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Translating Ignatian Principles into Artful Pedagogies of Hope

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Abstract

The Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) program offers transformational learning through institutional partnerships that grant academic degrees to students at the margins of society. Ignatian principles and pedagogy are applied within online coursework. Teaching anthropology within this diverse, intercultural learning environment required artful language and narrative approaches to create a trusting environment in which to discuss challenging concepts. The place of hope in students' lives was underscored in this process that describes how teaching is a practice of accompaniment. Providing educational platforms and mentoring to students living in the margins requires an adapted online learning environment as well as a relational approach incorporating social mediation, radical presence, and pedagogy. Social mediation in this context is understood in relation to transformational learning processes and how they are socially and culturally mediated. This exploratory narrative inquiry shows how technologies allow organizational collaborations as well as international university partnerships to connect students to online learning opportunities, thus informing future research endeavors and online learning initiatives.

Introduction

Creighton University offers an online course, Introduction to Anthropology: Social and Cultural Determinants of Health, through the medical anthropology program within the Department of Cultural and Social Studies. This course is open to students enrolled at Creighton University, including students coming from the Jesuit Worldwide Learning: Higher Education at the Margins (JWL) organization. Qualified Afghan students who applied for the B.S. in Leadership at Creighton were awarded scholarships made possible through a Creighton Global Initiative (CGI) grant. This online learning space, which included the Afghan students for the first time in the fall semester of 2018, engendered diverse learning narratives through cross-cultural encounters. It also solidified international institutional collaboration. The semi-structured interviews provide insight into how these social interactions, englobing institutional structures and international university partnerships, are socially constructed and mediated.[1]

This article uses narrative inquiry as a method, combined with a learning narrative approach, to recollect the experiential learning process using interviews from participants. Further, this article analyzes this unique intercultural, online learning space, initiating exploratory research by storying practices in this virtual learning field. Social constructionist theory and practice provide a referential backdrop to investigate the transformational potential of online learning courses in the context of the aforementioned anthropology class. Furthermore, this case study can provide online teachers with insights into relational approaches, postures, as well as language styles incorporating metaphors that engender trusting relationships that further generative potential. This online classroom experience suggests that fostering meaningful intercultural learning narratives may enkindle hope for students in the margins. Just as importantly, the intercultural context may also reinforce students' reflexive skills that can be used in social and healthcare systems.

Online instructors must find an appropriate posture to lead their students through the intensive learning process that unfolds over an eight-week period. Teaching in intercultural, online contexts invites instructors to face new forms of complexity with social innovation. To meet online classroom challenges, relational theories and concepts can support the teaching and learning process. For this purpose, the social

mediation of learning in multiethnic environments can provide a relational approach and foster online relationships. Cultivating a posture of radical presence and valuing a relational understanding of the virtual social world generates a trusting online learning environment. Radical presence coordinates complexity by focusing on interactions with others, using dialog as a tool. "Dialog, as a form of radical presence, encompasses curiosity for difference, openness to forming new understandings, and a movement away from agreement or adjudication of perspectives."[2]

As an instructor, it was essential to adopt a posture that could effectively embrace the complexity of the virtual learning environment.

The online class experience elicited awe, which inspired an ethnographic approach in the hope of amplifying the teaching story. Learning narratives were gathered first from students and later from program directors to create an expanding dialogical space. This reflexive conversational space assembles students' perceptions as well as the director's overarching vision. Narratives are brought together in a polyphony or multi-voice presentation that is the first phase of an exploratory narrative inquiry.

Narrative inquiry is used within educational settings and is a method that can generate collective agency. "The move from storytelling to narration seems to be an important pedagogical issue, as it provides direction for narrative inquiry, moving it away from either therapy or "navel gazing" into academic content."[3]

This case study uses a form of exploratory narrative inquiry that linked academic partners, program designers, instructors, and students in the crafting of an international online learning platform. The assemblage of narratives presented, generates agency by creating reflexive academic space. The use of Appreciative Inquiry[4] in the questioning process fosters higher levels of coherency within the relational network while transforming perceptions. Further needs assessment may reveal additional findings as well as recommendations for effective long-term programs. By evaluating the pertinence of academic diplomas and outcomes in relation to applied knowledgeability, partnerships could be

reinforced and the Jesuit Worldwide Learning program could better meet the needs of students. Engaging in more qualitative research, after considering this exploratory narrative inquiry, could further reinforce international partnerships and collaboration dedicated to student-centered approaches.

Narrative inquiry acts as a "story catcher," assembling voices of students, professors, and program directors participating in the process. Storying online learning partnerships can provide insight into the effectiveness of online programs, reinforcing long-term international collaboration. This case study will introduce readers to the promising potential inherent in online learning programs and partnerships: exploring relational and technological complexity through narrative methods of inquiry. After explaining the context of the online learning platform and its design, this story mandala progresses from student narratives to the director and coordinator's vision, and finally connects the learning community to the larger political context. The referential framework underscores how online learning communities can provide a form of accompaniment.

Connecting Via Online Platforms

After recently becoming certified as an online instructor through Creighton University's Teaching and Learning Center, I began teaching in the fall semester 2018 from my home in Switzerland. Afghan students participated from learning centers throughout Afghanistan in conjunction with Midwestern American students enrolled at Creighton University. JWL coordinates the teaching program onsite in community learning centers throughout Afghanistan and offers technical support to the Afghan students. Creighton University is responsible for the academic course content. All students enrolled at Creighton University accessed the course material through an online classroom learning management system, logging in to listen to the professor's weekly introduction, taking weekly quizzes based on the textbook readings, participating in weekly discussion posts that referenced films on anthropology, as well as readings from embedded articles that corresponded to the weekly themes presented in each module. Textbooks were paid for by Creighton University and provided through

JWL to the Afghan students. Weekly Zoom sessions for the Afghan students were organized to allow for discussions on medical anthropology themes as well as to share about the context of students' learning environments with respect to differing time zones. Zoom sessions for the students in the United States were also organized, but few students actually participated. Though the course teaches anthropology by focusing on the social and cultural determinants of health that are fundamental in medical anthropology, the relational aspects of the virtual learning space can be better understood by using the lens of social psychology. One key purpose of this article is to analyze how the discussion posts fostered the process of meaning creation by engendering conversations that were supported by course readings and concepts.

Within this dialogical learning space, social artistry facilitated the bridging of religious, cultural, social, and professional narratives in relation to disciplinary (anthropological) narratives. Social artistry, in this context, refers to a relational teaching approach that draws upon symbolic language and deep listening to give value to dialog and reflexivity in complex social learning interactions. Artfully embracing the role of instructor requires teaching methods that can bring students together in a virtual learning space, even though they are separated geographically and culturally. Improvisation was required to adapt the course to student's realities like taking into account the unforeseen challenges that can arise when students live in war zones. Learners' perceptions and professional trajectories were transformed by participating in this adapted adult learning program and offering university accreditation. Burgeoning narrative concrescence interlaced multiple explanatory models into a transcendent mandala of comprehension that gave form to the unification of narrative consciousness. It was necessary to create trusting relations so that students' discussions could express their world views that had been socially constructed by different religious beliefs and cultural practices. Instructor feedback was an important element that supported student's learning processes. Evaluation was not only given in relation to the quality of the responses but also in accordance to students' progress. This approach allowed the instructor to give value to the learning process. Anthropology

traditionally uses comparative and holistic approaches to study humanity. In this case study, narrative inquiry[5] provided a methodological backdrop, giving voice to student perceptions while valuing Ignatian principles.

Designing Transformational Learning Spaces

Course design in this online learning context combines transformational learning with integration of the Ignatian principles. Virtual learning spaces can effectively incorporate learning paradigms that have traditionally been taught in traditional classrooms. Ignatian pedagogy is part of the core curriculum at Creighton University. Ignatian principles provide a holistic approach and seek to transform students' lives while equipping them to support their communities. "Because the movement toward reaching greater audiences through distance education cannot come at the price of sacrificing the values of the institution, the challenges for implementing the institutional core values require attention."[6]

Implementing Jesuit charisms and core values through distance education links Creighton University and JWL. Institutional partnerships support the common goal of offering higher education to underrepresented groups. Hope for a better future drives the JWL program, which reaches out to marginalized communities throughout the world, by linking higher education institutions with international partners and investing in innovative educational opportunities. This global learning organization fosters educational environments designed to engender a more equitable, peaceful, and humane world, not only giving opportunity but also amplifying the voice of marginalized adults living in conflict zones. The Ignatian principle of "embracing complexity with gratitude" offers a referential framework for interdisciplinarity within the social sciences. "The wealth of experiences—both personal and social, direct and second-hand, performed and written, tangible and intangible— opens the student's understanding of a world so complex. Yet complexities should not hinder or distress the student; rather, they can be celebrated, given the Ignatian disposition of gratitude."[7]

This grateful celebration of complexity promotes an artful approach that connects individual life

stories and autobiographies to larger cultural, social, and political contexts. The approach involved crafting a learning approach within a university program for adult online learners that used both social mediation as well as technologies to link people and their communities.

Doing Anthropology: A Course Description

Within this context, the medical anthropology coursework and pedagogy facilitated the emergence of cross-cultural encounters and generativity. The connections students were asked to make using scientific articles as well as discussions about the social and cultural determinates of health in relation to their own professional contexts, required new forms of relating. All students already worked in social and healthcare networks or were completing health science degrees. Reading classmates' discussion posts opened important windows to cultural discovery. Responding to classmates' posts furthered the generative exchanges: Themes were identified, appreciated, and recognized in the discussion process.

Social artistry transposed theoretical concepts onto experiential learning canvases in the form of these weekly posts. Students discussed their chosen theme, supported their topic by referencing and citing articles and concepts learned through the required readings, and related the theme to personal experience. Social artists create social learning spaces and develop social learning capability.[8] Complex challenges require new approaches. "Social artistry is the art of enhancing human capabilities in the light of social complexity. It seeks to bring new ways of thinking, being, and doing, to social challenges in the world."[9]

Students responded to classmates' posts in evermore intricately embroidered conversational tapestries. Anthropological perspectives showed the artfulness of being human through multiple media embedded in the online course. As the Afghan students were using English, their second language, reading the others' posts required looking beyond grammatical mistakes and focusing on the intended meaning.

Objectives were fulfilled by using multiple channels. For instance, films supported the

reading material contained in the textbooks and articles, and allowed students to gain knowledge from images and interviews that told the anthropological story. The online space was configured to create a safe learning environment in which personal, social, professional, and political struggles relevant to specific geographical regions could be addressed. The discussions provided an important dialogical space to integrate the course teachings.

Students whose mother tongue was not English perceived the multiple-choice questions as difficult. The time allowed to both read the question and answer choices and then decide upon the appropriate response was too short. After consideration, this technical aspect was modified to allow students the needed time to complete the multiple-choice questions. Because of the multicultural challenge, the students were also allowed to take the test as many times as needed to achieve their desired grade. Allowing the students to take the exam multiple times helped students integrate the important concepts from the literature. This shift—or paradigm change—of the exams' objective altered its purpose from traditional evaluation to become more of a teaching tool.

This recounting of the course's approach conveys how learners ultimately became transformers and brought new skills to their professional perspective through their participation in an anthropology class. It also shows how teaching from a posture of radical presence can help accommodate the complexity of intercultural online learning by finding and applying student-centered pedagogical solutions. Adaptability was crucial for all participants. This anthropology case study suggests that online course design can effectively use transformational learning within virtual designs and program conceptions that honor Ignatian principles and pedagogy. Doing social science in an intercultural online learning environment enhances the learning context by providing multicultural encounters. This social science space acknowledges the art of adaptability, transforming the course *en route* to meet with student's abilities and needs.

Using Learning Narratives to Generate Reflexivity

Upon completing the coursework at the end of the eight-week period, students were asked to share learning narratives and explain how they would use their knowledgeability within their local context. Diverse learning narratives described student challenges in each field of work as they articulated how they hoped to better serve their communities. One student perceived the online class as a "weapon of inspiration" when speaking of social injustice and even dangerous situations. Access to higher education was especially relevant for young women, who often perceived themselves as challenging traditional roles. Their families and communities were not accustomed to women taking on leadership roles. The young women in the program not only took part in the online study program, but taught English in the learning centers. All participants gained insights through ethnographic portraits that questioned power relations in the field of public health.

For students connecting from localities within the United States, there was an added dimension of intercultural learning as they engaged in the discussion posts that offered insight into a different lifeworld. This additional layer of comparison was transformational, as it allowed participants to share their personal experiences in relation to the course content, which provided radically different vantage points. Their responses also allowed them to connect the course with their professional goals.

Ignatian principles applied in a contemporary context demonstrated a form of artfulness, as well as agency, offering students the possibility for achieving "Magis," becoming more, and "becoming men and women for others" by applying increased understanding of the social and cultural determinants of health to their professional practices. Here Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of Hope*[10] meets with Ignatian pedagogy in a virtual sphere, translating Ignatian principles into artful pedagogies of hope. The JWL hope that new technologies can bring people and institutions together from around the world, integrating and including students from the margins in online university programs, was realized in an "Introduction to Anthropology: Social and Cultural Determinants of Health." Participating in the learning process as instructor was extraordinary. This case study offers promising testimony to educators who are adapting their courses from traditional learning spaces to online learning platforms. The reflexive space in this story mandala, which brings together stories from different vantage points, invites online instructors to imagine how innovative online learning can enhance knowledgeability.

Student Perceptions of Gained Knowledgeability

Students from very different backgrounds answered open-ended questions about their learning experience. Their responses are referred to as learning narratives. The questions and responses are included in this section of the article. Some students included pictures to illustrate their learning narrative. The virtual learning environment allowed conversations to take place between Midwestern students enrolled at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and Afghan students across Afghanistan who were also enrolled at Creighton University. The diverse group of students living in the Midwest included Asian and African refugees, a medical student who had done fieldwork in Haiti, a Special Forces veteran who had served in Afghanistan, a medical doctor working with refugees in his region, a pharmacist, a Native American nursing student, and a nun from Africa. Drawing from their life experiences, students were able to appreciate different perspectives stemming from diverse life histories—through the weekly posts they were required to make as well as their own responses to fellow students. Students openly shared their backgrounds and referred to their beliefs and identities as well as their affiliation with minority groups. This candor enhanced the generative nature of the online conversations.

Students were asked the following questions to guide their learning narratives:

- How have your perceptions been transformed?
- Give an example describing what you have learned and how you will use your knowledgeability.

- How will your insights gained through the coursework affect your current or future work and community?

The following learning narratives were shared by students:

Narrative 1

"I am from Omaha, Nebraska. I plan to use the knowledge that I gained through this course in my future in the medical field. More specifically, I am interested in continuing to do community health work. Being able to recognize the social and cultural determinants of health is essential, especially on the community-level. With that, even in a clinical setting, I will be able to use my anthropology background to be sure that I treat every patient holistically.

My perceptions of the ways in which society and culture can determine health have been transformed. Prior to this course, I had some experience with the social and cultural determinants of health, especially in my experience doing community health assessments in the Dominican Republic, but I did not know how these factors tie into evolution, the environment, and populations on a larger-scale.

A more specific example of something that I learned from this course, or rather reinforced in my knowledge, is the importance of treating everyone as their own unique person. It is important to take societal and cultural factors into account, especially in a healthcare setting, but it must be done in a way in which trust between the patient and the healthcare provider is the main priority. This is a topic that I wrote about in one of my discussions. It was the most applicable to my future and my past experiences. I hope to let building rapport with my patients be one of my top priorities in the future. If my future patients trust me, then, no matter who they are or where they are coming from, their visit will be worthwhile."

Narrative 2

"I take care of immigrants from packing houses so very easy to think about this message. Social

violence and structural violence were good thoughts. I sometimes got worn out extrapolating the books to how to apply to my everyday life. The world revolves around sixty-year-old men and we forget how EVERYONE else is affected by our decisions or how we look at life. Yes, I will be using this knowledge! Already am using it as I try to understand my patients."

Narrative 3

"I am from Bamyan, Afghanistan. Bamyan is a central province in Afghanistan that mostly Hazara people live in. I am twenty-one years old and completed my Diploma in liberal studies in 2018 and in social work. When I was in school, it was my dream to study abroad, and fortunately, that dream has come true.

My hobbies are listening to local music (Hazaragi) watching English movies, especially debates, and also spending time with my friends. I really enjoy being able to laugh and being with people from various backgrounds. I like to talk to different people, ask questions and engage with them because as a social worker, I like to work in the community and be part of their solutions.

Although, I am a student in Creighton University, I am also a member of JRS family and teach English in Lal district Ghur province which is a much-excluded area because of discrimination and inequalities.

Afghanistan is an Islamic and mountainous country which is located in the heart of Asia. It has a hot summer and a very cold winter. There are different ethnic groups in Afghanistan, but four of them are famous like Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks. I belong to the Hazara ethnic group, but for me actually, ethnicity and race is not very important. What is important is humanity and self-giving. I really love humanity, not race and parties, because God has not created me Hazara, but a human person. Although I am Muslim and live in an Islamic community, I also love and respect other religions because all religions are right, and no religion accepts awkwardness. It is people who do bad and their behavior is not related to their religion. This is what I found and learned from anthropology. I

Herat, Afghanista

will take away with me Creighton's mission which is serving humanity regardless of anything. I really aspire to see one day the world as one country and one nation who have a strong sense of loyalty and acceptance. At the end, again, I would like to thank you for your honesty and sense of humanitarianism."

Narrative 4

"Throughout this course, I learned about so many profound and remarkable issues and concepts that can't be put into words, especially the chapters and videos which were all related to my field as a Social Worker who is living and working in a community where people are felt to have a need for these kinds of concepts and issues to be told and taught."

Narrative 5

"I am from Afghanistan, in a community where 10 people die every day, and because of lots of violence and civil wars. I really feel that I have learned something from this Anthropology course. I am in a community and the culture and language is different, we need to respect others and try to understand what should be respected in their culture. In the future I can teach others and be a model for other students. Currently, I am teaching in one of rural areas in my country and lots of people have limited access to education, because of lots of economic problems, cultural problems, ethnical problems, civil wars and many

other problems that do not let the people seek education. The photo you see is of my province, where I was born, and it is very mountainous. We are living in a community which is very mountainous and lots of people are deprived and cannot study." Here is a picture of the school where we are teaching around 100 students. I am an English teacher in this community. They are trying to learn the English language in order to continue their higher education"

Narrative 6

"We spoke of religions that prohibit blood transfusions. When there is a health danger for an individual needing a blood transfusion to survive, religion is not always a positive influence. Last time in a class of ethics I was alone defending my point that between two evils, I will choose the

lesser evil by allowing a blood transfusion to a patient involved in an accident even though his/her ID says, "I am a Jehovah Witness." In the social work profession, ethical dilemma issues are complex because we have to follow the client's determination. In Anthropology, this kind of belief is typically considered a determinant of health."

The semi-structured questions were formulated to engage students in the narrative process. This exploratory phase of inquiry cannot be used to evaluate the achievements of the course objectives; however, the responses can provide more in-depth understanding of students' experiential learning processes. Narrative inquiry can also be used to discern important themes that can help guide and orient future research. The learning narratives enriched the narrative depth, offering new flyways for investigative potential.

The Jesuit Worldwide Learning Vision

After receiving the student's narratives, a voluntary part of the course, JWL coordinators were contacted and asked to participate to enhance the burgeoning *communiverse*, or whole learning community dialog. Appreciative Inquiry was used to generate increased reflexivity about the program's goals when interviewing the JWL director. The JWL vision provided a story arc for the institutional partnerships, reinforcing collaboration and unifying institutions in a coordinated commitment to higher education in the margins. Peter Balleis, S.J., Executive President of JWL (headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland), shared his vision in a recent interview:

> This virtual learning space brings together different locations around the world. The virtual space creates a global mindset, allowing students to have the ability to think change. JWL will be involved in a research program that is looking at how e-learning can be applied to work in the margins with community input. The students following the JWL program teach English to other young women in their community. They are new role models for women in their regions. The JWL Fellows take learning to the farthest corners of the world. The presence of Father Orville

in the region encourages the students, while providing onsite support and assistance. There is a high rate of success for the students in the program. 70% finish their degrees. The community learning centers have been designed to develop knowledgeability by supporting fellows who then in turn teach within their communities. This configuration aims at building knowledge together and finding solutions to community challenges together. Together, communities must come up with solutions. The Ignatian pedagogy supports this learning community concept.

How the young generation will manage in a difficult environment is not taught, however, the program serves to connect them to the world, with online learning technologies that allow them to stay in their hometowns. The families in these more remote areas of Afghanistan are less worried about their children participating in a "western" education program, because their children can stay in their family homes without having to move to large cities like Kabul. Their parents are happy to have them home and see the benefits of having their children work within the community learning centers that provide education for their community members.

The program aims to present new ways of thinking through the peace leader program that included students from Afghanistan, Jordan and Africa. Many of these young people have lived through war and therefore have an intrinsic interest in peace. Though the program requires lots of work, they find a way to accomplish the demanding coursework. The program brings together students from around the world. They are actively learning together to transform the world. The term "learning" was chosen instead of education.

JWL embraces all world religions providing mutual learning and respect. The program can be understood as a counter-strategy to building walls. JWL is actively building a global mindset. We are also developing research programs in Afghanistan so that the JWL Fellows can produce knowledge. The JWL website explains in detail their activities saying, "All of these programmes have been

developed within the framework of Ignatian experience which seeks to develop the whole person, or *cura personalis*, with student learning structured around the concepts of experience, reflection and action."[11]

Father Orville DeSilva, the onsite coordinator in Afghanistan explained how students learn to become change agents and

> . . . develop multiple perspectives and critically analyze their own cultural values. It opens their mind to the world realities and instills in them a sense of being a universal community of learners. Since the students are studying from remote locations, they do require ongoing accompaniment. As the sites where the students are studying from are so remote, technical glitches happen, at times when they need to submit their assignments. The subjects students study equip them to become future leaders in their communities, standing by values of integrity and honesty. Being JWL students, they already feel the responsibility of reaching out to others. In the future they will use the knowledge to be agents of social transformation in their societies.

A student who coordinated the Zoom sessions affirmed how the face-to-face meetings enhanced the online context: "They provided the possibility to share together and experience a much-needed connectedness."

An essential narrative layer is provided by including the vision of the JWL president, who works at the headquarters in Geneva, as well as that of the coordinator who worked with students onsite in Afghanistan. Understanding the organization's goals and objectives from their vantage points enriched the dialogical process. Still, there was yet another context to integrate. The current affairs that were causing great hardship during the eight-weeks when the class was taught were also acting on the online learning space, creating difficulties for students to connect online and threatening their security.

The Role of Hope and Metaphor

Understanding the changing circumstances of international students is crucial. Evolving world situations require collaborative responses to meet the needs of students living in war zones as well as refugee camps. As a Creighton University instructor, it was necessary to understand the political context and the daily challenges that the students were facing, as well as all that was at stake for the students who had chosen to participate in the program. A student-centered approach requires comprehension of the political and social context in which students are living, especially in this case study.

The course work and university accreditation provide important recognition for students seeking to find jobs in their localities. Although the hope of finding meaningful work is woven into the learning canvas for all participants, this is especially significant for JWL students. There is an even greater need for hope in the form of education for those living in the margins. Students in war zones and refugee camps especially need skills and knowledgeability to serve their communities and find a viable way forward.

The New York Times covered a story on October 19, 2018, that explained the endless crisis Afghans face daily. In bold letters, the article began, "Elections raise little hope in a war-ravaged nation where peril is at every turn."[12] The article goes on to describe how young adults are losing hope. After 17 years of war and crisis, Afghans cannot see any clear path forward. The political advocacy that encourages young adults, who have now come of age, to remain hopeful, is met with the reality of daily challenges of danger and hardship.

A student contacted me via Skype, when the Creighton class began in the Fall semester, to explain that he had just been held up at gun point by robbers who took both his computer and motorcycle. He had used his earnings as an instructor to purchase both. He worked in the learning center and explained that he felt he had been targeted. His desire to transform his life and

community through teaching is highlighted on the JWL website, where he describes himself as a social change agent.

> To be in the service of my fellow human beings is now a value for me. For me, the entire humanity is just like a powerful chain in which every single human being is as important as that of a single chain which helps to sustain the whole chain together. My part in this strong chain of humanity would be to have sympathy, empathy, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence. I want to serve my community and to be as a social change agent.[13]

Using technologies such as Skype, Zoom, and Canvas (the online learning management system), it was possible to accompany students from a distance. They were able to make contact easily and explain the challenges they faced during the eight-week intensive course time frame. Zoom sessions were specifically organized so all could speak together across different time zones. From the Swiss Alps to the far-reaching corners of Afghanistan, weekly discussions allowed students to ask questions and integrate the material they were learning. Not only were online learning technologies required to connect and communicate, but artful language that incorporated metaphor also facilitated the meaning-making process.

Social mediation uses metaphorical language and symbolism as a teaching tool in intercultural learning environments. Anthropology is the study of the many forms and functions of human diversity in the present as well as in the past. The discipline of anthropology lends itself well to an artful approach, as the textbooks and films feature symbolic depictions in reference to the subject matter. Students are asked to relate the subject matter drawn from the weekly assignments to their personal experiences. The course material gives value to metaphorical and symbolic content. Students' weekly posts include responding to two classmates' posts, thus giving recognition to each student's perspective. The classroom exchanges become an intercultural performance where artful communication emerges from the dialogical space. This conversational space elicits reflexivity as well as new ways of interrelating that emerge through the online relational context in which students must consider the views and opinions of others, meanwhile positioning themselves in respectful ways.

Crafting an Online Learning Organization

Both the online learning program at Creighton University and the JWL learning community involve connecting universities with online teaching programs and reaching out to diverse adult learners, some of whom are at the margins of society. The learning community offers degrees to students that would not otherwise have access to higher learning. The pedagogy is based on online teaching methods as well as Ignatian pedagogy. JWL's mission and commitment to students in the margins provide increased motivation to find solutions and encourage universities to meet increasing global challenges with innovative online solutions.

While following the online instructor's class, both the technical aspects and expansion of student participation were addressed. Various tools are used to design an online course. But online teaching also includes the transformational effect: "When well done, students can, and do, learn more online than they can and do sitting in the desks of a lecture hall—for a lot of reasons."[14]

Designing an online curriculum involves professors from various disciplines in collaboration, thus reinforcing interdisciplinary partnerships. Ignatian pedagogy is being used as a frame for universal design to meet the needs of Generation Z's experience with technologies.[15] This is especially pertinent for working adult students as well as those in the margins who are living in conflict zones. Well-designed online curriculum attracts students who otherwise might not be able to enroll in university courses. Teaching online opened the door to the realities and potentialities of virtual learning spaces.

Teaching as Accompaniment

From a social constructionist point of view, radical presence invites teachers to adopt a posture that allows them not only to teach but to accompany students. "To me, it is clear that radical presence positions us to appreciate a relational understanding of the social world. With

so many traditions, beliefs, and values to coordinate, how could unanimity be possible, how could some abstracted form of understanding/knowledge be possible? The world is complex, not simple."[16] In this statement, communications scholar and social constructionist Sheila McNamee suggests that we develop ways to *coordinate complexity*. These ways are generated by focusing on the relational interactions. The relationships and coordinations are also guided by the teachers' feedback to students' posts. The teacher furthers the reflexive process by underscoring concepts, valuing connections, and highlighting insights. Giving value to human diversity and the multiplicity of possible responses and connections encourages generativity. The teacher plays the role of conductor by harmonizing the polyphony or multiple voices that are expressing themselves within the dialogical space, offering a meaningful coordination of the complexity that emerges. "Through positive coordination we engage in the very processes from which issue meaning, value, and the continued sustenance of the sacred. Holiness is neither a state of heaven nor mind but may be realized in our next moment together."[17] Kenneth Gergen's social constructionist approach underscores how positive coordination acts to sustain the meaning-making process, giving rise to moments of shared sacredness.

A student asserted that Allah created life on earth during one particular Zoom discussion session on evolution. This seemed to contradict the story being told in the anthropology text books. Using a narrative approach, we discussed how there can be competing narratives that each individual must evaluate and work through. The concrescence, or organic coming together of these stories, can be facilitated by using metaphor. For example, by telling the story of the Tree of Life represented on the mosaic floor of the Otranto Cathedral in Italy, a UNESCO World Heritage site constructed in 1100 CE, I initiated an artful approach to dialog, incorporating representations that ultimately served to reinforce the learning process.

The story of the Tree of Life recollected an art form from the past that was created within a religious space to teach Christian heritage through imagery. This metaphoric imagery transformed the conversation by introducing yet another level of

symbolism into the dialogical space. The debate that the student had brought to the conversation by opposing religion and anthropological theories in relation to evolution was transfigured through a narrative approach that introduced a story as well as a mosaic art form. It lifted the conversation to yet another level. The Tree of Life became a transcendent metaphor and acted on the words, the vessels of meaning, being formulated in the Zoom session.

Paulo Freire wrote of the importance of language and metaphor, "Changing language is part of the process of changing the world. The relationship, language-thought-world, is a dialectical, processual, contradictory relationship."[18] He noted the importance of symbolism in speech and language in conjunction with metaphor as used in literature as well as in science. He encouraged students to take up their citizenship. Freire opened his book, *Pedagogy of Hope*, with the claim that educational practice is an adventure where hope demands an anchoring in practice. Teachers too must learn to embrace new mindsets and so model social innovation within newly crafted online communities.

Radical pedagogy is a concept as well as a practice that is associated with Freire's vision of pedagogy. It has the ability to initiate social transformation by introducing educational practices that challenge dominant economic, social, and political forms of power. Multiple interpretations of Radical pedagogy are emerging, however, in the field of education.[19] Educational leadership can be demonstrated by teachers by espousing theoretical concepts as well as by implementing transformative practices within the learning space. This can be done by adopting a posture of radical presence, practicing transformational and radical pedagogy, while striving to embody hope. Giving value to hope lifts up the social learning space with an intention to harness generative energy that allows students to become transformers. Together teachers and learners contribute to foster community generativity. Both theory and practice are intertwined in online settings in which educational leadership is artfully performed as accompaniment.

Higher education was perceived by the local residents attending the graduation ceremony in

Bamyan, Afghanistan, as a pathway to engaged citizenship. A film on the JWL website captures the testimonies of several of the young women in the class.[20]

"They are destroying the community, but I am trying to rebuild the community," is the way one of the students explained her determination after watching the film's opening scenes that showed the explosion of ancient Buddhist statues by the Taliban. Yet another female student spoke in the film's debut, "They think that girls should not study," and went on to explain how she believes that there should not be discrimination between girls and boys. These narratives portray the hopes and aspirations of the JWL students who are earning a degree at Creighton University. "They helped me to think differently," one young woman in the program stated, referring to the learning experience she had had with students from different social, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Another young male student explained that, before the courses with JWL, he had not asked, "What is my responsibility to my community?" He went on to say, "We have to work together and create togetherness. We have to transform the world together." At the graduation ceremony in Afghanistan a young female student affirmed to the audience, "I will make a change."

In supporting her daughter's choice to study despite concerns from her community because of possible reprisals, one mother said, "I trust my daughter and I know she can protect herself." As the documentary film's title suggests, these courageous young students are working "Towards a New Afghanistan."[21] The learning site in Bamyan, where the graduation ceremony takes place, is at the feet of the Buddhist statues blown up by Taliban insurgents—a place where a new narrative is being written. Imaginative approaches are currently needed to find community solutions in this place as well as throughout the world.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola wrote the first version of his *Spiritual Exercises* between 1522 and 1524, and they were immediately used and practiced. They provide a transformational pathway that leads participants to become "men and women for others." Students in the anthropology class espoused their dedication as well as their desire to transform their communities. "Ignatian pedagogy begins with the human experience. Thus, it is critical for faculty and student affairs professionals to understand the students' context within which learning occurs."[22] Ignatian pedagogy's holistic approach continues to inspire course design, professors, and students in today's postmodern world. The focus on students' contexts is particularly relevant for students at the margins. Online courses are designed to allow students with family responsibilities and full-time jobs to continue their education and professional training. By creating international partnerships, JWL takes online learning to young men and women who are living in refugee camps or war zones. These political contexts require even more sensitivity to students' community contexts. The hardships that they are confronting must be given special consideration.

Respecting student's feelings and attitudes contributes to the holistic approach. Diverse opinions were shared on topics including kinship and marriage, sexual orientation, evolution, discrimination, and social injustice. Mutual respect was especially important as some students were facing daily challenges in relation to violence and uncertainty. A respectful learning space was also cultivated with respect to students sharing personal information in relation to gender, ethnicity, as well as mental health challenges. Through learning, women discovered new agency. It was necessary to be available to discuss any problems that might arise during the intensive course period. This was communicated in the teacher information by sharing contact information so that students could call the teacher directly using Skype. Teacher availability reinforced the relational trust engendered within the learning environment; meanwhile, students were asked to be respectful of time differences. Communities were given agency when accompanied by JWL and their institutional partner. Access to education provided hope and awareness of a global context with the potential of transforming regional hardships.

Journeymanship: A Vessel of Transformation

Transformational learning processes are rooted in the contexts in which we live: our shared stories as well as the matrix of our many relationships.

"What the unconscious 'does to us,' can in fact be conceived in positive ways, instead of hindering us."[23] When studying anthropology, the profoundness of the subject matter can be brought to the surface in conscious recognition. Lifelong learning can be understood as engendering a form of flexibility that takes the shape of a *transformagram* when learners participate in adult education that applies transformative learning practices.[24] Co-constructing learning spaces that allow students to become more flexible, providing wiggle room to investigate new ideas and integrate new knowledge, is fundamental in the transformational process. This odyssey or journeymanship transports individuals as well as communities to new landscapes of potentiality.

Bringing knowledge into the world requires knowledgeability. "Knowledgeability entails translating this complex experience of the landscape, both its practices and their boundaries, into a meaningful moment of service."[25] The complex relationships that are established to support learning communities work to create a legitimate space in which both learning and academic certification can be applied to service. There are social expectations that are tied to the practices in the landscape that give value to the competencies acquired.

Multiple levels come together in a meaningful learning community landscape dedicated to service through knowledgeability that betters the world. The course, "An Introduction to Anthropology: The Social and Cultural Determinants of Health," invited students to look at the human condition by using textbooks, scientific articles, ethnographic works, and films as a way of focusing in on the human subject. Medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman's *Illness Narratives* brought recognition to narrative approaches in his field, using narratives to better understand how illness was affecting patient's lives. There is a coherent line of inquiry that runs through the course content. The international online learning community configuration and the narrative inquiry methodological approach move participatory action research to a form of research as accompaniment.[26]

In addition, as course instructor, previous research on conflict narratives further imbedded the teaching posture in the narrative model of mediation, reinforcing this landscape of practice as well.[27] The narrative model in mediation provides a referential framework for addressing or speaking about social injustice and violence.[28] Narrative mediation, in conjunction with other narrative inquiry methods, presents an artfully concepted referential canvas. The learning narratives that were shared in the course followed Kleinman's lead, using narrative methods for questing and comprehension. His more recent writing calls for active engagement when he asserts, "A passion for society requires that we do more than expose the social conditions that bring harm to people. It also calls to actively involve ourselves in movements to deliver the care that makes possible their recovery and healing."[29] An emancipatory process was engendered by all the participants who engaged in the narrative inquiry. Both those writing the narratives and those reading the assembled manuscript participate in the snowballing, reflexive space. Together, in a collective *oeuvre*, participants are manumitting—or writing to set themselves free.

Multiple levels of collaboration were employed in crafting a virtual learning environment to connect academic institutions, learning organizations, teachers, and learners. The co-construction of the virtual learning organization also required the practice of radical pedagogy, in which pedagogy is both a science and an art. "Instructors can create experiences for Generation Z which align with their interest to change the world through invention."[30] Radical pedagogy is needed to transition toward teaching practices that can generate the inventions that can indeed change the world. "Radically new approaches should meet the objectives of the formation of a person living in the modern world, built on a complex balance of political and economic interest.[31]"

Social mediation and social artistry were used to bring together participants in a joint performance dedicated to radical social change. Valuing interlaced learning narratives gives voice to learners, teachers, and program designers who espouse the importance of community service and social transformation. Online learning environments allow for configuring new forms of togetherness by using cutting-edge developments in technology. Hope and accompaniment foster

virtual learning communities, in which radical presence generates social innovation as well as beautiful, intricate, story mandalas that intertwine artful learning narratives. Virtual design is the canvas that weaves together the storyline.

"What do I inspire you to do?" is the question Mohammed Hassam Mohamud asked at the Davos World Economic Forum meeting in January 2019. As a JWL student in the online diploma program in Kakuma, where he has lived for more than 20 years as a refugee, he represented the refugees in his camp as co-chair of the meeting in Davos. In his filmed presentation he explained, "We have aspirations, hopes and dreams. Refugee camps are not ethical, nor sustainable, and not conducive for human growth. We need to have a sense of belonging and identity, tools for equal opportunity and education, and access to a future that I can feel I am a part of."[32] Witnessing the social injustice and social suffering of marginalized students becomes part of the overarching learning community's mission.

In this sense, teaching and learning takes on a higher level of meaning. South Americans like Father Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P. have modeled liberation theology that combines Christian theology and social activism. This example has inspired a new conception of international aid. Together Dr. Paul Farmer and Father Gustavo Gutiérrez have given rise to a social movement that "changes the way countries and institutions have traditionally thought about development aid—moving, in Farmer's words from 'Aid to Accompaniment.'"[33] Their approach can be applied to JWL partnerships. By using their work and emerging framework as an example, the JWL international learning community, which includes the academic partnerships, can offer a way to address real-world problems. "Yet accompaniment is not simply walking together. It requires recognizing real-world complexities, acknowledging the asymmetries of power and privilege, and being willing to address these while walking together."[34] Within the JWL online learning program, participation in the program becomes a practice of accompaniment. Engaging in anthropology and narrative inquiry in this way becomes a pathway toward social transformation and the practice of radical self-giving. In keeping with the Ignatian principles, "Gratitude is the space of that radical self-giving and that presence of beauty in our lives without which even the struggle for justice would be crippled."[35]

Conclusion

This exploratory narrative inquiry provides a starting point, generating reflexivity in relation to teaching and learning online and in the margins, within a multicultural virtual context. Ignatian principles and pedagogy can be effectively incorporated into online courses as presented in this case study. Traditional ethnographic methods inform research through qualitative methods and are widely used in anthropology. Social constructionist theories provide a referential framework to explore online education and identify important themes for scholar practitioners. Course design can benefit from transformational learning paradigms that give value to radical presence and pedagogy where teaching transitions to a practice of accompaniment. Social mediation in the context of higher education has the potential of engendering hopeful futures by giving voice to learning narratives that can orient course design to serve students' needs. As students become transformers within their communities, they can share teaching models that give value to social artistry and adaptability. By incorporating artful language, generative dialogical space can be enkindled within virtual learning communities and local places of practice. Metaphors have the capacity to link people from different cultures by using symbolic representations to bridge understanding. Assembling and beautifying story mandalas become part of a burgeoning landscape of practice, especially in intercultural contexts. Together students, teachers, and academic partners become engaged pathfinders, using narrative inquiry as a questing and *futuring* method. "Autoethnographers and duoethnographers cannot solve social injustice. But through their words and deed they can advance social justice. Auto-and duoethnographers can offer narratives of exposure and resistance to dominant discourses."[36] Within this landscape of narrative inquiry, Ignatian principles can be applied in international learning communities and give rise to artful pedagogies of hope.

Further qualitative research documenting student's life trajectories could be part of a joint endeavor to cultivate communities of practice.[37] Through follow-up interviews, students' narratives could be analyzed in relation to the application of their newly gained knowledgeability within their communities. A semi-structured questionnaire could be developed to inquire about the benefits of higher education and about the difficulties students may encounter as they try to find employment and contribute within their social context.

The cultural values inherent in a Western education program could also be investigated in relation to other cultural frameworks in an effort to promote cultural diversity. Qualitative methods, gathering *narratives of knowledgeability*, would allow the JWL program to understand students' long-term needs better. Further research would also provide greater insight into the recognition of a higher education diploma in students' regions as well as the pertinence of the curriculum in relation

to their social and economic contexts. By investigating student perceptions, the JWL program can be reinforced and so respond even more accurately to perceived needs while anticipating students' difficulties after obtaining their diplomas. Engaging in generative needs assessment research[38] would provide JWL with a transitional program for students, supporting them as they find new ways to apply their knowledgeability. Salient findings from the research process could orient recommendations and suggest courses of action. Joint efforts could then be co-designed, providing a relational framework that would allow universities and faculty to mentor students during a transitional period, encouraging them to share what they know while cultivating hopeful futures. In this way, the JWL learning organization could craft a platform that offers long-term support to students and graduates in the margins. Cultivating a learning community of artful mentoring may indeed generate gardens of blossoming hope. HJE

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