moved in search of lower salaries for workers and greater profits for the company, even while maintaining relatively low consumer prices in the United States.

This relevance requires seeing the big picture and having one's awareness raised, a concept known in Latin America and popular education as "conscientization." In study abroad (and we would argue, in education in general), this means connecting one's own life to the topics being covered in the program in order to understand one's own place in the systemic issues relative to the program. For United Statesian students in programs abroad, this will often mean understanding US political, economic, and military power in the host country, particularly if it is a developing country. Paulo Freire (2003) makes a further connection between reflection and action that leads to transformation (*praxis*), which is echoed in the literature on critical literacy. As McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) point out, "Good intentions and awareness of an unjust situation will not transform it. We must act on our knowledge" (p. 53).

During one program, the time was split between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. These two countries represent vastly different paths of development. A learning moment occurred when we were held at the border for several hours. The ICADS facilitator was working with the officials to get us into the country; we had flown into Costa Rica but were flying out of Nicaragua, so there appeared to be some concern on the part of the Nicaraguan immigration officers about our motives. We were brought into the building (after having been told to wait in the bus) and were told to line up against a wall until our passports were validated. Although there was never any danger, students felt vulnerable and exposed and voiced concerns over having their passports out of their possession. Students were able to draw connections to the stories of Nicaraguan migrants that we had heard the previous week. One woman had shared that she chooses not to go through the port, even though she has documentation, because of the cost (all persons pay migration processing fees, and some may need to purchase a tourist card). Costa Rica also assesses a departure tax, so someone living in poverty would have difficulty crossing legally simply because of the monetary ramifications. The students understood much better their own privilege of being able to come and go to many countries in ways that are barred for much of the world's population. While for any program it is important to do as much as possible to guarantee student safety, experiences that challenge students' comfort zones must not be avoided and can, in fact, lead to deep learning.

Cultural Humility and Critical Literacy

Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) introduced the concept of cultural humility as related to multicultural education when training physicians. Their concept has expanded to multiple professions and incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique; redressing inherent power imbalances; and developing mutually beneficial and nonpaternalistic clinical and advocacy partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998, p. 117).

These guiding principles fit well with the core tenets of critical literacy. A larger discussion of the principles of critical literacy (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004) was outlined in the previous section; this discussion focuses on the intersection of Tervalon and Murray-García's (1998) construct of cultural humility with the concept of critical literacy. According to McLaughlin and DeVoogd, critical literacy involves focusing on issues of power through reflection, which translates into transformation and action; looking deeply at the complexity of problems; finding adaptable and dynamic techniques to teach critical literacy; and helping participants examine multiple perspectives.

If a study abroad program, whether short- or long-term, is meant to facilitate the transformation of participants, then a thoughtful approach incorporating the precepts of critical literacy should lead to movement toward cultural humility. Kortegast and Kupo (2017) stated that, without programs engaging in critical reflection and challenges to worldview, "short-term study abroad becomes reduced to cultural tourism masked as an academic experience" (p. 168). Avoiding programs becoming no more than a tour with a syllabus (Slimbach, 2010) requires thoughtful planning, an investment by faculty leaders, and ample opportunity for critical reflection. Cultural humility requires self-evaluation and self-critique, which can be uncomfortable as the layers of power and privilege are dismantled. Critical literacy explores issues of power, which can be facilitated by reflectivity or self-critique. Participation in a study abroad program is, in and of itself, an exercise of privilege. The vast majority of students studying abroad are White (70.8 percent), although participation by minority students has increased in recent years from 18.1 percent in 2006 to 2007 to 29.2 percent in 2016 to 2017 (IIE, 2018).

The question then becomes, how do we move students along this continuum of knowledge and self-awareness, benefiting their personal and academic growth, while also engaging in mutually beneficial contacts with communities? When building a program that encourages reflection at multiple levels (personal privilege, institutional oppression and privilege, the impact of policies abroad), it is important to avoid what Andreotti (2006) termed "sanctioned ignorance (constitutive disavowal) of the role of colonialism in the creation . . . of what is called the 'First World'" (p. 44). In a later article, Andreotti (2011) discussed the privileging of European and Western epistemologies. When dealing with constructs such as notions of time, definitions of progress, and unequal relationships, we should not be allowed to engage in geopolitical amnesia (Andreotti, 2011), and we should be aware of the hegemonic effects of *colonialization* and the inherent power imbalances born of the focus on race, social class, space needs, and the needs of capital for White European colonizers (Escobar, 2004).

Andreotti's (2006) concept of critical global citizenship education blends the concepts of cultural humility and critical literacy. Extrapolating her assumptions and implications and relating them to study abroad is not a huge leap. Andreotti (2006) states that critical global citizenship education does the following: focuses on inequality and injustice and should help students better understand the unequal power relationships that exist around the world (often related to the history of colonization and current policies creating neocolonialism); avoids "imposing [our] own assumptions as universal" (p. 47); creates opportunities for equal dialogue, engaging in "reflexivity [and] dialogue" (p. 48); and helps students "reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures" (p. 48). The potential benefits to this process include "independent/critical thinking and more informed, responsible, and ethical action" (Andreotti, 2006, p. 48), which encompasses both critical literacy and cultural humility.

Using the concepts of popular education, as well as the application of critical literacy techniques, can help students explore (and hopefully deconstruct) their worldview. Faculty, as well as students, need to participate fully and be open-minded to change. The first author, Loya, experienced a shift in her social work worldview during a site visit to *la Universidad de Costa Rica* (UCR), when the US students visited a Costa Rican social work class. During the visit, the UCR students said (somewhat disdainfully) that they do not like the verb "help" (*ayudar*) as it implies a passive relationship, but rather they prefer the term "accompany" (*acompañar*) as an indication of a joint process. This philosophical shift may seem minor, but it is something that is now shared with all her students because of how the semantics resonated with her. That simple exchange facilitated a new perspective of the client/worker relationship, challenging her own worldview of social work as a helping profession.

Group processing is an integral component of a program that leads to personal growth. During these programs, students rotate guiding the reflection at the end of the day, with help as needed from faculty and facilitators. During one program, a social worker in the criminal justice system in Costa Rica presented a *charla* over women in prison. Most often, women are convicted of crimes related to drugs, and frequently there is a relationship with a dominant male that led them down this path. In Costa Rica, women are allowed to have their children with them in prison until the children are three years old. During this processing session, students began trying to fix what they saw as a practice that was detrimental to the child, since the child would have to leave their mother's side when they turned three. The processing was redirected by the ICADS facilitator (the second author, Peters) to the strengths of having the child with the mother, thus being able to support their bonds even if it meant separation when the child reached the age of three. Student participants were able to reframe their original conversation and saw the circumstances from a different perspective.

A closing activity also helps students, faculty, and the facilitator bring home the learning that has occurred during the two-week program. The facilitator begins with a ball of string, tosses it to someone, and gives the instructions of having to share one thing that we wish to take with us and one thing that we wish to leave behind. The ball is then tossed to the next person, and so on. The answer requires critical reflection and is the person's individual spoken truth about what he or she has gained from the experience. Students most frequently focus on materialism, living with less, relationships, and their newfound understanding of a global society, our place in the world,

and that the United Statesian way may not always be the best way. This exercise is frequently emotional for all of the participants, as we struggle to begin the transition back to home even after only two short weeks in the country. We draw connections to the web that has been created by the crisscrossing of the yarn; we are now connected because of our shared experiences, and we are changed because of them. When cutting the web, each person leaves with a bit of yarn to remind them of their experiences and the relationships they built during their time abroad.

Best Practices

After working with students and communities in Costa Rica for nine years, the second author (Peters) and her colleagues at ICADS have identified the following best practices for ethical study abroad programs:

1. develop program/course objectives, and match program activities with those objectives,
2. in pre-departure seminars, study the local context from a social justice perspective,
3. include logistical information and check participant expectations with reality on the ground in a pre-departure seminar,
4. plan activities with local and/or ecotourism companies (Honey, 1999),
5. be intentional about methodology, and discuss program activity methodology before entering each activity,
6. learn about ethical behavior in the local context (dress, informed consent, punctuality, the role of the community organization, cultural considerations, etc.),
7. debrief each activity,
8. discuss what changes in behavior the program will inspire in participants, and
9. share learning with people in the local context (they don't often have access to scholarly work written about their home).

The following two examples are from activities that ICADS and its students identified as having the potential to be ethical or unethical, depending on the approach used. The first is an activity in which students interview informal vendors in the streets of San José to learn more about the informal economy. The second is a visit to a community in Costa Rica largely made up of immigrants from Nicaragua. Unprepared students might feel uncomfortable performing these activities due to a lack of understanding of the social situation they are entering, which indeed poses an ethical dilemma.

The first activity, interviewing informal street vendors in San José, is chosen because it aligns with the following course objective: "Explore options for employment in the current development model of Costa Rica." Program faculty provide students with literature, discussion, and lectures on economic development models, and they also provide information on Costa Rican economic indicators such as poverty, rural-to-urban migration, and so forth. Before the students carry out the activity, the methodology of the interview is discussed. This includes how to do the interview, as well as theoretical information about interviews, informed consent, and IRB ethical standards. ICADS directs students to interview participants, based on ICADS' experience in the field, and helps students to practice an intentionally designed methodology

before going out into the field. Part of the orientation includes a discussion on appropriate behavior (such as how to approach people, how to ask for permission to carry out the interview, what to do in different situations, how to dress, etc.).

After the activity, there is a debrief session for students to share what happened, what they think they learned, how they felt about the activity, and so forth. Attached to the activity is an assignment in which students are required to make connections with the literature and discuss how this activity might change their future attitudes or behavior. As much as possible, it is important to return this information to the activity participants. As a faculty-led program activity, the faculty member should be participating in all aspects of the activity as outlined here in order to best be present with the students in their learning and reflections.

Another example that helps to flesh out the intersection between cultural humility and critical literacy is a visit to a community of Nicaraguan refugees and immigrants in Costa Rica that took place during the program jointly coordinated by the authors. The learning objectives of the visit fit with the overall learning objectives of the program, including to better understand and engage with women and migrants in order to problematize issues of gender and migration both in Costa Rica and the United States. The visit itself was planned in coordination with a local organization that uses a community organizing stance to support women migrants in building their own support networks for addressing domestic violence. This coordination included plans for compensation to the community for their time spent with students, as well as background information on immigration to Costa Rica and the challenges women face, and instructions on how to approach the community. Prior to travel, students were assigned scholarly readings that focused on immigration challenges in Costa Rica, along with the marginalization of Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica. During travel, students were received as guests to the community, ate food prepared by the local women (who were compensated), and listened to their stories of immigrating to Costa Rica and becoming part of the support network. The students had the opportunity to ask questions and share thoughts before being shown the efforts of the community to secure legal right to their land and government funding for more adequate housing.

This visit provided a myriad of ways for students and the community to learn about and address power relationships and consider multiple perspectives. First, in the context of anti-immigrant rhetoric in Costa Rica and attempts to ignore or cover up issues of inequality and violence in the country, students were exposed to the perspectives of a community struggling with the Costa Rican dream. They were also exposed to international issues of cause-and-effect realities of migration, realities which may very well be true in the United States, as well. They were invited to a community with terms set by the community members. They learned about complex issues without easy answers (such as land titling and squatters' rights in Costa Rica). They were also exposed to multiple and surprising perspectives.

One such example came when a student asked one of the Nicaraguan women if it was more difficult for her to leave her abusive husband while living in Costa Rica, where she did not have access to her regular support network, making the assumption that of course it would be more difficult. The woman answered that it was actually easier because she was not tied to the expectations of her family, neighborhood, and church. This unexpected answer opened the way

to consider many issues pertinent to social work, as well as allowed for learning and reflection by both parties about being open to new perspectives.

Finally, the visit itself was followed by a debriefing reflection session, facilitated by a student and supervised by the faculty member and facilitator/translator. This is a necessary step that must also be designed and executed with care, as “learning [must be] discussed and articulated” (Kortegast & Kupo, 2017, p. 162). The action of the visit must be accompanied by reflection, which will, in turn, lead to further action to address injustices and achieve transformation. In the case of this visit, students may or may not have the opportunity to address an injustice discovered in Costa Rica. However, the choice of migration as a topic allows them to address injustices in migration issues in their home contexts, based on what they learned in Costa Rica. They may have also discovered that some of the people living as refugees in Costa Rica were displaced from Nicaragua due to the effects of US foreign policy in Nicaragua during the Contra War, and this provides the students with an opportunity for informed action as voters in the US political system.

Conclusion

Finally, hooks (1994) outlined how teachers should enter the sacred space of learning with their students, “shar[ing] in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students” (p. 13). Faculty leaders should be willing to use engaged pedagogy (embodied in the techniques of popular education) in order to promote critical awareness in both teacher and learner. This engagement, presence, and accompaniment by the faculty leaders are essential, as the faculty leaders (and study abroad professionals) themselves will learn and change, and they will better be able to reflect with and guide students.

We hope this treatise has given some new context for incorporating cultural humility, through critical literacy, into study abroad programs, especially those focused on service learning. We would like to end with another quote from Illich (1994), which communicates our message quite profoundly. He states:

If you insist on working with the poor, if this is your vocation, then at least work among the poor who can tell you to go to hell . . . And it is profoundly damaging to yourselves when you define something you want to do as “good,” a “sacrifice” and “help.” . . . I am here to challenge you to recognize your inability, your powerlessness and your incapacity to do the “good” which you intended to do. I am here to entreat you to use your money, your status and your education to travel to Latin America. Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But do not come to help. (p. 320)

The authors would add: Come to learn.

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