An Anti-Racist Transnational Feminist Note on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

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This article critically examines Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) from an anti-racist transnational feminist perspective. It underscores the potential pitfalls of COILs multiculturalist assumptions. While the authors acknowledge the benefits of COIL, such as enhanced access to education and opportunities for intercultural learning, they express concerns about power imbalances, language obstacles, and the overemphasis on Western viewpoints.

The authors draw from their experiences as scholars and graduate students to illustrate how seemingly harmless activities, like icebreakers, can inadvertently reinforce inequalities rooted in intersectionality. They stress the importance of COIL pedagogy being sensitive to students diverse backgrounds, language skills, and cultural contexts. Furthermore, they challenge the possibility of COIL reinforcing existing power hierarchies, especially those centered around language proficiency and Western supremacy.

Despite recognizing COILs potential in bridging international communities and empowering underrepresented groups, the authors advocate for a critical approach that foregrounds equity and inclusivity. They urge for continued dialogue and cooperation among educators, diversity practitioners, and activists to create more culturally sensitive and sustainable COIL curriculum designs. The authors ultimately argue for the practice of cultural humility and the creation of meaningful intercultural learning experiences that question prevailing power structures and advocate for social justice.

Keywords: Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), anti-racist pedagogy, transnational feminism, cultural humility, equity, inclusion, intersectionality, online education, power dynamics, language barriers

Introduction

Since the 1980s, transnational feminists and anti-racist pedagogues and scholars have raised concerning questions about learning, knowledge-producing, and communicating with "other women"meaning women who are not white, Western, native English-speaking, cisgender, heterosexual, and Christian (Ahmed, 2000; Lazreg, 1988; Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1988). Their concerns resulted in a corpus of academic and activist writings criticizing extreme optimism of the multiculturalist assumptions and questioning the possibility of equal and mutual communications. Born out of the desire of multicultural liberal education in an adjacent academic paradigm, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) attempts to connect learners across academic disciplines and national borders to come together to learn with and through each other. In definition, COIL is based on developing team-taught learning environments where teachers from two cultures work together to develop a shared syllabus, emphasizing experiential and collaborative student learning(Rubin & Guth, 2015, p. 18). This article, intentionally titled "An Anti-Racist Transnational Feminist Note on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)," tries to use the lens of anti-racist feminist pedagogies for criticizing collaborative online international learning to disclose the potential dangers of underlining multiculturalist assumptions and suggests ways for improving the learning outcomes for a non- Western and anti-racist feminist environment in COILed classes.

On the one hand, a brief review of the existing literature indicates the significance of multicultural learning and the notion of cultural competency in COIL[1] against these benevolent intentions, the problems become evident when one considers the power dynamics in the cultural exchange of voices and

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[1]Similarly, multicultural feminism would argue for including a variety of diverse women's voices in the feminist movement and literature.

the process of inclusion. On the other hand, the last two years of the pandemic have changed academic institutions irreversibly. Online teaching has become an undeniable component of higher education, and as the literature suggests, COILing has made education more accessible for some communities that would not have access otherwise (Moore & Simon, 2015). We strongly believe that rejecting online teaching completely or refusing COIL altogether is not a viable option. Instead, a new challenge for anti-racist transnational feminist pedagogues and diversity workers has emerged: collectively, we need to reflect on notions of power, privilege, and oppression in internationally collaborative online learning environments.

This article shares the result of our collective thinking about feminist pedagogy, anti-racist transnational feminism, online teaching, and COIL. We are a group of academics (one faculty member and five graduate students) who have spent between one and four semesters together discussing these issues in multiple graduate courses. When we collectively decided to join the COIL certificate at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU)[2] in spring of 2022, which is also known for its active role in advocating for global education through different venues, we could not find transnational feminist texts that addressed our concerns. Therefore, in this note, we share our interdisciplinary and transnational feminist concerns about COILing. Some of the topics we address here come from our scholarly knowledge and some from our bodies' experiences of trauma, microaggressions, and pandemic fatigue. Following bell hooks (1994, 2003), Becky Thompson (2017), Kyoko Kishimoto (2018), and other feminist pedagogues, we value these intellectual, emotional, and psychosomatic experiences. We incorporate them in our note while making a conversation with multiple academic fields.

First, we briefly touch upon multicultural vs. anti-oppressive pedagogies and their different outcomes in class dynamics. We then present our note on COIL using an anti-racist transnational lens, in addition to observational analysis of our time in the COIL certificate. Here, we address how, even in something as simple as an icebreaker, an activity that most instructors adopt in their COILing practices, one needs to be mindful of the intersectional identities of the learners. We then transition to the intersecting identities of the students and their bodies. Specifically, we share our concerns about international learners, who have various levels of fluency in languages. Due to the dominance of the English language in power structures, millions of the global population have taken or plan to take English proficiency tests such as the IELTS to access some of the privileges that come with it (IELTS Grows to 3.5 Million a Year | Take IELTS, 2019). Therefore, unequal privilege levels become an undeniable ingredient of social inequality in a COILed classroom. In our next section of the note, we acknowledge the accessibility COIL brought to specific communities during the pandemic, but we still insist on paying attention to the equity issues that arise when virtually connecting people across lines

of privilege. Our note then considers one hypothetical benefit of COILed classes: the possibility of connecting members of internationally displaced diasporas and empowering them to share their cultural heritage and problems in COILed classes. For example, we ask the question about the possibility of utilizing COIL for Hmong students to develop a deeper understanding of their imagined community and cultures. Finally, we close this note by reflecting on positionality, evaluating Western/Euro-American social constructions of sex, gender, and sexuality in a COILed course/module, and the importance of embracing and advocating for intersectional identities in the LGBTQIA+ community.

Admittedly, this note is also an open invitation to other teachers, educators, diversity workers, and activists to join us, provide feedback and responses, and empower us to think critically and produce more culturally responsive and sustainable curriculum designs when creating future COILed courses. Here, we hope to practice cultural humility, as an unending process of listening and learning about others, through COILing classes and beyond.

Anti-Oppressive or Multicultural COILing?

Because COIL is rooted in the liberal multicultural paradigm of education, in this note[3], we argue that utilizing COIL in higher education still demands a closer review of multiculturalism. Kishimoto (2018) provides the following description of multiculturalism:

> Multiculturalism, which became prominent in the U.S. in the late 1980s and 1990s, was important in challenging assimilationism and Eurocentrism in the curriculum but contains some problems (Gordon and Newfield 1996). Multiculturalism acknowledges diversity within and among racial and ethnic groups but can be problematic in its belief that society is democratic and egalitarian (James as cited in Brotman 2003, 210) and its apolitical and ahistorical approach in the discussion of cultures and celebration of diversity (Kailin 2002; Kandaswamy 2007; St. Clair and Kishimoto 2010; Teel 2014). Multiculturalism, in its popular usage in the U.S., views diverse racial and ethnic groups

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[2]A program run in collaboration with the Department of Global Education and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) that offer a four-week COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) certificate. The certificate introduces learners to four modules: Introduction to COIL, The COIL Model and Curriculum Development, Intercultural Learning, and Technology and Course Design, in which learners get familiar with instructional design and the philosophy of COILing. However, nowhere in the course one can find discussions about power dynamics and anti-racist pedagogies.

[3]We refer to our collective writing as note in this paper.

as existing on the same level of power and over-looks race and institutional racism that are the basis of inequality between groups. (p. 541)

In Black Studies, Multiculturalism, and the Future of American Education (1995), Manning Marable introduces four interpretations of multiculturalism within the United States: corporate, liberal, radical essentialist, and radical democratic. While corporate multiculturalism seeks to highlight the cultural and social diversity of Americas population, (Marable, 1995 p. 50) the liberal multiculturalism is explicitly anti-racist and takes for granted that education institutions have a powerful social responsibility to deconstruct the ideology of human inequality (Marable, 1995, p. 50).However, Marable explains that liberal multiculturalism falls short in adequately addressing structures of power, and in providing theory and praxis to move toward what he calls radical democratic multiculturalism.

The question of multiculturalism becomes even more complicated when one moves from national to global scale. Globalization and the internationalization of societies predispose culturally and ethnically diverse populations to interact with each other (Agathangelou, 2020). These global forces often reshape historically homogenous societies to become culturally and ethnically diverse multicultural societies. Intercultural competencies are a framework of essential skills that help with the interactions with culturally homogenous populations. Scholars have created several different models of intercultural competence. These models of intercultural competencies primarily locate cultural competence around awareness, knowledge, and skills (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

Here, transnational feminists point out the failures of multiculturalist approaches to education. For example, Sara Ahmed (2000) provides insights into the difference between tolerating and accepting cultural others. She discloses that multicultural space often connects more closely to corporate multiculturalism, reinforces the differentiation between the minority and majority populations, and results in either marginalization or integration (Ahmed, 2000; Bryan, 2010). Therefore, minority culture is being oppressed (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). The problem with the notion of intercultural competencies stems from the lack of critical reflections on the society and the self and reinforcing othering. Freire (1970) argued that the liberation of minority populations could not be achieved without analyzing and reflecting on the relationship between oppressor and oppressed (pp. 33-35). Adding reflections driven from Critical Race Theory (CRT), paying direct attention to politics of race and intersectional identities, and reflecting on intercultural competence models through these lenses enables us to challenge the Western domination and structural oppression within traditional models of education. We use this critique of multiculturalism through an anti-racist transnational feminist lens to inform our writings in the following note.

Our Transnational Feminist Note on COIL

1. Icebreakers

The first meetings of any class are some of the most important ones. Many students value the opportunity to build social relationships within classroom spaces, and to set a vibe in the classroom (Mittelmeier et al., 2018). Creating a welcoming space for two classrooms meeting across the globe is extremely challenging. In the case of a COILed classroom, the first meeting will be the time the students begin to know each other, learn the technology, and initiate their cross-cultural experience.

Icebreakers are suggested by multiple COIL guides as ways to create a more comfortable learning setting, lower anxiety around the COIL experience, and foster relationship-building between students (College of Education and Human Development, 2016; Faculty Guide for Global Course Connections, 2013; Rubin, 2015) (College of Education and Human Development, 2016; Great Lakes College Association, 2013; Minnesota State University, Mankato, 2021; Rubin, 2015). However, those guides do not discuss the potential ramifications of not creating an icebreaker that is inclusive and culturally responsive. A poorly constructed icebreaker can create a space that fosters exclusion, microaggressions, and a lack of cultural competency. If even a portion of the classroom fails to be welcomed and feel like they belong in the classroom, the remainder of the COIL experience could be jeopardized. A non-inclusive icebreaker may begin to create opportunities for xenophobia and other microaggressions to manifest and create difficulties in growing cultural competency between the two classrooms (Mittelmeier et al., 2018)

Through participating in the COIL certificate, many of us found little to no discussion about icebreakers that may be exclusionary to some identities in the room or make assumptions about experiences students have had. Many icebreakers that we have taken part in become exclusionary when one simple question is asked: Who might not relate to this? For example, What is your favorite holiday? is a question that often refers to Christian or Western/American holidays (e.g., Christmas, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving), unless specified to be purposefully inclusive. Certain questions can also assume or exclude peoples sexual and/or romantic identities and experiences of friendship. For example, Who is your celebrity crush? may exclude people who identify as aromantic and/or asexual,[4] while What do you value most in a friend? can exclude people who identify as aplatonic[5] (AUREA - Aromantic Attraction and Relationship Terms, 2021; AUREA - Basic Aromantic Terms, 2021; Wenzel, 2022). Many food-related questions might trigger

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[4]Aromantic is a term used to describe someone who experiences little to no romantic attraction (AUREA, 2021b). Asexuality refers to experiencing little to no sexual attraction (Wenzel, 2022).

[5]Aplatonic is a term used to describe someone who experiences little to no platonic attraction (AUREA, 2021a).

someone who has an eating disorder or has a negative relationship with food because of systems of power like classism and sexism. Often, the positionality of the instructor influences the icebreakers that are not reflective of the identities and experiences present in COILed classrooms. In addition to identity inclusion, cultural inclusion is also important to consider when crafting icebreakers. Many cultures have different ideas of what personal information is okay to share with strangers or outside of the family and may get uncomfortable if the icebreaker becomes too personal (Zulkifli & Idris, 2021). Even the simplest of icebreakers might be anxiety-inducing for a student who does not speak English as their first language, which may often be the case in a COILed course.

With the lack of literature around culturally aware and inclusive icebreakers, it might feel like a challenging task to produce an icebreaker that can create a welcoming space. When considering using questions as an icebreaker, a good place to start is by asking questions similar to the ones we just considered: Who might not relate to this? Is this too personal? Might this question trigger a student? Is this a Western-centric concept? Could this lead to xenophobia, microaggressions, or a misunderstanding about a students culture? On top of asking these questions, another option is to offer multiple questions for students to answer, giving them the option of which one they may relate to most and feel more comfortable answering. Icebreakers could also be constructed to help students engage with the cross-cultural classroom and provide students opportunities to share their cultures.

It is also important to consider the delivery method of the COILed course. An icebreaker for a synchronous course may look different from one for an online asynchronous course. Asynchronous or limited synchronous COIL classroom spaces may benefit from doing a welcome social event outside of the classroom to help avoid the isolation and lack of cultural exchange that may occur in that classroom setting (Wooten et al., 2020). Technology may also impact the type of icebreaker instructors can accomplish in their course. A classroom that can use a video conference platform with breakout sessions (e.g., Zoom) may be able to use small group facilitation to provide a more personal experience, while reducing the anxiety of sharing between an entire classroom of people. A classroom in which all students can record videos may use video projects as a means for students to get to know each other while engaging with the course content (Taufiqurrochman & Rana, 2021). Google Slides or other platforms that allow multiple editors at once can be used to create interactive icebreakers that students can answer with semi-anonymity (Lewis, 2021). Additionally, icebreakers do not have to be a one-off occurrence and can be used throughout the course when energy is low, or to continue to engage students in cross-cultural learning (Chlup & Collins, 2010).

This note is by no means a comprehensive guide to creating an inclusive icebreaker, but the beginning of a conversation on

ways we can create a space that advocates for marginalized identities and brings together multiple cultures, whether that be a COILed classroom or not. Being able to set the tone for the space and advocate for marginalized students from the start can make or break a course experience. To do that, educators must make sure that their icebreakers promote inclusion and do not harm their students.

2. Language and Cultural Barriers

As a group of anti-racist and transnational feminists, we are concerned about international students and non-native English speakers in a COILed setting. They may face specific challenges due to their geographic location, English language proficiency, communication, and writing skills in English. Additionally, time differences, internet availability, and access to electronic devices and social media are critical factors to consider.

In Do International Online Collaborative Learning Projects Impact Ethnocentrism? the authors ask a similar question. They are concerned about the role of collaborative online learning in expanding the Eurocentric cliches in students minds instead of helping them deconstruct Westernized perceptions of themselves and others. Authors insist that effective online learning requires more time and profound reflections on both students' and instructors sides. Additionally, it is necessary for learners and their teachers to continuously question their understanding and the efficiency of the methods used in such learning environments. In other words, students will need much more than learning about technologies and assignments; they need a level of cultural competency that is missing most of the time (Boehm et al., 2010).

Boehm and his co-authors demand for ongoing reflection resonates with what Kyoko Kishimoto (2018) points out as cultural humility, in which self-reflection requires faculty to have the humility to know that they are a work in progress, both as individuals and as professors/ scholars/ researchers (p. 543). She urges instructors to be aware of their position and their level of privilege, openly teach about race and its effect on the classroom, and utilize anti-racist pedagogy and how it can change the dynamic of a given learning environment. Finally, Kishimoto (2018) insists on organizing anti-racist efforts on campuses to take action against racism and microaggressions.

By looking back at COIL, and, specifically, the content of the COIL certificate at the MNSU campus and comparing it with findings in Boehm and Kishimotos research, we can see that the anti-racist element is missing. None of the four primary modules of the certificate echo this anti-racist awareness. This absence could result from optimism within the paradigm of liberal multiculturalism. Nevertheless, it overlooks the perils of cultural domination instead of comprehension between two groups of students with different privileges and geographical positions.

3. COILing for the Underrepresented

Against the complications COIL instructors face to implement an anti-racist approach, COILing scattered sections of an invisible community can help in the revival and maintenance of vulnerable communities and their cultures, such as the Hmong communities who do not identify with a nation-state. At the end of the Secret War,[6] in other countries[7] One of those countries was the United States, with California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin becoming the three states with the largest Hmong populations. Even though many Hmong individuals in the United States are American-born, and a majority have been settled in the United States for forty years, they still find themselves struggling with the acculturation process (Vang, 2009).Additionally, it is a challenge to find pedagogic research specific to Hmong people and their experiences. Thus, it is vital to highlight some of the difficulties of virtual international collaborations for the Hmong community, and the potential benefits for making classrooms more culturally responsive to their needs. The model minority stereotype, used for studying the Hmong community because of their Asian roots, dismisses the challenges of Hmong Americans in education. As Moua (2018) explains

> Due to this myth, many AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander), and even more so Southeast Asians have been excluded from research about the role racial identity plays in schooling, which further refuses to acknowledge AAPI as marginalized, oppressed, and disempowered minority groups. (p. 3).

Therefore, Hmong American students feel underrepresented and not included in the curriculum. The situation does not get easier when it comes to non-American Hmong communities in other host countries.

Against precarities it may cause, COIL would be a good program to get Hmong individuals across the globe in touch with each other to exchange their experiences and research, and for other students to develop an understanding of Hmong culture. One suggestion of that could be courses in Womens, Gender, and Sexuality Studies programs. By using COIL, the very few Hmong Studies programs in the US can potentially extend the opportunity for all students to understand sex, gender, and sexuality from a Hmong perspective. For many Hmong communities, gender plays a massive role in the power structure of the community. As a Hmong author writes, parents teach cultural information and rituals to boys so they can carry on the family line. Parents groom girls in housework and childcare so that they will be good wives and daughter in laws (Moua, 2018, p.34).A COILed course in Hmong Gender Studies can address some of these inequalities directly and raise awareness in the community about them.

Other ways that Hmong learners can utilize COIL is by discussing how to approach foreign concepts and introduce them to the larger Hmong community. Two examples of such concepts are mental health and gender pronouns. In the Hmong language, there is no word for depression. Therefore, many Hmong individuals are not even aware they are experiencing depression and are unable to express how they feel. Similarly, the term domestic violence in the Hmong community is seen as a Western concept, and many in the Hmong community do not grasp what the term means. As Chang (2015) describes,

> The concept of domestic violence seemed almost nonexistent among the Hmong before they immigrated to the United States as it has usually been a part of the social structure. They do not see it as an issue that requires intervention. (p. 4)

By using COIL to connect with other Hmong individuals, the collective could explore ways to redefine terms such as depression and domestic violence in ways that Hmong individuals who may struggle with language proficiency would be able to understand.

Furthermore, first-generation Hmong American graduate students often struggle to find resources for their research surrounding the Hmong community, especially if the research focuses on what is deemed a taboo subject, such as divorced women (Zehn, 2019). By implementing COIL, one can bring a community of underrepresented Hmong graduate students and faculty together to start creating these resources and academic literature. With the lack of literature and research on Hmong history, culture, and experience, there is a need to shine a light on their stories, such as those from Hmong first-generation graduate students. Consequently, this can challenge traditional understandings of Southeast Asian American identities in education by providing multiple perspectives told from Hmong viewpoints and demonstrating more intricate and deeper understandings of the Hmong community in education.

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[6]Around 1960, in order to deter and stop the growing power of communism in Southeast Asia, the CIA sent troops into Laos. Thousands of Hmong men and boys (as young as 12) were recruited and secretly fought with the US. One of the Hmong soldiers major missions was to protect the Ho Chi Min trail and to recover American soldiers. When a peace agreement was signed in 1973, the Hmong found themselves returning to destroyed farmlands and homes, and in danger for their involvement in the war. This would lead to the Hmong seeking refuge across the world (Valley PBS Original Documentaries | The Hmong and the Secret War, 2017).

[7]Large numbers of Hmong refugees were accepted by the United States (200,000-300,000 resettled) and France (15,000 resettled). Smaller amounts of Hmong refugees went to other countries such as Germany, Canada, and Australia. In South America, small Hmong populations can be found in French Guiana and Argentinia (Luesakul, 2016).

4. COILing During the Pandemic and Beyond

Because of the virtual nature of COIL, one can point to resemblances between online teaching and collaborating between online classes internationally. Two years of the COVID-19 pandemic drastically altered the world; with its effects reaching into the classrooms, it seems appropriate to reflect on the changes in e-learning and how it could teach us about the challenges of COILing.

Some may argue the pandemic provided opportunities for expanded access to education. With lessons moving online and advancements in technology, ideally, it would seem more people can learn and be a part of higher education communities. However, this insinuates that all people have access to technology and does not consider virtual education's barriers. To succeed in a virtual educational experience, a person would need access to a device with a stable internet connection and the space to learn and authentically participate in the classroom. With the classroom now entering the personal sphere of the home, it also needs to be noted that not every student has a distraction-free space to learn. With the demanding responsibilities due to school closures, changes in care for older adults, and people simply staying inside, we saw a shift in women and girls being forced to take on more responsibilities in the home (Gross, 2020).

The idea that the virus has leveled everyone to a similar playing field is untrue because not everyone has the same means to survive the pandemic. As we have entered the third year of living with this virus, worldwide experiences vary vastly. Some countries have reached high immunization levels with vaccines, whereas others have barely begun distributing the first rounds of vaccinations (Oehler & Vega, 2021).Even more concerning is the unknown of the virus, how current vaccination efforts will hold up to the evolving strains of COVID-19, and what that will mean for already disenfranchised communities.

With the purpose of a COILed classroom to integrate students of all sectors of the world, educators must understand the larger picture of their student's environment and different lived experiences across various contexts and among students. The pandemic has caused lasting trauma. Because of all the disparities caused by the pandemic, feminist pedagogues have suggested "teaching with kindness" as a fundamentally ethical approach to education (Denial, 2021). According to Denial (2021), To be feminist and teaching in a pandemic is to recognize that our efforts toward broadly-realized social justice cannot falter, that the actions we take for and within a classroom, online or off, are inseparable from our larger world. (p. 136)

Thus, as anti-racist and transnational feminist pedagogues, we suggest extending the same level of kindness and applying similar ethics of care when COILing our classes with non-white and non-Western communities located outside Europe or North America. The history of neo-colonialism has pushed dual standards in approaching more and less privileged citizens of the world. One of the basic steps in making our COILing practices more culturally responsible is to approach other students with an equity lens to make sure their cultural values remain intact, and the format of the class does not intimidate or pressure them with power dynamics.

5.The Politics of Location and Identity

Because of the multiculturalist assumptions and lack of addressing anti-racist notions, while COIL may be useful to some communities, it can also pose dangers to others, such as those who are marginalized by their sexuality/sexual identity/romantic identity. A long tradition in American and transnational feminism highlights the importance of location in ones identity. Politics of location, as articulated by Adrienne Rich in the 1980s and picked up by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1984) and Caren Kaplan (1994), emphasizes recognizing the positionality of the women/subjects and the accountability that comes with this recognition. This acknowledgement toward others position in the world is not highlighted enough in COILing, and, therefore, it fails to address the systems of power in classrooms, society, and globally (Moore & Simon, 2015). Specifically, COILed sexuality classes/modules may sound like a helpful way to spread knowledge between classrooms, but the lack of reflection on ones positionality and consideration for systems of power in COIL materials is concerning as COILed sexuality classes/modules could lead instructors to fall for a fiesta of differences, perpetuate epistemic violence, and harm others[8] (Kaplan, 1994).

According to the American Councils for International Education (2019), most of the schools in the global partner network institution are in the Global North. This is not because instructors and students of Global South lack agency or are oppressed by their cultures, but because of global asymmetrical power systems, which are exacerbated because of COVID-19 (De Lissovoy, 2020). The absence of schools in the Global South is significant for feminist pedagogy because a place on the map is also a place in history (Rich, 1987, p. 212). As feminist pedagogues, we are concerned that this absence leads to lack of representation of non-white and non-Western cultures, and it urges us to consider the following questions: What viewpoints and histories about sexuality are we missing? How can this facilitate an environment for epistemic violence wherein classrooms in the

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[8]In Black Appetite. White Food.: Issues of Race, Voice, and Justice Within and Beyond the Classroom, Jamila Lyiscott (2019) presents an example of this fiesta, in which instructors utilize the rich cultural diversity available to them in their pedagogy, but do not consider the power dynamics at play in their approach. Consequently, these instructors feed into the dominant white educational system that harms the very students they are celebrating (Lyiscott, 2019). While mirroring the societal hunger for the racialized and cultural Other, this harmful pedagogic approach acts as a trap COILers could fall into. This dynamic is important to highlight, especially when we consider absence.

Global North are exporting Western/Euro-American concepts of sexuality? How does this absence reinforce subalternity if classrooms are reading/talking about sexuality in the Global South rather than learning with them?

In other words, exclusively COILing classroom(s) with more power runs the risk of universalizing Western/Euro-American notions of sexuality/sexual identity/romantic identity to the classroom(s) with less power because Western bodies are considered the normative body (Grewal & Kaplan, 2001, p. 666). However, not every context has the same words or concepts; some people find Western sexuality labels offensive, Western labels may not have the same meaning in every context, and some contexts do not have words for certain identities or concepts at all (e.g., gender pronouns are a foreign concept in the Hmong community; LeSavoy et al., 2015; Najmabadi, 2008).

This, on top of other concerns, can contribute to the perpetuation of American sexual politics as the only way to understand peoples sexual/romantic identities and the exclusion of people who identify otherwise. Because of the intersection of exceptionalism, racism, colonialism, and Islamophobia, countries in the Global South and Islam can be seen as barbaric, backwards, and oppressed by their cultures, while countries in the Global North (especially the US) and Christianity are seen as promoting freedom, democracy, and liberation (Çalikan et al., 2020; Grewal & Kaplan, 2001; Mohanty, 1984). If power dynamics are not addressed directly while cultural awareness is pushed, students in COILed classes may carry over these harmful essentializing discourses about culture in the Global South. Thus, they may assume certain issues are found only in these contexts and not in the Global North and perceive the consequences of asymmetrical global power systems as barbaric cultural practices (Grewal & Kaplan, 2001). Traces of this Western gaze and exceptionalism disguised as global awareness can be seen in one COIL students comment after watching a class presentation on female genital mutilation (FGM) in West Africa. The student said (Gokcora & Oenbring, 2021):

> I found this presentation extremely informative. This was informative for me because I did not know about this issue happening in Africa...I am a female myself and this is something I would not approve of to take place on my body, this is pathetic. (p. 58)

It goes without saying that FGM happens in many parts of the world, including the Global North, and this example demonstrates how there is a real danger of COIL students not unlearning this link between barbarism and the Global South and the racist notion that white men need to save Brown women from Brown men (Grewal & Kaplan, 2001).

Similar to the ways womens rights are used to measure how progressive a country is, gay rights have become a marker of this, as well, without recognizing the fact that much of the homophobia across the world is due to colonialism (Çalikan et

al., 2020). Thus, immigrant others are seen as naturally queerphobic because of culture, which Global North countries use to justify war, militarism, occupation, and violence in the name of sexual liberation (Çalikan et al., 2020). Consequently, sexually marginalized refugees must adopt Western/Euro-American sexuality labels and fit the coming out narrative to be considered worthy of protection, thereby reproducing and enforcing state-produced sexual identities that divide people into good gays that the state must protect and bad queers that are disposable (Çalikan et al., 2020, p. 52; Grewal & Kaplan, 2001, p. 670).

Since classrooms from the Global South are largely absent from COIL networks and partnerships, and instructors are not taught how to analyze their positionality and relationship to global systems of power in the COIL literature, it is very likely that COILed sexuality classes/modules will universalize these state-produced sexual identity labels and lack an understanding of various sexualities across contexts. This issue is important to highlight as an international COIL cohort member also found the Global Souths absence equally concerning. Additionally, it is likely that students in a COILed setting apply these discourses to topics of sexuality and perceive countries in the Global South as naturally queerphobic. Consequently, they may see countries like the US in the Global North to be a safe haven for those marginalized by their sexuality/sexual identity/romantic identity (Çalikan et al., 2020).). As discussed earlier, this can escalate to the justification of colonialism, imperialism, Islamophobia, racism, and exceptionalism.

This leads to our next concern: How do instructors and students sexuality/sexual identity/romantic identity impact their COIL experience?[9] Given the upsurge in anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiments in recent years and historical oppression of this community, concerns about how sexuality/sexual identity/romantic identity and gender identity may affect ones COIL experience must be considered. As one COIL cohort member said, their concern is the absence of how my sexual identity might limit/influence my COIL opportunities or be a threat to my safety depending on the location of the partner class. Similarly, another COIL cohort member said that the biggest [concern] so far is the lack of sexuality content and not knowing how that impacts students in partner classes both for other countries but also. . . how international queer and trans people would feel in a room of US students given the current climate in the US. Unfortunately, the COIL literature does not address how instructors can navigate this bias, what the resources avail-

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[9]America is far from the exception regarding LGBTQIA+ rights. In the US, nearly 670 anti-LGBTQIA+ bills have been filed since 2018, and as of March 20, almost 240 anti-LGBTQIA+ bills were filed in 2022, with over 150 of them targeting the transgender community (Lavietes Ramos, 2022, paras. 1-2, 12). This is especially concerning since several states have proposed and passed bills that would ban schools from discussing gender and sexual identity in the classrooms, like Floridas Dont Say Gay bill (Riedel, 2022, para. 6; Wenzel, 2022, para. 1).

able to them regarding this issue are, and while the literature discusses cultural awareness and intercultural competence, it does not emphasize the importance of making a queer-friendly space in a COILed class. This is especially important since classrooms are also sites of struggle and sites of contestation that should work to empower marginalized groups of people and challenge those who participate in oppression (Çalikan et al., 2020, p. 56). Additionally, Evans and colleagues (2017) found that LGBTQIA+ university students use the classroom environment to gauge the campus climate for queer community. For example, people who identify as asexual are often invisible and are more likely to be dehumanized and seen as animalistic and machine-like than other sexual minorities (Robbins et al., 2016, p. 752; Wenzel, 2022, paras. 3-4)[10]. Similarly, many who identify as aromantic also experience invisibility and marginalization in the LGBTQIA+ community, especially since sexual and romantic attraction are often conflated in the dominant US society (AUREA - Aromantic Attraction and Relationship Terms, 2021) (AUREA, 2021a). Due to the marginalization of the LGBTQIA+ community in the US and global asymmetrical systems of power, an awareness of and reflection on ones positionality is vital to resisting the dangers discussed and creating an inclusive and anti-racist learning environment.

Conclusion

Utilizing an anti-racist transnational feminist lens, we analyzed collaborative online international learning to discuss the potential harm COILing can bring to the classroom, as well as steps toward a non-Eurocentric and anti-racist feminist COIL experience. By examining the concept of multiculturalism, which is often promoted in COIL, we identified many concerns, specifically about exclusionary icebreakers, expectations about English proficiency skills, ethnocentrism, and assumptions about peoples COVID-19 experiences. In addition to identifying these dangers through observational analysis, we noted how COIL may be used to help connect parts of scattered cultures and communities in diaspora, like the Hmong community, to help revive, maintain, and create new connections between some individuals in that community.

However, it is evident a reflection on power dynamics, privilege, and oppression is necessary to avoid further marginalizing minority groups. This reflection and the implementation of its results brings instructors a step closer to feminist COILing, which can open the door to instructors understanding that unlearning harmful ideologies is just as important as learning through an anti-racist transnational feminist lens. By no means is this a complete evaluation of what COIL has to offer for various classrooms and communities and the possible dangers it poses. Further research and analysis must be done from diverse positionalities, feminist pedagogies, and experiences to add to and expand on our note. We ask others to listen, join, and continue this conversation to create more empowering and brave spaces in learning environments.

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[10]We have elaborated on this point further in discussing the importance of culturally responsive icebreakers in a COILed class.

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