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Teaching Inequality in Brazil: A Study Abroad Exploration of Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality, and Geography

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Abstract

This paper presents and analyzes a case study of a five-week study abroad course called *Inequality in Brazil: An exploration of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography*. The course was constructed to teach social inequality in the context of Brazil by using place-based and experiential learning within the framework of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1989). By examining inequality through the lens of culture and geography, students were empowered to become *student-teachers* in their explorations of race, class, gender, and sexuality as they linked theory to practice and lived experience. This paper provides an example of how study abroad can be used to teach about issues of inequality by partnering with community members to build learning environments where students and community members can all benefit.

Keywords: study abroad, experiential learning, critical pedagogy, social inequality, education, Brazil

Introduction

This paper highlights principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1989) used to empower students participating in study abroad programs. In doing so, it presents and analyzes a case study of a five-week study abroad course called *Inequality in Brazil: An exploration of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography*. Offered at a small liberal arts school for undergraduate students, the course consisted of study and travel to three major Brazilian cities in May and June of 2015. It was designed using Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1989) to address the subject matter of inequality in Brazil, focusing on the themes of race, class, gender, and sexuality filtered through geography and migration. One of the main objectives of the course was for students to address these issues using a multidimensional analysis to better understand inequalities within local, regional, national, and global contexts and to be able to connect these levels of inequality to social forces. To reach this goal, a variety of place-based and experiential learning opportunities was given to students so that they could attain a higher understanding of inequalities both theoretically and as practiced and experienced within specific locations.

Study Abroad, Experiential Learning, and Critical Pedagogy

The emergence or intensification of international challenges over the last few decades has prompted more and more colleges and universities worldwide to respond to this call by preparing their students to become global citizens (Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). To meet this goal, these institutions have internationalized not only their curricula but also their campuses, creating opportunities for students to participate in short- and long-term study abroad programs. Central to these initiatives is the idea that students will gain a broader and deeper understanding of local and global issues through their experiences while immersed in their host communities.

Within the experiential learning paradigm, experience and reflection play an important role in the learning process of individual students studying abroad (Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Kolb, 1984; Lou et al., 2012). Experiential learning theory, as conceptualized by Kolb (1984), brings together the insights and contributions from a number of 20th-century scholars, including Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, and William James, who have "placed experience at the center of the learning process, envisioning an educational system that was learner-centered" (Kolb, 2013, p. 276).

However, Freire's work amplifies this shared vision by conceiving education as the practice of freedom (Hooks, 1994) and as a tool for social transformation (Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Marc, 2019). As Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich (2002) put it,

> Freire brought to light the role that power plays in education and called attention to the ways in which the knowledge of certain sectors of society have been ignored and invalidated. His theory of liberatory education focused on developing educational methods that develop people's critical thinking skills through collective reflection and analysis upon the experience, or "dialogue." (p. 45)

In addition, Freire saw praxis—a reflective action that is transformative as it works to change the world through the application of theory—as the work that leads an individual to reach *conscientizacão*, or critical social awareness, becoming the means by which we as oppressors and oppressed alike liberate ourselves through the construction of a better society. For Freire (1989), pedagogy is a means for "making it possible for [women and] men to enter the historical process as responsible Subjects" (p. 20). He saw this process as one of teaching-learning and thus of catalyzing learning-teaching in others, leading to the development of critical consciousness. According to Freire, dialogue was of utmost importance, because it is only through actively listening to others that we as uncompleted beings can become better social beings. One can argue that this is accomplished through lifelong learning, but only as it is understood as an aspect of human praxis and the unity between action in and reflection on the world (Freire, 2006).

For the course Inequality in Brazil, one of its main goals was to move students beyond simply learning about inequality within a specific context, and to flip their roles as students to become what Freire (1989) terms *student-teachers*. Students were encouraged to take the readings and to create and re-create knowledge for themselves and each other in student-centered group discussions and dialogue (Freire, 1985). Therefore, this pedagogical style was chosen because "learning for the sake of praxis lends itself to more active and engaged learning and social action. When learning can be applied and shared, it amplifies itself and moves beyond an individual act and becomes an act of community building" (Barnum & Illara, 2016, p. 3).

Globalizing the Sociology Curriculum

The push to globalize the sociology curriculum has been of concern for some time (Martin, 1996; Sohoni & Petrovic, 2010; Wagenaar & Subedi, 1996) and remains a priority for many institutions of higher learning (Acker, 2007). The importance of fostering critical thinking with a global perspective and the ability to function in a globalized world have been emphasized by many as a key component of a sociological education (Martin, 1996; Sohoni & Petrovic, 2010; Wagenaar & Subedi, 1996). In a more global world, students and their education must also become more global. Sohoni and Petrovic (2010) focus on the notion of *global perspective* and its incorporation into the sociology curriculum emphasizing the interconnectedness "between the local or national and the global" (p. 288).

Nevertheless, Martin (1996) hints at the inability of American sociology to see beyond itself and its borders due to its tendency to become parochial. Lie (1995) also addresses the danger of parochialism and reminds us that the origins of sociology are cosmopolitan as it pulls from a variety of thinkers in a variety of locations. Although these thinkers are often Eurocentric, they at least addressed nations and cultures other than their own. Despite that, Lie (1995) identifies isolationist tendencies within American sociology that may lead to an inability to engage intellectually across borders or that may make the discipline itself obsolete in a global world. Although many American sociologists conduct research and attend meetings internationally, the risk is present, especially in teaching as we sometimes tend to focus on what is *most relevant* or *of most interest* to students (Lie, 1995).

The use of study abroad courses as a means of globalizing the sociology curriculum is not new; however, its appearance in the literature is rare, especially within a developing world context (Fobes, 2005). Wagenaar and Subedi (1996), early researchers in the use of study abroad in a developing nation within the discipline of sociology, point out that one of the main strengths of study abroad in terms of globalizing the curriculum is that it "enhances multiculturalism" (p. 272) and leads to a "reduction of ethnocentrism" (p. 282). They point out the added strength of studying in a developing nation by noting the development of "greater depth by providing direct, contrasting experience with many basic sociological concepts" (p. 282).

Fobes (2005) addresses the learning experiences of students who do not speak the language of the nation in which they are participating in study abroad courses. Her suggestion is to use a *critical pedagogical approach* based on "Kaufman's (2002) four-point model of critical pedagogy" (p. 181). Fobes's case study of a study abroad course taught in Cusco, Peru, examines an application of critical pedagogy. She shows that using a four-point model of critical pedagogy based on "understanding, reflecting, analyzing, and engaging in social action" is successful in assisting students who do not speak the language of the community in which they are traveling or studying (p. 192).

Christiansen and Fischer (2010) take an interesting look at teaching a *sustainable green course* that also involves traveling between cities in the United States. They particularly address the importance of study-abroad programs and experiential educational opportunities in terms of recruiting and retaining students in sociology departments and the importance of these learning opportunities for imbuing sociology students with "arguably the most important perspective sociologists need to do their work—the cultural comparative perspective" (p. 312).

Addressing some of these issues, the American Sociological Association Task Force on the Undergraduate Major (McKinney et al., 2004) makes sixteen recommendations to improve the teaching of sociology in the twenty-first century. Among them, numbers 8-13 are of particular interest to study abroad courses and courses addressing inequality. Recommendation 8 addresses race, class, and gender; Recommendation 9 looks at multiculturalism and cross-nationalism; Recommendation 10 emphasizes the multidisciplinary character of sociology; Recommendation 11 tackles diverse pedagogies; Recommendation 12 highlights community-based learning experiences and critical thinking; and Recommendation 13 points toward out-of-class learning experiences (McKinney et al., 2004). Considering these recommendations and the previous discussion, the Inequality in Brazil study abroad course was proposed with the goal of using the principles of Freirean critical pedagogy to engage students in the process of identifying and reflecting on issues of inequality in Brazil considering their cultural and historical contexts.

Methods

In this section, we describe the main steps taken to prepare and execute the summer abroad course *Inequality in Brazil: An exploration of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography.* First, the course was built using Dickinson College's substantial experience with study abroad programs. Dickinson ranks among the best colleges for study abroad (Pipia & Loudenback, 2016) and much of its success is because it has prioritized this component of its curriculum. Given the existence of this administrative infrastructure, the idea of creating such a class was based on the necessity of filling a gap in the college course offerings and connecting different majors and minor programs such as Sociology, Latin American Studies, and Portuguese and Brazilian Studies. Even though these programs offered classes covering distinct aspects of Brazil, including the society, the culture, the history, and the environment, no one in the college had ever explored these topics in a study abroad. Most of the remaining work for building the course was the responsibility of the professors who proposed and led it, specifically making use of the knowledge and networks of Edvan Brito, who is Afro-Brazilian. The purpose was then to build on students' personal and academic experiences by enhancing their theoretical and methodological knowledge with complementary research tools and exposing them to new and exciting learning experiences while in Brazil.

Participants represented a wide range of diverse backgrounds and experiences, much higher than the college as a whole. Our assumption is that self-selection played a role, especially considering how the course title may have aligned with the interests of certain students at a predominantly white institution. Our learning community consisted of us, the authors, in the role of teacher-students, and eleven student-teachers. The teacher-students consisted of a white male sociologist and an Afro-Brazilian male linguist and Portuguese instructor. Of the eleven student-teachers, four were male and seven were female. A variety of ethnicities, races, and heritages was represented among these eleven students. One female was an international student from Singapore, two male students were of Dominican heritage, one male and one female identified as African American, one female was of the Navajo Nation, one female was of Jamaican heritage, one female and one male were of Mexican heritage, and one female was of Polish heritage. Six of the students were either immigrants or the children of immigrants. One student was a rising junior, and the others were rising seniors. (The only requirement of the program was that they had to have completed their sophomore year). The students ranged from upper middle class to working class, with most

being on the working-class end. For three of the students, this was their first time abroad. Many had experience either living overseas as children or visiting family abroad.

The course had four main goals. First, it took a critical look at the layers of Brazilian society that shape, construct, and inhibit life outcomes in terms of equality and inequality. Second, it examined how the most fundamental elements of social stratification (race, class, gender, and geography) function both separately and in tandem with organized systems of inequality in the Brazilian social, political, and economic contexts. Third, the course used theoretical and practical applications of stratification to evaluate how social constructions of difference influence social institutions and social policy and the effects they have on individual lived experiences. Finally, it considered how the forces of racism, sexism, and classism impact the attainment of basic needs, such as wages, healthcare, and housing. With this in mind, the next step was to create a list of five learning objectives based on both low- and high-level thinking skills (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom & Englehart, 1956), which could be used to measure how successful each student would be in meeting the course goals. Thus, by the end of the course students were expected to be able to:

- Recognize the historical contexts and transformations of issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography and how they intersect in Brazil.
- Demonstrate a base of knowledge of various types of inequalities in Brazil from multiple perspectives addressing experiences of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography.
- Analyze problems and solutions to inequality in Brazil as defined and carried out by residents and local, state, and national governments.
- Determine not only how issues of inequality are framed by different communities and different state governments, but also to what degree they have been successful.
- Compare and contrast the Brazilian experience with the U.S. experience in relation to inequalities of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography.

To make sure the course goals and learning objectives would be met during our five-week stay in Brazil, we decided to include three major cities in our itinerary, namely Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. Due to Brazil's unique history, these cities were chosen for both their historical and contemporary importance, including their representation of the racial diversity of Brazil. Activists in the Black movement have adopted the terms *Black* (*negro/negra* in Portuguese), *Afro-Brazilian*, or *Afro-descendant* to refer to individuals or groups who self-identify as both Black (*preto/preta*) and mixed (*pardo/parda*) in the census (Dos Santos & Anya, 2006; Telles, 2004). Following this trend, we use the word *Afro-Brazilian* throughout this paper to collectively refer to these two census categories. According to the 2010 Census (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2011), São Paulo has the largest population among the three cities, with 11.2 million people. Even though this city has the smallest percentage of Afro-Brazilians (about 37%), it still has the largest Afro-Brazilian community in the country (4.2 million people). Comparatively, Rio de Janeiro has a population of 6.3 million people, of which about 48% are Afro-Brazilian, while Salvador has the smallest population, 2.7 million inhabitants, but the largest percentage of Afro-Brazilians, representing about 80% of the city's population. Next, we present more detailed information about these three cities along with examples of learning activities in which we engaged our students for the course to meet its pedagogical goals. In each of the three cities, we met and interacted with teachers, students, and community leaders.

Salvador

Salvador was the first capital of Brazil. When Salvador was capital, the Brazilian economy was based on sugarcane and the institution of slavery. Today, the wealth of that time can be seen in the many Catholic churches full of gold decorations, which can be contrasted to the Catholic churches traditionally reserved for the enslaved people which are without gold. The city is also the home of Candomblé, the Afro-Brazilian religion. To appreciate the richness of Salvador's history and culture, a number of visits to historical sites and talks with academics and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives were scheduled, including a center of Candomblé (*terreiro de Candomblé* in Portuguese), Pelourinho (the old slave market and a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the Catholic church reserved historically for enslaved people which today holds mass with Afro-Brazilian music, a school of capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian martial art), and the Steve Biko Institute (an education center for Afro-Brazilians). We also made a trip to Cachoeira (a colonial city with a strong Candomblé tradition, and important to Bahian independence) and spent time in Quilombo do Alto do Tororó (a village founded by fugitives from slavery).

Rio de Janeiro

In 1763, the capital of Brazil moved to Rio de Janeiro, which became the country's second capital. Rio de Janeiro is a city built on a European model that excluded the indigenous and the African elements of the Brazilian culture. It served as the home of the Portuguese royal family from 1808 to 1821, as they escaped Napoleon's invasion. During these 13 years, Rio de Janeiro was the capital of not only Brazil but also the Portuguese Empire, becoming the only European capital to be outside of Europe. Rio de Janeiro is the second most popular destination for migrants in Brazil. It is also the traditional birthplace of favelas, following the freeing of the enslaved people in 1888. Today it is home to over 1,000 of these communities. The city is also known for its Carnival, the largest in the world. However, at the production site for the Carnival floats and costumes, you will find many Afro-Brazilians working on the construction, but few of whom will participate. Our activities in Rio de Janeiro included guided visits to the Native People's Museum (*Museu do Índio*), the Favela Museum (*Museu de Favela*), a community organized and run establishment, and the National History Museum (*Museu Histórico Nacional*). Students also visited Criola, an NGO focusing on race, gender, and class; the Saint Christopher's market (*Feira de São Cristóvão*), a cultural market catering to Northeastern Brazilian immigrants. They also attended lectures with a public-school teacher, a representative of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, a scholar and activist who advocates for transgender people's rights, and a representative from the Black Pages Brazil, an NGO that works with and empowers Afro-Brazilian entrepreneurs.

São Paulo

São Paulo is the largest city in Latin America. It is the industrial center of Brazil and, as such, it is a destination for migrants from all parts of the country. It is often referred to as the New York of Latin America. São Paulo is home to the largest Japanese community outside of Japan and also has a large Italian community, a large Afro-Brazilian community, as well as Brazilians of different European national origins. While there, we visited the Museum of Afro-Brazilian History and Culture (*Museu Afro-Brasil*), the Portuguese Language Museum (*Museu da Língua Portuguesa*), the São Paulo State Immigration Museum (*Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo*), the Brazilian stock exchange (BOVESPA), a public school located in the metropolitan area of the city,

and the Favela of Canindé, the place where Carolina Maria de Jesus, the author of *Child of the Dark,* spent most of her life. During these visits, students were able to talk with and interview scholars and representatives from NGOs working in the areas of race, class, and gender. Other activities included participant observation in the world's largest LGBTQ Pride Parade in São Paulo, a guided tour to the downtown area, calling students' attention to the sites that have a strong connection with slavery in the past and the ongoing presence of immigrants from all over the world, as well as a meeting with past and present volunteers and students of Bonsucesso Community Course (*Cursinho Comunitário Bonsucesso*), a community based organization that prepares Black and poor high school graduates for the entrance exam in public and private universities.

After finishing the itinerary and the list of daily activities for the five weeks of the course, we had to decide on how we would make sure students were making progress in terms of achieving the course goals and learning objectives. This concern led us to think of different formative and summative assessment tools. The summative assessment consisted of a final paper while the formative assessments included comparative film reviews, daily debriefings, and blog and photo essays. There were two film reviews that students were required to do prior to our departure for Brazil. The strategy of having students turn in these reviews before leaving the United States was very helpful as they provided some examples of key sociological and cultural elements that would be covered during the course. Importantly, it minimized the number of assignments students would have to complete while traveling and keeping up with an intensive daily routine. The end-of-day debriefings were used to provide students some time to reflect on the activities of the day in relation to the required readings (see Appendix A). The daily debriefings not only helped us keep track of their overall participation and engagement in the activities of the course but also gave them some time to discuss the possible topics they would explore in the blog and photo essays. The daily debriefings were also where we discussed course readings that we could then link to the sites and presenters we were visiting and meeting (see Appendix B). For the blog and photo essays, students were assigned specific days to work in teams of two to write an entry for the course blog, which can be accessed at http://blogs.dickinson.edu/inequalityinbrazil/. These teams would oversee documenting the day's events and learning objectives. While one team member was in charge of taking photos of group activities, paying careful attention to organized events and interactions with our Brazilian hosts, the other was responsible for writing up the day's activities, explaining both what we did for that day and how they linked to the various assigned readings for that particular topic. Blog entries were approximately two pages double-spaced per day and team members had to work together to ensure they had pictures to support the blog. While writing their blog entries, students were encouraged to incorporate ideas from, and properly cite, the course readings, the guest lecturers, and their classmates. Because the blog and photo essays represented the most effective form of assessment in our course, we had decided to use them as the main source of data to measure how successful the course was in achieving its goals and learning objectives. The next section is an analysis of the students' blog and photo essays.

Analysis

This section of the paper addresses each of the five learning objectives established in the methodology by excerpting students' work to provide qualitative evidence that these objectives were or were not met. As previously mentioned, each day two students wrote a blog entry, which

was expected to cover the main topics discussed and reflect both the theoretical readings and the experiential learning activities. Blogs were read and coded based on the learning objectives.

Learning Objective 1. Recognize the historical contexts and transformations of issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography and how they intersect in Brazil.

To meet our first objective, students had to build their foundational knowledge. Although many of the students were familiar with concepts and issues of inequality and colonialism, we wanted to make sure they acquired a working knowledge of the subject matter in terms of historical context and social change through time. We addressed this objective in numerous ways, such as discussing the reading materials, doing city tours in historical areas, and visiting museums and local organizations. Pineda (2015) illustrates, "Upon our visit to the Museum of National History, we were able to trace the history of Brazil from its indigenous roots to its European colonization and thereafter, the expansion of slavery" (para. 4) In addition, students were always reminded to pay attention to how inequalities of class, race, gender, and sexuality intersected in the various places we visited. This is exemplified in Pulz's (2015) comment about the demographic distribution of the beach goers in Rio de Janeiro. She says, "We saw inequality among the street vendors versus the people who walked around for pleasure on the beaches. Oftentimes, the street vendors are dark skinned working long physically tiring hours because this is how they can make a living" (para. 2) Students were able to build a working knowledge of Brazil much quicker due to the visible and physical aspects of museums and cultural immersion in the community.

Additionally, the dynamic of power in the context of culture as it applies to race and geography was pinpointed by Heredia (2015a) on his blog entry completed after a visit to the Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo. He says:

> Two of the pieces that stuck out the most to me were "Africa" and "America," by Stephan Kesller [sic]. These paintings were made in the 1600s, and they depict European contact with African and Native American communities, respectively. In "Africa," the artist depicts a peaceful encounter between a European and an African man, and they are surrounded by symbols and participants of "African" culture. First, this painting conflates the entirety of the continent into a homogenous "African" culture. The painting also suggests that interaction between these two groups was as peaceful as the painting depicts. The second painting shows a similar interaction between the European and Indigenous populations. In addition, in the center of the painting, there is a fire pit cooking human body parts. This perpetuates the stereotype that indigenous people around the world are cannibalistic, wild people that needed to be guided by European powers. As we left the museum, I thought about people of color's long history of oppression, and how much work still needs to be done today to continue to liberate the most disenfranchised individuals in our communities. (Heredia, 2015a, paras. 6-7)

In this statement, we see the application of a critical lens in analyzing the play of representation of race and events within socially constructed geographies, but we also see at the end of this text the manifestation of *conscientização*, as the student links to the "history of oppression" and the work needed to "liberate … our communities" (Heredia, 2015a, para. 7). Evidence of students' recognition of the historical context and transformation of the issues examined throughout the course appeared mostly when they were describing the activities in which they participated. Importantly, students also began to make connections between history and lived experience.

> As we approached Cachoeira, there were a series of independent black female merchants on the sides of the highway selling freshly cut sugar canes in plastic bags. In an interesting socio-historical connection, it reminded me of the "sugar planting colonists", specifically the Portuguese in Brazil, who controlled

> indigenous and African bodies to work the sugarcane plantations from the early 16th to late 19th century (Skidmore, 2010, p. 34). Sugar cane remains and continues to be one of the few sources of income for many poor families who survive on agricultural produce. (Estrada, 2015, para. 2)

This excerpt is especially important as it shows the student taking in new information from class readings and applying it to what they had witnessed. By taking in knowledge and linking it to phenomena, the student has demonstrated *conscientização*, or as Freire and Macedo (1987) put it, learning to read not only the word but the world. In addition to being able to identify historical contexts and transformations of issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography and how they intersect in Brazil through visual representations in museums and lived experience, students were also able to begin identifying these positions in relation to our second main objective discussed next and can also be seen in Estrada's (2015) comment above.

Learning Objective 2. Demonstrate a base of knowledge of various types of inequalities in Brazil from multiple perspectives addressing experiences of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography.

We saw Estrada (2015) making the links between race, class, gender, and geography. As students became grounded in understanding the historical context and the social changes in relation to these issues, they began analyzing different social positions and examining how they are experienced in society.

> Walking through the favelas today put into perspective how residents of the favelas have so little; yet, have a sense of pride beyond description. The data revealed that in comparison to Brazilians outside of the favela they have poorer education, less access to clean water and extremely higher home density. Still individuals from the favela organize, educate, and in their own way, rise up every day. Our interactions with the favela today were a reminder of the true beauty that lies beneath the struggle for a dignified life. (Hill & Estrada, 2015, para. 6).

Here we see Hill and Estrada (2015) honing in on concepts such as "pride," the ability to "rise up," and "the struggle for a dignified life" (para. 6). These examples are evidence that the students have moved beyond a simple knowledge or documentation of experience and are understanding experience as a process rooted in reality, but changeable and contested. Acquiring a base knowledge about the different kinds of inequality also meant that students were incorporating the language that could help them translate into words specific aspects of the host country's culture. Syniec (2015) exemplifies this change by describing her witnessing a name-calling incident involving two middle school students in one of our visits.

> A girl shouted across the room at another student, "Favelado!" This is a term that is associated with someone that lives in a Favela. The word "favela" itself is very discriminatory and associated with someone coming from the lower class. We've learned from our visits to favelas, that the word "communities" is a word that is more synonymous with the citizens and their homes; whereas the word "favelas" has a negative connotation. (Syniec, 2015, para. 2)

This example illustrates how exposure to cultural exchange via immersion programs such as this can be a way for students to acquire important information that can help them become more sensitive towards issues that affect marginalized groups in various communities. Furthermore, the foundational knowledge that students get from the readings, the group discussions, and the interactions with the local people allows them to experience the culture from a more critical

standpoint and to see things beyond their first appearances. McSeed (2015) provides an example of that when she talks about the Gay Pride Parade in São Paulo:

> [T]he parade is raising awareness about different sexualities however, after the parade, these individuals whose sexual orientation is not heteronormative is suppressed and continues to be suppressed until the socially sanctioned times of transgression such as Carnival or the gay pride parade. (McSeed, 2015, para. 2)

McSeed acknowledges that although framed as an event of acceptance, the Pride Parade is not reflective of a general acceptance but rather a moment outside of the norms of society, a type of carnival, or an exception to the rule. In addition to having a more informed interpretation of cultural events, students were able to describe the relationships among a set of elements that are part of a given social problem. When describing some of the points discussed during a visit to an LGBTQ non-governmental organization in Salvador, Rodriguez (2015) calls attention to how race and class can be related to gender and sexuality, specifically in the case of White LGBTQ members.

> It's important to note that even in the LGBTQ community race and class privilege shelters these upper-class individuals from the discrimination and violence that many working class individuals face. (Rodriguez, 2015, para. 4)

By identifying race and class privilege, Rodriguez demonstrated the variety of experiences within groups, pointing out the inequality within inequality. The students used a variety of strategies to demonstrate they had some knowledge of the various types of inequalities covered in the course. In analyzing the students' blog entries, this learning objective was met through the definition of concepts and keywords, the explanation of the interconnectedness among elements related to inequality, and more importantly the application of this knowledge in the interpretation of events that happened during our time in Brazil.

Learning Objective 3. Analyze problems and solutions to inequality in Brazil as defined and carried out by residents and local, state, and national governments.

By putting students in situations where they interacted with community members, we hoped to expose them to the local analysis of problems and their solutions. Hill (2015a) noticed the hope present within communities when we visited Canindé, a favela in Sao Paulo, and the role it plays in motivating individuals and communities to work towards solutions.

> One of the major things that I took away from the presentation was when the community Center director Wilson said: "When you come back it will be better." That statement made me realize that the community has a level of resilience that allows them to create change. (Hill, 2015a, para. 4)

In this instance, Hill (2015a) focused on a belief of both the center director and of himself in the idea of progress, in positive transformational change, and in the capacity of residents to organize and work together to improve their situation. Students began to identify social problems as being framed from different actors' perspectives and also how the solutions can be vastly oppositional. The following excerpt illustrates how local community members framed a social problem but also how government actors were working in an oppositional nature with a different definition of a social problem. By having students in a contested space, they were able to see how a particular location can be defined and framed in completely different ways by opposing actors—in this case, the local members of a *quilombo*, a traditional Afro-Brazilian community formed by fugitives from slavery, and the Brazilian Navy.

> After we ate, one of the women in the community came out and spoke to us about the history of the village and the current problems that they face. One major problem was the privatization of public space around the community. Their traditional lands have been taken by the Brazilian Navy. It has gotten so extreme that they have fences which represent what land is theirs and what land is the government's. Marines even sometimes patrol the community with guns just to intimidate community members in the hopes they will move. This fence separates the community from the soccer field, fishing routes, their farmlands and even access to the city. (Hill, 2015b, para. 3)

This excerpt shows us that, in this case, the actual geography of this community and their traditional lands are being defined for different use values, creating a conflict of interests. On one side, a traditional Afro-Brazilian community who frames the problem in terms of their rights to land used for recreation, their livelihoods, and access to the city and all it entails (see Harvey, 2012). On the other, the Brazilian navy, in their role of national institution occupying land to build a base on what they defined as undeveloped and underused land. By the end of the study abroad, students began to realize the importance of both cultural and structural explanations of inequality as seen below.

> Unfortunately, in Brazil, the system often triumphs and sets many obstacles that limit the education that people pursue. Of the youth we encountered in the favelas/communities, it is likely that only a small handful will make it through high school. As for the students we met through the organizations, they had a certain fire in them to succeed. (Foong, 2015, para. 5)

Foong's end of the study abroad reflection identified the structural barriers to individual success and the relatively small number of individual success stories that can be attributed to individual agency. Foong compares the life chances of those from favelas and the barriers of class, race, and geography and the exceptions visible through those students able to take advantage of NGOs to better their chances of success.

Learning Objective 4. Determine not only how issues of inequality are framed by different communities and different state governments, but also to what degree they have been successful.

Before and during our stay in Brazil, students were introduced to a variety of accounts on issues of inequality embedded in the Brazilian society via original texts written in English or translations of texts originally written in Portuguese. Even though these sources were essential to understanding some of the complexities around the issues of inequality discussed in the course, it was expected that students should be able to determine how different communities and government officials framed issues of inequality on their own terms, evaluating how successful they were in doing so. Nevertheless, based on the content of the blog, we did not find strong evidence that this learning objective was met.

Learning Objective 5. Compare and contrast the Brazilian experience with the U.S. experience in relation to inequalities of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography.

Students had an a priori working knowledge of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography in the U.S. context and we wanted them to think about their ideas and about what they would encounter in Brazil before arriving. Having had the students watch several films, we discussed what their expectations were and encouraged them to examine their beliefs about what they would experience and learn. One student noted: "We had to confront American stereotypes of Brazil and reflect on

how they aligned with our experiences" (Pineda, 2015, para. 3). After spending time in Brazil, they began to acquire knowledge of how these concepts are experienced in specific contexts.

In asking students to compare and contrast the differences and similarities of the experiences of inequalities in the Brazilian and U.S. contexts, we wanted them to be able to identify both shared struggles and the specifics of different environments and contexts. They began to pull from their own experiences and interpreted them with deeper meaning. Heredia (2015b) links his experience in Brazil with that of his mother, exploring two different experiences of cultural collision.

> While we were at an indoor mall [...] I handed the cashier worker a 50 reais bill, and for the next five minutes we were stuck in a game of hand gestures and eye contact. It seemed to me that I had given him the wrong amount money, but he couldn't tell me what was wrong in English, and I couldn't ask him anything in Portuguese. [. . .] that instance of linguistic barrier was shocking for me. I felt disempowered in my inability to communicate, and most importantly, it reminded me of my mother, a Dominican immigrant who has lived in the United States for over fifteen years. Despite how long she's lived in a mostly English-speaking country, Spanish still dominates her tongue, and she often needs help expressing herself effectively in English. In that moment, I hurt because I thought of all the instances she's been stuck in similar situations, at a supermarket buying groceries or at a doctor's appointment and I felt how isolating it must be, to navigate public spaces without words. (Heredia, 2015b, para. 3)

Heredia's (2015b) excerpt is evidence of how students connected personal life events with the experiences they were having in Brazil. They were also reminded of the different ways they are also affected by the consequences of the different types of inequality in their home country. In another example, Yazzie (2015), a student from the Navajo Nation, after visiting the Museum of the Indian in Rio, expressed the sense of connection she felt after speaking with a Native Brazilian and seeing the parallels between their experiences and struggles as First Peoples. Later, after visiting the São Paulo Indian Museum, Yazzie included herself as a member of this community when discussing the experience of Native Brazilian people by noting "our very strong sense of community and our love to laugh" (Yazzie, 2015, para. 4). In this phrase, she expressed not just an idea of belonging, but an awareness of a unified people. In another example, Heredia (2015b) compared his experiences and dreams as a Dominican boy growing up in the United States with those of Max (pseudonym), a boy we met during one of our visits to a favela in Rio de Janeiro:

> I was struck by Max's dreams because I was once a Dominican brown boy with curly hair, skin too close to ribs, and similar dreams that were beyond what was expected of my circumstances. Through a sequence of fortunate events and amazing people, I was able to immigrate to the United States, and a decade later, to attend a private college that provides resources for me to pursue my passion for writing. I felt angry when I thought of all the obstacles standing in his way, and the ways in which Brazilian society's structure promises that most boys like Max would never make it out of their communities. (Heredia, 2015b, para. 7)

By asking students to compare and contrast, we were asking them to pull from their own experiences and their own previous knowledge base. One of the main ways this occurred during the daily debriefings was by keeping up to date on events in the United States such as the Black Lives Matter Movement and comparing it to the Black Movement in Brazil.

> What Flavia [Rios (class lecture, June 9, 2015)] presented to the group relates to what is happening in the U.S where there are Black social movements happening to demand the same things that Black Brazilians are fighting for. This illusion of a racial democracy in Brazil is being exposed right before my eyes as I see the similarities between what is happening in Brazil and what is going on at home in the U.S. These movements are important and need to happen in order for there to be change. (Robb, 2015, para. 5)

By being able to link what they experienced and learned in Brazil to struggles in the United States, students were empowered to think about transformative change in society. In writing about race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography, students were able to make the connections between physical environments and social boundaries in Brazil and the United States, identifying how inequality can take differing yet similar forms in different circumstances. Although it is difficult to state how many of our student-teachers reached the learning goals of the course, we feel that all met some goals, and that most met many. Student-teachers helped other student-teachers reach the goals as they engaged in knowledge and knowledge building as a collective act.

Conclusion

This paper addressed how we applied some of the principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1989) to plan and teach the course *Inequality in Brazil: A study abroad exploration of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography* during a five-week summer study abroad program for undergraduates at Dickinson College. We explained how the course was designed and implemented, and evaluated how our learning objectives were met based on student writing.

Using Paulo Freire's (1989) Pedagogy of the Oppressed as a framework to understanding issues of inequality in Brazil was crucial. It helped us better understand the historical and social factors that influence the existence of the various types of inequality covered in the course as well as the different ways people have resisted these problems. Embracing critical pedagogy also required all of us to challenge and resignify our institutional roles. In other words, it would not be possible for our students to become student-teachers if we were not willing to become teacher-students. Understanding and practicing this principle was necessary to build a learning community where students felt their knowledge and experiences mattered.

We led eleven students through the three cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Salvador. For five weeks, we usually had two scheduled events each day. This was challenging and exhausting for both the students and us and we would suggest more scheduled downtime for everyone to recharge their batteries. Although it was an exhausting experience, it was also energizing for our students and us.

Another challenge of teaching a study abroad course was the "balance between the experiential and the academic" (Atkinson & Lowney, 2016, p. 67). Also of concern was how we as educators develop meaningful learning experiences for learners—both traditional students and community members—so that they can learn and put into practice the *sociological imagination* of C. Wright Mills (2000). Camacho (2016) raised a similar issue by asking "how can one fully experience the high impact of cross-cultural understanding that comes with international exchange in a timeframe that feels more like a vacation?" (p. 9). She answered that there is "value in comparative scope" (p. 9). From our perspective, and from what we have heard from students, the Brazil program was a success. As professors, being able to have discussions on readings related to theory and empirical evidence—and then to have the students physically in the spaces we were talking about—was an amazing pedagogical experience.

The nature of traveling and remaining open to unplanned opportunities for educational experiences was something we actively cultivated among the students. Two examples stand out. Several students made friends with people in the hostels where we stayed. In one of them, a student asked

our permission to loan the reading packet to someone who was interested in what we were studying so that they could make a copy. The student was then able to use the course as a means to take on the role of a student-teacher (Freire, 1989) outside of our course and to teach what they had learned. In a second example, a couple of students met Kiran Sirah, the President of the International Storytelling Center in Jonesborough, Tennessee, and who was in Brazil working on issues of storytelling as a means of addressing violence within poor communities. The students approached us and asked if he could address us during one of our group sessions. This impromptu talk gave students a completely new perspective on how to address issues of inequality through stories, which fit in well with our overall goals and objectives.

Language barriers provided difficulty for students to get into deeper conversations and connect with people. We did our best to seek out English speakers or to serve as Portuguese-English interpreters when needed, but that meant that students and community members were not able to directly communicate. Students did engage with English speakers when possible. Also, those who knew Spanish were better able to communicate with monolingual Portuguese speakers. However, even the language barrier held learning potential, as seen in Heredia's (2015b) reflection above.

Our general goal for the class was to create a study abroad experience that engaged students with the subject matter of inequality in Brazil while simultaneously empowering them through a Freirean pedagogy to become student-teachers. And in that process of becoming, we expected them to take ownership of their educational experience. This goal was met: Students brought their own experiences and shared them, and as they felt comfortable in bringing others into the class, they began creating part of the curriculum. The blog also gave students the power to use language to reach others and to see their learning experiences not as something solely for themselves but as something to share and to teach others. The course Inequality in Brazil was meaningful not only to our students but also to the many community groups and individuals we met and who shared their lives and experiences with us, further engaging in our community of teacher-students and student-teachers.

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Appendix A: List of Films and Reading Assignments

Pre-Travel

Bendetson, B. (Writer), & Moore, S. D. (Director). (2002, March 31). Blame it on Lisa (Season 13, Episode 15) [TV series episode]. In J. L. Brooks, M. Groening, A. Jean & S. Simon . (Executive Producers), *The Simpsons*. Twentieth Century Fox.

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During Travel

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Appendix B: List of Individual and Institutional Partners

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BM&F BOVESPA
CDI Bahia
Comunidade Alto do Tororó
Comunidade Samba da Vela
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Instituto Steve Biko
Memorial da América Latina

Memorial da Resistência de São Paulo
Museu Afro-Brasil
Museu Afro-brasileiro de Salvador
Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo
Museu da Língua Portuguesa
Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia
Museu de Arte de São Paulo
Museu de Arte do Rio de Janeiro
Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo
Museu de Favela
Museu do Índio, Embu das Artes
Museu do Índio, Rio de Janeiro
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