

## *Reification of Social Privilege in International Volunteerism*

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### **Abstract**

International service learning programs are highly regarded in U.S. undergraduate education as an effective tool for enhancing and promoting intercultural dialogue. However, such a claim is questionable because the effects of social privilege on the volunteers and their actions while abroad are seldom analyzed critically. This study examines undergraduate volunteers' understanding of their social privilege through the reflection of their volunteering experiences. Social privilege includes the conferring of unearned assets on one party and the use of the resulting advantages to further dominate the less advantaged parties. Ten semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with student volunteers in Cambodia and post trip with volunteers upon their return from sojourns in Cambodia and Thailand. The interviewees' narratives about their volunteering experiences were analyzed using grounded theory, specifically the constant comparison method. Findings revealed that international service learning alone was not sufficient to challenge institutionalized, self-mediated, and internalized social privilege. Therefore, universities interested in promoting critical cultural consciousness through service learning need to invest in follow-up instruction as part of the programs, guided critical reflection, and community outreach. The suggested actions may increase the possibility of internationally volunteering students benefiting the learning community by reducing social hierarchy.

Keywords: International volunteerism, service learning, social privilege, intercultural dialogue, Cambodia, outreach.

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## **Introduction**

International service learning (ISL) programs sponsored by U.S. colleges are supposed to enhance the personal development, civic engagement, intercultural skills, and career opportunities of the participants (Sherraden, Bopp, & Lough, 2013). The participants typically travel to underprivileged communities abroad where they engage in community projects that are supposed to benefit the hosts. At the same time, their participation accords them opportunity for academic learning and personal growth. Such praxis-oriented approach in higher education, frequently labeled as service learning (SL) programs, aim to decrease social disparities between the host communities and the visiting volunteers. As stated in their programmatic goals and mission statements, the programs are humanitarian-oriented.

While ISL programs have enjoyed substantial institutional support from universities, the effects of social privilege on the participants and their actions while abroad are seldom analyzed critically. The collective statistics on international volunteerism performed by U.S. nationals indicate that 88% of the participants were Whites; 48% were associated with a religious organization; and 1 in 3 came from a household that makes at least twice the average national income (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011; Horoszowski, 2013). Given the participants' social statuses, their experience in the ISL programs is inescapably colored by the social disparities between their own and the host communities. Furthermore, 83% of the works the participants engage in during their sojourn are physical labor that the host communities can perform on their own (Horoszowski, 2013). As such, it is unclear whether these kinds of volunteer work can structurally change the social conditions of the host communities (e.g., economy, politics, power, etc.) and thus minimize the social disparities (e.g., see King 2004; Sherraden et al., 2013; Waddington, 2001).

Through in-depth interviews with 10 U.S. undergraduate students participating in ISL programs in Thailand and Cambodia, the current study explores and attempts to understand the discourse about social privilege as it relates to international volunteerism. It is through such exploration of social privileges of participants that some of the works in ISL programs can be assessed and understood, especially in terms of the programs' effectiveness in advancing social change. In addition to enhancing intercultural dialogue, the study findings may deepen the understanding of how program participants conceptualize their international volunteering (IV) experience. By using the participants' own understanding, we hope to encourage and further engage practitioners and researchers in a critical reflection on the implications of ISL programs.

### **The theoretical framework of social privilege.**

Social privilege refers to the experience of human rights, just treatment, unearned merit, entitlement, power, and immunity solely due to a person's social group identification through birth (Black & Stone, 2005; Moahan, 2014). Privilege is inseparable from oppression, which is the normalized and systematic use of force or deprivation to subjugate people for the unearned benefit of the privileged group (Harvey, 2000; Levine-Rasky, 2011). Given that individuals possess multiple identities, they are situated within different webs of privilege and subordination (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). In her intersectionality theory Crenshaw (1991)

postulated that such situatedness is inseparable from the macro systems in the society. Therefore, the understanding of one's identities cannot be complete without commensurate understanding of the social institutions that emerge from history. Therefore, in the current study, the understanding of social privilege is contextualized in the U.S. societal systems, in which White privilege cannot be ignored.

Jones's (2000) theoretical framework for understanding how racism and oppression function in the U.S. captures the intersectionality of identities, social privilege, and oppression. By using the framework, Jones hoped to spark a national discourse on racism and introduce interventions to mitigate the impacts of racism in the U.S. healthcare system. Given the privileged social statuses of ISL program participants, the framework can be extended to demonstrate the actualization of social privilege in everyday life. Jones posited three levels for understanding racism that can be used to similarly understand social privilege: institutionalized, self-mediated, and internalized.

*Institutionalization* is privilege that is legalized and normalized by societal institutions. Institutionalized power structures thus allow individuals to be unwitting oppressors who may not personally wish to oppress others. In *self-mediation*, privileged individuals enact oppression that is condoned by institutional norms through imposition, deprivation, or inaction. Self-mediated social privilege occurs when the privileged individuals believe their prejudice and discrimination to be normal, fair, logical, or even non-existent. *Internalization* occurs when individuals identify with the messages put forth by the aforementioned levels and hence support the overall system of oppression. As demonstrated in Jones's framework, oppression sustains when the social privilege of the dominant group is multifaceted and the non-dominant group is entangled in the different intersections of the multiple identities. Dismantling the system that oppresses the disadvantaged population requires work at all three levels.

### **The actualization of social privilege in SL volunteerism.**

Studies show that SL programs in U.S. universities are ineffective at imparting knowledge about learning with others to undergraduate participants (e.g., see Endres & Gould, 2009; King, 2004). Instead, the programs serve to maintain the power structures in the dominant society, particularly by reinforcing the notion of White superiority, paternalism, and hierarchism. For example, the practices of many academic SL programs, local or international, marginalized the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries are put in a position of inferiority, in which they are assumed to be unable to provide for themselves and must rely on the generosity of the program participants (e.g., see Siem & Strürmer, 2012; Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Though well meaning, the participants demean and objectify the people they intend to help through their volunteerism. The volunteerism, thus, reinforces the oppressor-oppressed relationship (King, 2004; also see Freire, 1970).

In fact, SL programs instill conformity to societal norms among participants. The volunteers participate in work that supports the dominant institutional structure without engaging in critical thinking about the practices employed by the program. Gorham (1992) noted that despite spending months in the host communities, student participants were unable to engage in meaningful network building with their hosts.

Indeed, Endres and Gould (2009) found that even with intensive training in understanding White privilege and Whiteness, undergraduate students participating in intercultural SL programs in the U.S. continued to believe in the power of Whiteness to benefit activism.

In the ISL context, studies suggest that while the participants often achieve personal growth from the programs, they rarely relate to community members in a meaningful way or understand their lived experiences. The host communities continue to face the same challenges long after the volunteers are gone (King, 2004). Their interventions, for the most part, do not appear to be well thought out or sustainable. In short, the participants' social privilege is perpetuated through the programmatic goals, volunteering effort, and the marginalization of the communities. Therefore, it is asked:

*RQ:* How does the ISL program participants' discourse about international volunteerism reveal their understanding of social privilege in relation to social change?

## **Methods**

The second researcher designed and devised a plan for this study, whereas the first researcher collected and transcribed the interview data. The first researcher began collecting data while concluding her ISL program in Siem Reap, Cambodia, and immediately upon returning to the U.S. Both researchers collaborated in analyzing the data and writing the results of the study.

The interview protocol was designed using Spradley's (1979) ethnographic interview method, which permits the participants' articulation of their experiences through symbolic means that are meaningful to them (also see Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2010; Schmidt, 1998). Descriptive, structural, and contrast questions, along with probes, were used to explore the participants' experiences. Four generic grand-tour questions were asked, focusing on: (a) the participants' descriptions of their own motives for engaging in their selected ISL program; (b) their expectations about the trip; (c) their understanding of the volunteering experience; and (d) the impacts of the experience on them. Chen and Chen's (2011) interview questions surveying participants' expectations and motivations for volunteering were partially modified and incorporated in the protocol.

Each interview lasted 1 to 1.5 hours. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before audio-recording the interview; no compensation was given. The interviewees ( $n_{male} = 2$ ;  $n_{female} = 8$ ) were full-time students at universities in the West Coast and the Southwest. The volunteers participated in either the Thai-Myanmar border program, which built shelters for the Karen refugees, or the Mondulkiri and Siem Reap program, which focused on elephant and turtle conservation works and some limited teaching. The study included the participants from both programs because the programs shared the curricular goals of promoting social justice in Asia and developing student leadership skills. Moreover, the volunteering locations share cultural similarities and histories. All program participants received university credits for their SL course works.

All oral data were transcribed and analyzed iteratively. The researchers separately read all transcripts multiple times using Lindlof and Taylor's (2013) constant-comparative method. They separately organized the data into meaningful segments and coded the emerging themes, and then met to reconcile any differences in coding and refine the coding categories. Last, they agreed on the themes to be reported. The reported speech presented in the Findings section is minimally edited for clarity and readability.

## **Findings**

### **IV as a socially privileged opportunity.**

All participants described IV as an opportunity that should not be missed. For example, Participant 4 said, "I would not deprive anyone of it [IV] if they wanted to do it. I feel like everyone should get that opportunity." Participant 2 concurred, adding, "I realized how easy it is to volunteer, how I don't have much of an excuse not to at least do it every once in a while."

The students' participation in ISL programs would not be possible if they were not socially privileged. Participant 9 described, "People are like 'Why would you spend \$5,000?! I don't know how much. . . like \$5,000 on plane tickets . . . [but] you just get so much from it. You get all these wonderful memories and all these different perspectives.'" Material wealth, thus, afforded her the trip, and she gained invaluable experience. A manifestation of the substantive privilege is the participants' belief that they have a right to help the impoverished communities. Being from the "developed" "first world" allowed them to help the "third world" people, who are "underdeveloped" so as "to make this world a better place." Participant 10 further emphasized, "I feel like in a developing country, it's easier to help with changing problems that are going on," when commenting on the lack of governmental structure in Thailand as opposed to the U.S. that is advanced with developed laws and policies.

Clearly, the participants believed that their social privilege gave them the right to help people who are less privileged than them. Those in need of help were assumed to, unquestionably, accept and welcome foreign aid—presumably the best corrective measure. Participant 7 exhibited this air of superiority, stating, "If you bring Euros to Thailand, it's worth a lot more, you know. Then they can really do something worthwhile [with it]." People who need help are portrayed as living in deprived communities that do not allow free agency. The Karen refugees, for example, could only leave their community if "they find someone, [to] get them a stolen passport, there's like no other way," Participant 7 alleged. It is a projection of her social privilege that she believed the refugees had no option but to resort to theft and abandon their community. The reasons why people in underprivileged communities accept help from student volunteers for mostly manual work they can easily perform themselves are never questioned.

However, Participant 1 expressed some reservations. Maintaining a respectful tone while disagreeing with the Christian missionary approach to IV, he observed, "I don't really like going into somebody else's culture and telling them what they should believe, because you can't just go in and take away someone's culture." He noted

that Western volunteers are usually able to gain access to the host communities without the community members' consent and then try to shape the local culture.

Participants also reported gaining deep appreciation for their own privilege after witnessing the sorry living conditions of the Thai and Khmer people in the villages. Participant 6 observed, "Sacrificing toilet paper is a hard thing, you know. . . . Sleeping on concrete for two three months is difficult. It's not easy. It's painful. I had bruises for a while. . ." She continued her long list for a while. What she was being deprived of during her trip in Thailand speaks volume of what she was used to (i.e., entitled) back home. Although Participant 6 rejoiced upon returning to the States, declaring, "We have so many things at our fingertips," she also noted the irony of living in a privileged society where most people were unhappy. Participants used the dearth of technology and material possessions among the Thai and Khmer people not only to highlight social disparities, but also to define their social class statuses and thus accentuate the social disparities.

Equally revealing about the participants' awareness of their social privileges was the omission of race from their discourse. The participants acknowledged their wealth and social class, but did not show any understanding of the contribution and effects of race on their social privilege. In fact, race is inseparable from social class and privilege in the U.S. As Deetz and Simpson (2004) explained, color-blindness actually supports White supremacy and oppression; it allows the racialized lived experiences of the marginalized to be dismissed, while Whiteness is assumed to be normal and is never questioned. Therefore, the historical exploitation of marginalized others (e.g., through the enslavement of Blacks, genocide of indigenous people, and Western imperialism) did not carry educational benefits in their experience, despite the valuable lessons that the powerful ought to learn from history. To a large extent, the utilization of the "third world" as an outlet to experience one's social privilege without contributing to the hosts' betterment is similar to a softer form of recolonization of the East.

Based on the discussion above, it is concluded that IV is the reification of the participants' social privilege. Jones's three levels of racism, in this case social privilege, are teased out in the participants' discourse. However, due to space limitations, only personally-mediated social privilege is described in the following subsections, since the participants' narratives largely centered on themselves as individuals and on their personal life circumstances before, during, and after their sojourns.

### **Personally-mediated social privilege.**

Despite living amongst the people and participating in the everyday activities of their host communities, the volunteers continued to see their experience and view the people and their culture through the Western (stereotypical) lens. This stereotyping further alienated the participants from the actual lived experiences of their hosts. The participants did not fully immerse themselves in the local culture or appreciate the locals' perspectives. They used English as the only language of communication; as Participant 4 noted the language barrier was "so enormous" that she was not able to engage meaningfully "with the people [and] the culture." The participants revealed

two types of stereotypes they held about the host communities: stereotypes of exaggeration and stereotypes of marginalization.

### ***Stereotypes of exaggeration.***

Participants viewed volunteering as a “risk” that they took. They used words such as “third world,” “rugged,” “crazy,” and “dangerous” to describe Thailand and Cambodia, declaring, “That’s just so amazing and so, so crazy and interesting” (Participant 4) and “This is so crazy that it’s awesome” (Participants 10). Therefore, the perceived risks included the potential for being kidnapped, getting robbed, experiencing extreme weather, being trapped in political unrest, and contracting unfamiliar illnesses. To the participants who already considered international travel as risk even before volunteering abroad, Thailand and Cambodia were “new” and “challenging” or, as Participant 7 stated, “so cool and exotic.” Participant 6 added, “Everyone [was] like you’re going to India and Thailand that, like, don’t have running water in some places! I was like, wow I’m really going to a developing country!”

The volunteers’ exaggerated stigma of “third world countries” was clearly formed before they travelled abroad. The stigma was based on insufficient knowledge of the local people and their communities. The volunteers acknowledged that, apart from their knowledge of “developing countries” differ greatly from their own communities, they knew very little about their host communities before venturing out to live amongst them. Often, they compared between the “West” and the “East.” For Participants 2, 4, and 9, the mass media were the main source of information; for Participant 6, the only point of reference about Cambodia and Thailand before travelling to the region were Thai restaurants.

Ironically, these exaggerated stereotypes were further reinforced even after the volunteers engaged directly with the community members. Participant 10 observed:

They were just so content making breakfast, and that’s all they did, every day . . . that’s definitely interesting to see . . . because it’s kind of like a part of their culture is to be happy doing what you do and you don’t need to strive for more.

In other words, the stereotype of the unsafe “third world” was now conflated with another exaggeration—that the disadvantaged, by not knowing other options, welcomed their misfortune.

### ***Stereotypes of marginalization.***

While ILS programs are driven by direct engagement, this form of learning seems to have led to further marginalization of the host communities rather than foster genuine intercultural exchanges. Volunteers who realized how little they knew from personal experience were grateful that the sojourn “really opens your eyes and changes your perspective on life” (Participant 4). Unfortunately, their newly acquired knowledge of how “our worlds are different” (e.g., participants 5, 6, and 7) only reinforced their exaggerated stereotypes of the host communities, which in turn fed into their long-held stereotypes of marginalization, notwithstanding their direct interactions with the people.

This was illustrated by Participant 4's comments that "They are all such delightful human beings, really. And, when I saw them here, that, that fact in my mind did not change at all." Participant 4's comments betrayed her privileged position in relation to her Thai hosts, as her feeling of entitlement to judge other people is a performance of paternalistic stereotypes from one who assumes power over a perceived inferior. Participant 11 similarly demonstrated the stereotype of marginalization by implying that her social privilege gives her the right to enact social change, stating:

. . . it would be really incredible to find some child that doesn't have these opportunities in his life or her life . . . like I was privileged enough to be born into in America, and to bring them to America and teach them English. . . and give them this incredible life and all of these opportunities.

Acknowledging that she was "born into" a privileged system, she could not have demonstrated unearned merit any better. Like Participant 4, she placed herself at the top of the privilege power hierarchy, implying she could enact social change quite easily. Hidden in this perspective is the assumption that the change-maker is offering help to an inferior being, who then enjoys a better life. It claims that the American way of life is an "incredible life" full of "all of these opportunities" (Participant 11).

#### **IV for Personal Growth.**

Apparently, the ISL programs provided the volunteers an outlet for realizing their self-identity with very limited social consequences. Their social privilege remained unaffected by the "risks" they faced in volunteering in Thailand and Cambodia. The students did not see contradiction in using volunteering as a means to escape their "stressful," "distracted," and "fake" lives in the U.S. Participant 1 reflected, "To come here and feel comfortable about, talking about things that I perceive as reality . . . . It's really nice, like it makes me open again." In fact IV can also be viewed as a means of relaxation and entertainment for the participants. It is a place where participants can fulfill their curiosity about radically different others, as Participant 7 observed, "Comparing Southeast Asia and here [the U.S.], people there want to be whiter, but people here want to be darker. It's incredible how polar opposite it is."

The transformative nature of the sojourn also meant that the volunteers were no longer content to return home and be confined to living a "comfortable," "privileged," and "shallow" life. Participant 7 remarked, "I feel like I lose it a little bit more every day I'm not there . . . I felt a little more secure and comfortable there, than I do here." Displaying new found confidence and growth, she added, "I don't use technology at breakfast any more. . . . now I just focus on what I'm eating and how I'm feeling . . . We learned from the locals [to appreciate the moment]. . . like, *be here now.*"

As previously noted, it was the volunteers' choice to go live among impoverished people in Thailand and Cambodia; they then returned home to live in relative comfort and privilege while reminiscing about the "simple life" they had left behind. They did not face any negative social consequences. However, in its current format, ISL does not engage the participants in meaningful self-reflection that would foster personal growth. But the lack of self-reflection keeps the socially privileged volunteers blind to their own identities and thereby stagnating their personal development (e.g., see

McIntosh 1988). For example, despite gaining new motivation for activism since starting her volunteerism, Participant 7 resigned from the program citing scheduling complications “that kind of made it [referring to volunteering] more optional.”

Overall, the participants were very deeply touched by the extreme poverty of their Thai hosts and Karen refugees, especially when compared to their own comfortable lifestyles. However, lacking formal instructions to direct their learning, they could only reconcile their cognitive struggles with simple explanations that soothe their discomfort and allows them to bathe their experience in positive light. Reminiscing over the “simple life” of the Thai people, Participant 4 described, “These people are just genuine. They are beautiful inside and out. They’re hardworking. Every day for them is working . . . and I love that.” It seems her personal growth came from learning the most fundamental human values.

On a more positive note, the volunteer experience motivated all the participants to further engage in some form of activism. For instance, participants considered the possibility of engaging in the Cambodian de-mining operation, raising money for a school, promoting awareness on elephant conversation, starting new hobbies, and showed greater enthusiasm for enrolling in college classes. Since returning home, two participants also started a club at their school to educate future volunteers on the histories and cultures of various ISL destinations. Ultimately, by allowing the participants to experience the “real” and “raw” life of the “East,” the ISL programs also helped several volunteers to find and direct their life’s purpose. As Participant 11 concluded:

That really was what opened my eyes to, oh my god, there’s all these opportunities in the world, that I could just go and help people somewhere else and learn new things. . . especially with other people that have a different perspective on life.

The stimulating ISL experience also benefited the participants in other ways. Many are now able to handle ambiguity and stress with confidence and no longer “worry about the little things” in their lives. Others are no longer “afraid of failure” having put themselves at “big risk” and come out unscathed. Practically all the participants ended up affirming, in one way or another, that volunteerism is about helping others and for the betterment of the world, not for boosting selfish egos.

## **Discussion**

Participants in this study asserted that IV had triggered their awareness of their social privilege. However, they did not critically reflect on their experience and the associated learning. While the stated goal of ISL programs is to enact social change, this was clearly not realized meaningfully among the participants. Besides teaching English, helping with elephant conservation, and providing manual labor, the participants did not mention learning any skills for enacting social changes that the host communities consider useful. Because the programs did not offer guided post-trip reflections, the interviews conducted for this study ended up providing a platform for many of the volunteers to begin making sense of their experiences.

Although the participants reported returning home feeling rejuvenated and ready for further volunteer work, their notion of helping the less privileged might actually work to perpetuate their marginalization. Contrary to expectations, scaling up the effort may only worsen the situation and tamp down meaningful social change, such as in sustaining paternalism. Indeed, the participants' post-trip discourse contained the same old stereotypes, suggesting the volunteerism had little or no lasting impact on their core beliefs and assumptions.

For that reason, it is skeptical that ISL programs can answer the question of whether or not they do "make a difference" in the lives of disadvantaged global communities. In other words, how is social change possible through the participants' reification of their social privilege? It seems the lived experiences of people in the disadvantaged communities will remain invisible as long as the legacy of institutionalized racism found on university campuses and similar oppressive systems are approved and endorsed by higher education. In a way, ISL programs, led by the White elites in U.S. higher education—the social institution that is founded on racism—continue to recruit and benefit the socially privileged White participants. This is not to mention that the universities are populated by predominantly Whites, and academic practices imposed on all reflect White values (Hendrix & Wilson, 2014; Simpson, 2010).

In fact, ISL programs have created a structured system that rewards the most socially privileged population (i.e., predominantly, rich White students). The participants are rewarded with opportunities to travel internationally to participate in "real" and "raw" experiments in diversity. It is no wonder that even when they observed social disparities, the participants conflated the disparities or, as Participant 11 did, lessened the seriousness of the differences by reducing them to harmless sound bite, "No matter where you are in the world, we are all human beings, we're all built pretty much the exact same way."

Therefore, without appropriate guidance and informed explanations of the people's routines and behaviors, participants could only come up with simplistic attempts at making sense of their experiences. They reduced the complexities in the observed differences to simple, universal human values and notions (e.g., "love," "respect," "happiness," "satisfaction," etc.). They conflated the tangible with the intangible, dismissing social disparities in the global power structure that, for instance, concentrates power in the hands of a privileged few (mostly White men) as "normal." In this system, social disparities remain invisible. Since real solutions cannot be found for nonexistent problems, the social capital of these powerful individuals remains intact.

Even when guided reflection and discussion can be conducted via the ISL programs, the social privilege of the student participants will likely be maintained. For this reason, the programs that are attractive to the privileged undergraduate population will continue to support and sustain a higher education system largely based on Whiteness and White supremacy. Despite their implied promise, reflection and discussion do not really hold the participants accountable for their actions. Furthermore, the safe spaces provided for such activities do not necessarily encourage deep or critical thinking and reflection. Perhaps that is why, even after interrogating the lives and resources of the underprivileged communities, the volunteers do not feel accountable to "give back" to the communities—that is, to revisit the people and

thoughtfully contribute to meaningful structural change that the people deem useful. It seems the talk about helping others and guilt over socio-economic disparities are short lived and do not transform into long-term learning.

Besides the reality of marginalization of the disadvantaged communities, another troubling issue is the fact that privileged student volunteers are able to use their experience for personal gains academically and professionally. Participants declared that their experiences made them “unique” and gave them “an edge” when applying for scholarships, jobs, and future internship opportunities. Getting rewarded at the expense of others and without assuming any risks is the embodiment of privilege and further strengthens the oppressive system (e.g., see Endres & Gould 2009; Siem & Strürmer 2012; Tiessen & Kumar 2013). The ISL programs further provided a structured means for “bored” undergraduates to escape their reality and experiment with cultural diversity in the “East” and put their knowledge of the “developing world” to the test. Although the “East” was put on full display for the curious students to devour to their heart’s content, the hosts’ dissenting voices remain unheard (Lee, 2016).

While the reification of social privilege in the ILS programs is critiqued in this study, the findings do not necessarily mean ISL programs are purposefully oppressive. In fact, many of the participants volunteered out of curiosity and were eager to experience the exoticness of the East. Their post-trip reflections through the interviews also revealed their concern for the disadvantaged in society. However, without the appropriate pedagogy and educational instructions the participants, despite footing the expensive travel bills and tuition in exchange for credit loads, were not able to actualize a meaningful academic dialogue and learning experience.

Finally, institutional power, such as Whiteness, must be properly labeled and sufficiently interrogated in order to engage in meaningful works in dismantling the oppressor-oppressed relationship (Jones, 2000; Simpson, 2008). In essence, when the ISL programs reward only the most privileged students and universities incentivize the growth of these programs, the recolonization of the “East” and marginalization of its people will continue. Instead, engaging in genuine intercultural dialogue that does not silence the marginalized and learning *with* the host communities may be more effective. However, such an approach that involves open and respectful exchange with the hosts by understanding the hosts’ lived experiences—as situated in their social and historical realities—deserves a separate in-depth discussion, and may fall to researchers who specialize in intercultural dialogue (e.g., see Lee, 2016).

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