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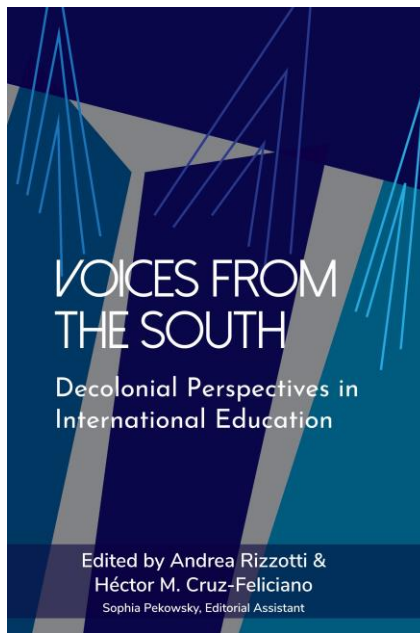
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Introduction

Andrea Rizzotti and Héctor M. Cruz-Feliciano
(translated by Sophia Pekowsky)

The nobodies: nobody's children, owners of nothing. The nobodies: the no ones, the nobodied, running like rabbits, dying through life, screwed every which way.
Who don't speak languages, but dialects.
Who don't have religions, but superstitions.
Who don't create art, but handicrafts.
Who don't have culture, but folklore.
Who are not human beings, but human resources.
Who do not have names, but numbers.
Who do not appear in the history of the world, but in the police blotter of the local paper.
The nobodies, who are not worth the bullet that kills them

—Eduardo Galeano

We open with a quote from the poem “The Nobodies” by the Latin American author Eduardo Galeano to show a reality of our contemporary world, in which inequality manifests not only in economic disparity but also in the hierarchization of culture. The hypocritical binaries between art and folklore, language and dialect, and religion and superstition that Galeano highlights show the value that Western culture is given over all other forms of knowing and being (epistemologies and ontologies). These binaries are enforced to the point where differences are seen as marks of inferiority and are used to legitimize inequalities.

The hierarchization of culture seeps into every aspect of international relations, and international education (IE) is no different. The disparities, inequalities, and hierarchies that exist within and between diverse countries

are recreated in academic institutions, resulting in educational systems, linguistic models, and pedagogies that create unequal distribution of resources, decision making, and circulation of knowledge between members of the field.

The idea for this book was born from the editors' experiences working with U.S. students in Buenos Aires, Argentina (Rizzotti and Pekowksy), and various regions of Latin America (Héctor M. Cruz-Feliciano), with U.S.-based providers. While IE and exchange have a rich, complex, and global history dating back to ancient times, study abroad in the United States began as a way for privileged students, generally White men from wealthy families, to study in Western Europe. With the onset of the 20th century, leading into the post-World War II context, study abroad and international exchange began to be used by the U.S. government as a way to encourage peace and diplomacy and spread U.S. influence across the globe. Programs such as Fulbright and Peace Corps, founded in 1948 and 1961 respectively, encouraged young U.S. students to travel across the globe, not just to study, but to conduct research and volunteer.

While the participating U.S. students and host countries have widely diversified in the last 50 years, the field still continues to reflect its roots, with 57.9% of students studying in Europe in 2019–2020 (NAFSA). Study abroad programs in the Global South are often advertised by providers as “nontraditional,” inviting students who perceive themselves to be particularly adventurous risk-takers. While programs in Europe are seen as valuable opportunities for *academic* exchange, programs in the Global South are advertised as “adventures,” opportunities for learning “outside of the classroom.”

As Elena Corbett discusses in this volume, students participate in study abroad programs in the Middle East to learn about “international relations” or “diplomacy,” rather than appreciating the rich and situated traditions of literature, math, science, art, and philosophy within the region. Because of this devaluation of local academic systems, undergraduate or premedical students coming from the United States sometimes assume that they can practice medicine or undertake projects in the Global South that they would never be permitted—due to licensure and qualification requirements—to conduct in their home contexts.

Numerous publications have addressed the many ways that IE programs that host students from the Global North in communities in the Global South can replicate colonial and imperialist tendencies (Sharpe, 2015; Zemach-Bersin, 2007; Ogden, 2007; Bolin, 2001). There is also a wide array of articles that explore how study abroad promotional material reinforces colonial views of the “exotic other” (Vodopivec, 2012; Zemach-Bersin, 2009) or stereotypical “regional images” related to social identities and cultural components

(Felitti & Rizzotti, 2013–2016; Onyenekwu et al., 2017). In response to these observations and critiques, groundbreaking studies have explored and suggested concrete ways to decolonize IE (Ogden, 2020, Adkins & Messerly, 2019; Fichman, 2018).

While these scholars have created important and necessary guidelines for analyzing and reducing colonialist tendencies in study abroad, most of the literature on the matter has its origins in scholars and institutions based in the Global North. This book attempts to reverse this trend by giving center stage to study abroad professionals based in the Global South, whose lived experiences allow us to have a nuanced and current perspective on the challenges that colonial attitudes and practices pose for the future of IE.

We write this text to put into question the idea that decolonial analysis can be conducted without taking into account the institutional and social context in which we find ourselves. While we understand that a decolonial vision involves a subjective position on values as a starting point, these values cannot be separated from context. Rather than arguing that change can start from the micro, from an individual person and their immediate environment, we believe a decolonial analysis must imply an exchange between the subject and the context.

Some Definitions

To begin with, we start with a short explanation of the definitions we are using and why we chose them. We work with the definition of the Global South from the Alternative Counter-Hegemonic Work Group From the Global South (CLACSO, 2019):

“In this Global South we include the nations of Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa that form a part of the capitalist periphery, but also the people and social classes within the Global North, are subjected to conditions of growing economic, political, and social degradation.”

While we focus on the first section of the definition—countries that form a part of the capitalist periphery—we acknowledge the complex power dynamics within the United States and other countries in the Global North. Within this book, we pay specific attention to the disruption caused by people with various marginalized identities in the United States upon exchanging experiences in the Global South.

In other historical moments, beginning with the Second World War, decolonization was conceptualized as a concrete action or series of actions intended to overthrow colonial regimes. Today, diverse authors such as

Catherine Walsh, Boaventura de Souza Santos, and Nestor Garcia Canclini, among others, discuss interculturality and decolonization as processes that involve a necessary dialogue between the individual and the collective to create social transformations. Through this process, institutions and organizations can begin to change the systems of inequalities and injustice that they sustain. In decolonial theories, the deconstruction of the colonial “other” is fundamental to establishing any basis for dialogue and interaction.

This publication is a proposal to rethink the practices of IE programs from a decolonial perspective, both in theory and in practice. It is a proposal to revise the practices that we implement and the dialogues between partners, with the help of The Forum on Education Abroad’s *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*.

The Chapters

We bring together a group of professionals and experts with a long trajectory of development and management of programs situated in diverse countries across the Global South: specifically, Argentina, Chile, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Peru, Senegal, India, and Jordan. The large proportion of authors from Latin America is due to the authors’ personal and professional networks within this region; in future publications, we would like to include more perspectives from other regions. Some of us are originally from these regions, and others have developed personally and professionally for a long period within them.

We are voices from the Global South who intend to deconstruct IE models that have shown profound deficiencies in terms of inclusion, diversity, and equity, and intercultural dialogue and to simultaneously construct an IE that includes alternative visions. We present in this publication a series of articles that reflect on good practices and propose pedagogical models rooted in decolonial pedagogies.

In the development of this project, we hoped that each author could write in their own language, which would be placed beside an English translation. We saw this as a way to use English as a common language rather than a hegemonic language. Unfortunately, the cost and time required for editorial production brought down what we referred to as our “Tower of Babel of the Global South.”

Despite it not being logistically possible, we discuss this idea to highlight the linguistic diversity within the field of IE and the reality that many of the authors in this publication do not speak English as a first language. The very words you are reading were originally written in Spanish and translated into English, with much of the nuance and sentiment of the text lost in translation

despite our best attempts. We do not give up on our “Tower of Babel,” but rather acknowledge that more time is needed to make use of multilingualism in IE as a permanent practice, as a way to enrich ourselves and support inclusion and intercultural dialogue.

In this volume, we support a perspective based on critical and decolonial interculturality that seeks to create new forms of thinking that deconstruct the use of the White, western male as the center of analysis. We seek to decenter the value of reason over feeling-existing as a condition of humanity and to criticize Western philosophy that places the human above nature (Walsh, 2009). This publication is an invitation to deconstruct hierarchies between those involved in the development and management of academic and cultural mobilities.

It attempts to center non-hegemonic voices, especially in the relationship between the Global North and South. Thus, the primary goal is to decolonize our own thought processes and, consequently, the pedagogical and educational practices that we enact. This must happen not only in our activism and personal life, but also within our organizations in relation to the unequal relationships that exist within them.

Although we hold discourses and practices that value diversity as something positive and desirable, this idea of diversity is often surface-level and continues to promote structural inequalities and inequities. The authors in this volume propose alternative practices that allow us to rethink these issues related to racism, social and cultural inequities, and the imposition of models from the West in different contexts.

In this sense, the chapters by Marion Tizón; Hannah Sorila and Cheikh Thiam; and Diego Andrés Lugo-Vivas, Cyntoya McCall, and Pedro León Cortés-Ruiz show the limitations of the implementation of packaged format programs within local realities. Likewise, they propose alternative practices that allow us to rethink these issues related to racism, social and cultural inequities, as well as the imposition of White supremacist models from the West.

Marion Tizón, who worked in Peru for 15 years, analyzes systematic violence in IE and how to work to combat these dynamics in three stages: predeparture, on-site, and re-entry. She works directly with the *Standards of Good Practice* and weaves in examples from her experience to discuss concrete ways that these standards can be applied and expanded to combat the colonial legacy of study abroad. She discusses sexist violence, not only within Latin America but also in the United States, and how these dynamics are re-enacted in study abroad.

In order to recognize and embrace the different identities and diversities that may be part of IE experiences, it is essential that we reflect on the place

that “diversity” occupies both in social and educational contexts and during mobility experiences. We must consider that identity is not a fixed category, and markers such as race, gender, and class are defined in multiple and varied ways in different societies; therefore, this category must also be viewed through the lens of critical interculturality, intersectionality, and decolonial perspectives.

The chapter by Hannah Sorila and Cheikh Thiam is crucial in understanding the various meanings of diversity and why simply adding more diverse voices to the field won’t change the problems we are discussing. These authors undertake an important discussion analyzing how conversations regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion in global education must take into account the persuasive nature of coloniality and White supremacy in higher education. They demonstrate how diversifying study abroad is not possible without analyzing the oppressive structures that cause institutions of higher education to be spaces that center White, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, and upper-class subjects. The chapter provides a theoretical explanation of the centrality of the White, male subject in Western thinking and ends with suggestions of action steps that universities and study abroad providers can undertake to incorporate a decolonial lens in their work.

Adding to this debate, Diego Andrés Lugo-Vivas, Cyntoya McCall, and Pedro León Cortés-Ruiz discuss how identity categories thought of as static can shift in different cultural contexts. They discuss their experiences working in an education abroad program in Colombia, which has enrolled primarily students of African descent in a field with predominantly White students.

The chapter uncovers ways in which students’ complex identities have impacted their study abroad experiences and how these experiences have in turn deepened their understanding of the self, as well as the challenges the program has faced in the process of connecting different ethnic and social groups and implementing a social justice framework in their practices.

The characteristics and learning expectations of the new generation of students urge us to rethink pedagogical strategies in all spheres of education. This new generation of young people, concerned about a sustainable life (in a wide and varied sense) and willing to question standard models, seems to be a global trend. For this reason, it is imperative to consider the curricular reorganization of the programs that we offer.

Héctor M. Cruz-Feliciano, with extensive experience in the development of programs in various Latin American countries, and Anitha Ramanna, head of programs and instructional design for an organization operating IE programs in India and Southeast Asia, both discuss proposals for the implementation of community programs from a decolonial perspective.

Anitha Ramanna presents a systemized report working in Pune, India, using the transformative learning theory, as proposed by Mezirow (1991), to analyze how “disorienting dilemmas”—experiences that do not fit into a person’s current views about the world—can lead to transformation and growth. She describes case studies in which humanitarian engineering students think with local communities, using solutions that make sense within the context of their environments rather than unsustainable solutions.

Héctor M. Cruz-Feliciano conducts a decolonial critique of service-learning projects in IE and advances “solidarity-based learning” as an alternative term. Using Paulo Freire’s ideas of liberatory education, he advocates for process-based projects that students can undertake with host communities as opposed to product-based projects that focus on completing tasks in short time periods.

In the past decades, neoliberal models have also become anchored within the structure of IE, both deepening and complicating colonial legacies. A historical review that focuses on the different perspectives that arise in a neoliberal context is essential to understanding how to apply decolonial perspectives to the field. Both Mauricio Paredes, the director of the Syracuse University Center in Santiago, Chile, and Elena Corbett, the director of programs in MENA, contribute to these debates.

Mauricio Paredes reflects on guilt and responsibility among U.S. students in Chile. Paredes uses Jasper’s fundamental text on guilt to explore the importance of recognizing and making visible criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical responsibilities, especially in the context of IE and in a historical moment marked by worldwide protests for social justice, independence, and gender and racial equity. He argues that with sufficient nuance, students who develop a sense of responsibility for the actions of their own country can forge concrete cultural connections that help them understand the present as well as the numerous political and moral responsibilities that help explain Latin America’s recent past.

Elena Corbett, formerly based in Jordan, introduces us to her experience with mutant neoliberalism in education abroad programs in the MENA region. She reframes the colonial student as a neoliberal student and analyzes the various dynamics of study abroad that make decolonization impossible. She discusses the post-COVID context and looks forward to the future of IE and the impact that the pandemic had, particularly on programs in the Global South.

Under these neoliberal models, IE has transformed into a business paradigm, standardizing practices and pedagogical formats, in which the decision-making and resource management are often based in Europe or

the United States. Today's challenge is to reflect with voices that have been subalternized and thus break the models and practices that are intended to be hegemonic (Ocoró Loango, 2021). An example of this process is the chapter by Andrea Rizzotti and Sophia Pekowsky.

The authors debate the common practice of banning student attendance at public political demonstrations in study abroad programs as a jumping-off point for discussing the neoliberal attempt to exclude politics from IE through rigid safety standards. Drawing from their experience working in Buenos Aires, Argentina, they propose a “pedagogy of being involved” as an intercultural and decolonial practice that encourages engaged, sustainable, and flexible security protocols that prioritize safety while still allowing students to make meaningful connections with the socio-political atmosphere of the host country.

Looking Toward the Future

Throughout all of these chapters, the critical intercultural vision is intertwined with the decolonial. From this point of view, we differentiate ourselves from the positions that view interculturality as a way of acknowledging individual techniques to manage emotions that lead to what we call “emotional literacy” (Nobile, 2018). Then the main goal is to strengthen self-knowledge, individual and meritocratic initiative as a vehicle for change, optimism as a permanent state of emotionality, leadership, and the ability to negotiate and influence others as a way to maximize participation in the labor market and the economy (Felitti-Rizzotti, 2018). These perspectives of interculturality combine perfectly with neoliberal and transnational projects where the individual takes precedence over the collective and the search for maximum productivity is the primary reason for the disciplining of emotions.

Walsh (2017) discussed the functional perspective¹ of interculturality, which speaks of tolerating and advocating for cultural diversity without discussing inequality. She argues, rather, for a critical interculturality, in which cultural diversity is made visible along with the power dynamics that work to silence or devalue certain racial or cultural groups. Critical interculturality seeks not only the coexistence of diverse groups but also social justice and change.

¹ The functional category derives from theoretical frameworks in sociology that characterize actions (at the individual or social level) as sustaining the established order, which is why they are considered “functional” to the current system.

We believe that it is necessary to recover in all educational spaces the socio-cultural nature of emotions and the acquisition of skills for personal and collective development. We believe that IE can contribute significantly to these processes if we understand that in the intersectionality between the intercultural and the decolonial lies the possibility of not reducing emotions and experiences to merely individualistic and malleable issues. For this reason, it is important to encourage the active participation of students in the pedagogical process in a way that results in rewarding and awareness-raising educational experiences (Nobile, 2018).

Finally, we invite the reader to think about decolonial pedagogies that explore rich histories of struggle, resistance, and fights for acknowledgment in the collective memory. We search for a horizon of hope and life, creating projects that can inspire change (Walsh, 2017), in search of establishing equitable relationships and ensuring dignity for all parties involved.

Walsh, Garcia Linera, and Mignolo (2006) affirm that the logic of coloniality operates on three different levels: the coloniality of power (political and economic); the coloniality of knowledge (epistemological, philosophical, scientific) and the coloniality of being (subjectivity, control of sexuality, gender roles, etc.) For this reason, the decolonial turn requires a shedding of the corset of the categories of thought that naturalize the coloniality of knowledge and being and the justification in the rhetoric of modernity, progress, and development. An inclusive IE is possible if we advance into the rupture of these colonial models and, as we previously stated, start to include and value every voice in the field to create an open and hopeful dialogue.

Contextualized historic consciousness, based on the theories of Paulo Freire (2012), brings us to a transformative social practice that is expressed in diverse ways in each chapter of this publication. We understand that experiences of academic exchange affect us all individually, but that they also happen in a collective reality, one much wider than that which is created in the confines of a class or one particular study abroad program.

We understand, therefore, that decolonial pedagogies could be possible to implement if all of the stakeholders involved in IE were not only listened to but also, and more importantly, valued equally. These discourses of equality should not aim to hide structural differences but make them visible to remedy them. We search for a critical and intercultural dialogue that brings us to a decolonial practice as a way to strengthen the potential that IE has in an increasingly complex and uncertain global context.

Through this dialogue, we hope to pave the way to creativity, solidarity, and commitment, as well as to an IE that could positively incorporate diversity, not only at a surface level but as a way to inform and enrich the work we do.

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