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360 DEGREES OF PEDAGOGY

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In the Campus Center

I meet with Praise, my student consultant, to talk about the course I'm revising as part of a new 360 cluster, "Learning and Narrating Childhoods." Praise listens with imagination and poses sensitive questions. She isn't an Education student so I have to watch my jargon. Her studies and experiences are highly relevant to the course. She helps me glimpse the course from the vantage point of an entering student, yet our talk is freer than it would be with such a student — our roles less intensely power-laden, shared investments more expansive.

One day we are speaking about the course title, "Literacies and Education:" why literacies, Praise asks, not literacy? I mutter something about connections between language, culture, and power — the function of education systems to define and police boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate languages and uses of language. Praise lights up: this reminds her of a Ted Talk by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie that she saw in a Political Science class last term. She will send me the link.

Adichie's "The Danger of a Single Story" became the entry text for my course and a touchstone throughout. Speaking as an African writer whose early reading experiences were of Europe, not of home, Adichie says, "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." Knowing herself to have been the object of others' "single stories" and also to have believed single stories about others, Adiche argues that the recognition of multiple literacies is a vital source of knowledge and justice. Students returned to this idea repeatedly as we studied, via academic inquiry and via a visit to Ghana, how to discern, and create, multiple stories where oppressive hierarchies have certified only one.

As it happens, the call to pluralize "the single story" connects directly to TLI consultancy relationships. The splitting and ranking of roles in education is of a piece with the splitting and ranking of literacies — in part each produces and justifies the other. Against this cultural backdrop, conversations with Praise created a "third space" (Bhabha, 1990; Guitierrez, 1999) in which our roles and purposes could be more fluid and holistic, our interests, academic and other, more seamlessly mingled.

As Praise completed her work with me at semester's end, a second TLI consultant, Sarah, began working with me and my two 360 colleagues joined the team for the start of the term. Sarah journeyed with us, through the challenges and joys of this new, new program, even as far as Ghana.

Many the Miles: Learning and Narrating Childhoods

We — Pim Higginson (French and Francophone Studies), Rob Wozniak (Psychology), and I — created this 360 to explore how children learn who they are and can be as they grow up. Cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, cross-stitched. Three courses; 15 students; a student consultant; 18 airplane tickets. Words, people, and studies in motion: privilege; development; identity; narrative; power. The novel as data and data as story (that could be otherwise); truth; falsehood. Mostly, questions: What is the role of language and literacy in forming and channeling personal and group identities? How are people written by their schooling? Into what and out of what are they written? How do they write themselves, their worlds? other people, other people's worlds? What does a postcolonial context mean for these questions? Who are we to ask?

With early course readings — Illich's (1968) "To Hell With Good Intentions," Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Adichie's "The Dangers of a Single Story" and Lugone's (1987) "World' —Traveling and Loving Perception" — we tried to guide our students to think about the violence of privilege and oppression — even of literacy. At the same time, we tried to center our inquiries in the strengths, not the hurts, of subjugated people. In Eve Tuck's "Call for a Moratorium on Damage-Centered Research," students heard a call to get beyond modes of study centered on damage and an accompanying need for reparations and restoration. How to learn from, not about, people — no matter how straightened their circumstances — as complete and complex, actuated by desires as fully as by needs?

The 360 Program invites faculty from different areas to work, academically and via field experience, with students whose own areas of experience and specialization likewise vary. Our group included students in each of their four years of college, with majors ranging from Sociology to English to Computer Science. We integrated academic and experiential explorations of literacy, literature and child development by visiting the village of Dalun, in northern Ghana, where educational opportunity for children is inhibited by poverty, by limited exposure to English language experiences and by responsibilities older children bear for the care of younger siblings in this largely agrarian community.

In response to these issues, four years ago, two young men from the village invited a Haverford student doing summer work in the area to collaborate with them to start an early education project, Titagya Schools, with the ultimate goal to provide preschool and kindergarten education in half of the 32 districts of the North and thus gain purchase to enter policy dialogues. Early in the enterprise, the Bryn Mawr/Haverford Education Program became a partner of the project; students in selected courses wrote curriculum and I began to serve on the Advisory Board. In Dagbani, the language of the region, "Titagya" means "We are changing." Like the 360 Program and the TLI, Titagya seeks to put knowledge from different sectors and cultures into relationship and action.

Our 360 trip included six days in Dalun, where we were visitors and learners, some of the time working with children and teachers in the school. We collaborated with the teachers to lead a teacher professional development workshop for 45 area teachers; our students took notes and joined in school group breakout sessions and informal dialogues. In Accra, the other locale of

our trip, we participated in activities at the University of Ghana's Institute for African Studies and visited local sites.

Enabling Risks

This 360 was ambitious — the very nature of the program and our chosen focus made it so.

Students and faculty together were venturing into new territory — actual and intellectual. Where there weren't yet structures in place to support an unusual degree of interdependence, we worked to create them. We had all committed ourselves to this journey, and at the same time continued to shoulder many academic and professional responsibilities outside it. And we were, each and all, doing new things and going new places. We were cutting a path. The outcome was necessarily unknown and open-ended.

In this context of academic and community risk, it is difficult to overestimate the value of working with a Student Consultant.

It is week three of the semester, and we have just finished a lunch meeting with the class to begin planning and orientation for our spring break trip to Ghana. The faculty have been working double-time to attend to the practical and intellectual demands of this ambitious program. We are intrigued, gladly challenged, engrossed.

As discussion of the trip winds up, one student takes the floor, saying she now speaks for the group to share serious concerns they have about how the 360 is going. The students, she says, are feeling overwhelmed and under-supported in the amount and styles of work we are requiring of them. They expect a higher degree of coordination across the three courses in practicalities such as tech platforms (each professor is using a different one) and the scheduling of assignments. They want more help making connections between the courses. They are more upset than engrossed.

Frame clash. Faculty and student expectations and experiences of the 360 are at odds. How to attend? How to respond? Here, our TLI consultant Sarah did vital work on behalf of the project we all shared.

The day after the lunchtime discussion, the three faculty and Sarah met together, as we did each week. As we talked it through and sorted out ways to respond, Sarah's insider/outsider perspective — insider to student culture, outsider to standing in the course; insider to some of the faculty's efforts, outsider to some of same — proved a critical resource. She helped us slow the pace of our analysis and attend dispassionately to the students' concerns. She offered her observations in a keenly measured and yet also candid way. Yes, too many tech platforms, no the students' expressions of concern does not signify a lack of dedication on anyone's part. Yes, sometimes students' perceptions gathered steam because they were spending so much of their time together; yes, we needed to show, by taking positive action, that we were listening. No, we were not asking too much of the students, but yes, the ask could be clearer, and some of the challenges more rewarding to meet.

Sarah's witness and counsel, then and throughout the promising and in time fruitful semester, helped us read and respond to students' needs. She also helped us interpret students' struggles in light of the differences between their accustomed course experiences and their actual and projected experiences of taking a 360. She helped us slow down to imagine students' perceptions in the context of their broader experiences of "doing college." So important, as doing college — for students and faculty alike — is re-defined when in play with a 360. We are changing.

We are Changing: More Songs, More Seas

My neighbors have a conceptual painting on their wall — painted on their wall — that is made up of the words, "More Songs, More Seas" printed in big block letters, gray on white. 360 is a program of more songs, more seas. Exhilaration; possibility; demand. Vulnerability to breath and weather. More. More perspectives on more problems, more experiences, more voices. Such sailing takes a strong team, a lot of energy, skill in tying and untying knots. High spirits at hard tasks.

A beautiful woven cloth I brought back from Ghana lets in light at some of the seams.

Like Sarah and Praise did.

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