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Collaborative online international learning, social innovation and global health: cosmopolitical COVID lessons as global citizenship education

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ABSTRACT

While COVID-19 has underlined many global interdependencies, it has also made clear the ways in which these globalised connections are structured by profound inequalities. Teaching in this context has been deeply challenging for many educators around the world. For related reasons, though, the pandemic has also created new provocations for global citizenship education (GCE) attuned specifically to the problems of health vulnerability and sub-citizenship caused by socio-economic inequalities. Describing one such educational opportunity, we examine the lessons learned from connecting two university courses across continents through a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) collaboration in the middle of the pandemic. Our courses brought together students from India and the US online to study how health vulnerabilities under COVID compared in the two countries. The collaborations of our Indian and American students helped them to develop practical skills in communication across a vast distance, while also offering cosmopolitical opportunities for learning 'other-wise'. Based on their reflections on their learning in the course, we suggest that the COIL approach provided a useful set of lessons about how global citizenship education can be enhanced through transnational and collaborative, but also critical and comparative attention to sub-citizenship in the world at large.



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COVID-19 has dramatically underlined the global interdependencies of the twenty-first century, but, just like preceding pandemics such as AIDS and Ebola, it has also made painfully clear the ways in which our globalised connections are structured by profound inequalities, insecurities and injustices (Marya and Patel 2021; Farmer 2021; Newman 2022; Sparke and Williams 2022). Teaching in this context has been deeply challenging for many educators globally, and teaching both for and about global citizenship has been made especially difficult because of widespread exclusions from the classrooms in which citizenship in all its diverse varieties is variously examined and enabled (UNESCO 2021). For related reasons, though, we want to suggest with this article that the pandemic has also created new provocations for global citizenship education (GCE), including education attuned specifically to the problems of social exclusion, disenfranchisement and sub-

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citizenship revealed by the spread of COVID. Such problems include not just exclusions from direct health protections such as vaccines, anti-virals and oxygen tanks, but also the much wider undermining of health rights and services caused by the socio-structural faultlines that have made so many people worldwide so vulnerable to the disease. For all those concerned with teaching about such faultlines, including both the forms of sub-citizenship they cause, and the forms of structural and development competencies, global solidarities, and human rights praxis that can serve as correctives, the pandemic was nevertheless a provocation to pedagogic, institutional and social innovation (Abimbola et al. 2021; Mitchell-Sparke, Mitchell, and Sparke 2022; Yamin and Farmer 2020). Here we describe an example of such innovation that we developed in response through taking a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) approach to linking our Indian and American courses.

Drawing on lessons about the value of COIL collaborations already discussed in this journal, we were interested in how linking our Indian and American courses online in the context of the pandemic could support 'ethical forms of solidarity and internationalisation that enable different ways to relate to the planet and to society' (Guimarães and Finardi 2021, 643). We were especially concerned to use the COIL approach to advance forms of GCE that would help our students come to terms with the huge global health inequalities, insecurities and injustices that were at once exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic. COVID's social co-pathogenesis, we explained to them, could thereby be turned into lessons about social structures shaped by neoliberalism, systemic racism and enduring forms of coloniality. By inviting our students to compare and contrast how such social structures codetermined pandemic vulnerabilities in both divergent and convergent ways in India and America, our hope was that our COIL collaboration would contribute to the kinds of post-national, post-colonial and decolonial approaches to diversifying GCE that others have long recommended in this journal (Andreotti 2011a, 2011b; Blanco 2021; Dyrness 2021; Jefferess 2021; Pashby et al. 2021). We were already attuned in these ways to the problems with the neoliberal, elitist and color-blind conception of supposedly 'borderless' global education that previously attended the advance of Massive Open Online Courses in the pre-COVID era (Sparke 2017). In contrast to such giddy globalism and its depoliticised cosmopolitanism, we were much more focused on the opportunities in our COIL for what Zulfa Sakhyya has elaborated in her recent *Globalisation, Societies and Education* article as a more politically-searching kind of 'cosmopolitical' approach: an approach aimed in our case at illuminating and enabling solidarity across the unequal lifeworlds made vulnerable to COVID by neoliberalism, geopolitics, racism and associated inequalities (Sakhyya 2022).

Our approach was also informed by other critical literatures from Global Health research and Human Centered Design (HCD) that we see as usefully aligned with the impetus to internationalise GCE with close attention to the needs, knowledges and socio-structural contexts of marginalised groups and communities. To adapt an important concept-metaphor from the world of global health work, we did not therefore see the COIL landscape as a 'Flat World' for borderless and context-free global education, but rather as an online space in which we could educate our students about the 'Mountains Beyond Mountains' of struggle for health justice in a world of structural violence (compare Farmer 2004 and Kidder 2009 with Freidman 2013). We worked in this way to draw on insights from Paul Farmer and other advocates of global health justice who have been calling for the decolonisation of global health based on a radical revalorisation of global south and subaltern perspectives (Abimbola et al. 2021; Aloudat 2022; Farmer 2021; Marya and Patel 2021; Mukherjee 2017; Richardson 2020a, 2020b). For us this includes an awareness of how such global south perspectives can emerge everywhere including the South of the North, but also always somewhere, socially-situated and, as such, capable of inspiring social transformation (Santos 2016; Sparke 2007; Santos and Banerjee 2019). Relatedly, we further found inspiration for our collaborative classroom activities and assignments in ideas from HCD about social innovation: ideas that, just like decolonial global health justice work, foreground the intersectional experiences and concerns of the most vulnerable themselves (e.g., Banerjee, Lucas dos Santos, and Hulgård 2021; Mishra and

Sandhu 2021; Nijagal et al. 2021). All of these inspirations, including the readings we gave to students about the diverse challenges facing community health workers in the pandemic, came together in our COIL as a way of approaching citizenship *and* sub-citizenship education ‘otherwise’ (Andreotti 2021).

We do not want to suggest that the COIL approach is the only way to advance online international education or even that our experiences adequately describe the vast variety of COIL possibilities. Nevertheless, we do want to argue in what follows that there were many lessons about GCE that emerged from our COIL collaboration. Our presentation of these lessons proceeds here in three stages. First, in Section 1 we further contextualise our pedagogical approach, outlining the wider disruptions to teaching in which it was organised, detailing the practical challenges facing our own students as we brought them together online, and mapping – both literally and figuratively – the ways in which we sought to use a set of online teaching tools to overcome these challenges. Next, in Section 2 of the article we describe the ways in which our adoption of social innovation and development ideas from HCD helped our students to articulate intercultural commonalities and solidarities at the same time as developing an intersectional awareness of the many inequalities structuring vulnerability to COVID. Then, in Section 3 of the article, we outline how our students’ work on the inequalities of being human in the pandemic further enabled them to reckon with how the skills and practices of global citizenship must necessarily include attention to experiences of biological sub-citizenship, including awareness of the associated exclusions from the health rights globally idealised as integral to human rights. We conclude by describing some of the lessons learned from our COIL course about how GCE can foster critical cosmopolitical competencies tied to ‘ethical forms of solidarity and internationalisation’ of the sort advocated by Guimarães and Finardi.¹

Section 1: Contextualising the COIL as a pedagogic ‘portal’ amid COVID

In the spirit of opening doors to social innovation, we started our seminar seeking to inspire our students by sharing Arundhati Roy’s remarkable metaphorization of the pandemic as a ‘portal’. First published in the *Financial Times* and also recorded by Roy as a video which we showed as a discussion prompt for our students, the portal metaphor was already being used by many other educators in both India and America to suggest that the COVID crisis, as over-determined by neoliberalism, structural inequalities and geopolitical upheaval as it was, might still open opportunities for post-neoliberal, anti-oppressive and pro-sustainability alternatives (Roy 2020a, 2020b; see also Peters et al. 2022). Our underlying approach to GCE was informed by these very same aspirations. Nevertheless, we also wanted from the outset of our teaching to recognise the real hardships being faced by our students, including the digital divide and politically co-pathogenic contexts of COVID that in both India and America included the intermixing of neoliberalism with notably illiberal turns to racism, caste-ism and the blaming of ethnic minorities for spreading disease (Jeffrey and Dyson 2022; Sparke and Vitale 2022; Sparke and Williams 2023). For all these reasons, we do not want to downplay the terrible challenges for student learning, especially cosmopolitical student learning, in the pandemic.

Considered in terms of its overall impacts, COVID has been a disaster for education globally. UNESCO estimates that by April 2020, over 1.5 billion students across all education levels were affected worldwide, with 93% of countries closing their schools and colleges either fully or partially (UNESCO 2021). Almost all institutions of higher education reported to UNESCO that they had been negatively impacted by COVID (Marinoni, Van’t Land, and Jensen 2020). And beyond schools and universities, other educational infrastructures and activities tied to everything from the intimate contexts of personal dwelling and viability to the institutions of social cohesion and stability were upturned by the pandemic (Blanco 2021; Jeffrey and Dyson 2022; Lewis and Morgan 2021; Laketa and Fregonese 2022). In this grim context educators turned to whatever tools were closest to hand to jerry-rig lock-down-compliant teaching efforts. Distance education tools in particular

were widely adopted, despite a research literature suggesting student disengagement due to technological access inequalities and the rush into online teaching by an ill-prepared educational workforce (Bond et al. 2021; Cutri, Mena, and Whiting 2020; Pokhrel and Chhetri 2021). Cautious critics such as Hans De Wit and Philip Altbach argued that ‘just as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), a decade or so ago, did not produce the educational revolution that many predicted, today’s massive and hurried shift to distance education will not do so either’ (de Wit and Altbach 2022). Nevertheless, many other experts on higher education continued to follow Roy’s ‘portal’ portrayal to suggest that we might somehow still move through the COVID crises toward seizing new pedagogical opportunities, especially in higher education internationalisation work (Kumar et al. 2022; Peters et al. 2022). With a mix of the pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will, this is exactly what inspired us to go forward with our own COIL collaboration as a kind of pedagogic portal for GCE.

Our separate courses were composed respectively of 24 American BA students enrolled at a higher education institution in the Bay Area of California and 16 Indian MA students enrolled at a higher education institution in Mumbai. Of these 40 students, 26 identified as women and 14 identified as men. Due to the pandemic, our students were mainly joining us from their homes, many of them scattered far from the Bay Area and Mumbai (including one American student who moved to live with family in Egypt, another who had to return from California to visit ailing relatives in India in the middle of the course, and many Indian students who joined us from remote rural areas in India). Isolated from their traditional campus contexts and wifi connections, most of our students were also subject to the same mix of domestic and technological challenges that bedevilled distance education during the pandemic more widely. Cramped household conditions, family tensions, siblings competing for both physical space and internet bandwidth, unreliable internet access, poor computing resources, background noise, lack of privacy, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and forced mobility were all problems that were reported to us. In addition, many of our students shared experiences of anxiety, stress or depression, including a widespread sense of exhaustion from having had too much distance education already. Some further faced family losses, funerals and bereavement issues, and some also contracted COVID itself, losing time from our COIL sessions, and, in some cases, suffering experiences of brain fog and other long COVID symptoms that disrupted their learning.



Figure 1. Google my map (anonymized) showing locations of COIL participants.

At the beginning of the course we invited all of our students to put themselves on a single *Google My Map* of the world with place markers that they could use to share details with the rest of their classmates about the locations from which they were joining our collaborative online classroom (see [Figure 1](#) below). This use of the *Google My Map* cartographic interface was a useful way for us to enframe the international space of our COIL conversations, breaking the traditional frames of the urban and national spaces of citizenship education while also zooming from the global back down to the local. For the same reasons, it also offered a good opportunity for our Indian and American students to introduce themselves to one another in a way that allowed for personalisation and geo-visualisation at the same time. But while the map enabled a form of international integration across the international distance separating our students, it could do nothing to transcend the time-zone difference between Mumbai and California. This 12.5 h difference made for many logistical challenges in collaboration. It demanded a set of compromises to find class times to meet at the far ends of the regular work day. The California course meetings therefore had to begin at 8:00 am Pacific Standard Time in order to overlap with the Mumbai course meetings that were scheduled late into the evening, starting at 8:30 pm Indian Standard Time. Despite these compromises, however, the online synchronous zoom sessions proved to be enormously popular with both the American and Indian students. This was especially so when we as instructors stepped aside, and invited the students to interact together in smaller but still transnational breakout rooms before collecting questions, ideas and research plans on Google Jam-Boards, Google Docs and Google Sheets.

The Google suite of online collaboration tools together provided an important platform for our COIL collaborations and the associated need for asynchronous coordination. We also used FlipGrid to allow students to exchange videos with each other, and YouTube to upload and share their final video projects. Unfortunately, we could not use Canvas (the online learning management system available on the American side) or Moodle (the online learning management system available on the Indian side) to facilitate discussion and peer review in the COIL because neither was available for both groups of students. But the mix of Zoom sessions, Google tools and FlipGrid nevertheless provided a robust set of platforms for supporting online collaboration. In addition, we pre-recorded five interviews with Right Livelihood Award Laureates who are world renowned experts on social justice organising in relation to the social determinants of health and development, which we made available to our students to watch online on their own outside of class time.² To these we further added pre-recorded video lectures of our own and shared instructional movies (such as *Bending the Arc* about the work of Partners in Health) that students could watch outside of our synchronous sessions in order to maximise the use of face-to-face online time for student exchange and collaboration. Even then, one of our frustrations towards the end of the synchronous sessions was that we had used too much of the time lecturing or sharing ideas as instructors, and not enough enabling the students themselves to learn from each other in breakout sessions. Nevertheless, after we helped organise them into a set of small research groups based on their own preferred research foci, we asked them to meet together on Zoom, Facetime or WhatsApp outside of our main class sessions. Each group was composed of between 3 and 5 students, and each also importantly included a mix of American and Indian students. For these groups the time-zone difference also made it challenging for meeting, especially at the start, but with a flexible mix of email and other social media connections, and with a strict set of scaffolded assignment deadlines driving their collaborations, they all managed to communicate well and create a division of labour for working together on the main course assignment.

The main assignment for the core COIL collaboration was to co-research and co-design innovative responses to the health and livelihood challenges of particular types of vulnerable community in the context of COVID. We provided a list of possible project foci ideas, most of them focused on the comparative examination of community health work in India and the US relating to vulnerable communities of women, camp dwellers, and precarious migrants. But we also encouraged students to think of further foci of their own based on the pre-requisite need to compare and contrast the associated vulnerabilities in both Indian and American contexts. No matter what focus each

group elected to study, we insisted that they had to present their resulting research findings and response recommendations in the form of a short online video. Many of the students initially viewed this assignment as extremely daunting if not entirely overwhelming. But the results – both in the form of 11 online videos produced in short order by students on different sides of the planet, and in their meta-reflections about their learning about the video development process – represented to us a remarkable testament to the potential of COIL-based GCE. Let us now explain why by first turning to the lessons in transnational literacies and communication capacities that we saw as being developed in the students through their collaborative learning together about global vulnerabilities, ethical solidarities, and social intersectionalities.

Section 2: Cosmopolitical solidarities and design work in/on intersectionality

Some of the important skills-based learning we saw coming out of the COIL related to forms of global consciousness, cross-cultural communication, empathy, and solidarity that are widely viewed as crucial to GCE (Pashby et al. 2021). As Karen Pashby and her colleagues underline, though, these sorts of transnational literacies and communication capacities are best fostered when also accompanied by a critical awareness of the power relations of global domination and local vulnerability. Following Vanessa Andreotti, they suggest that this kind of awareness adds the ‘depth education’ needed to develop GCE ‘otherwise’ (Pashby et al. 2021, 377). In our COIL course we sought deliberately to foster such cosmopolitical awareness drawing on lessons from HCD about both examining intersectionality and designing social change with critical self-reflexivity.

HCD is a flexible, yet disciplined and iterative approach to innovation that seeks to turn people who are traditionally treated as the *objects* of development and health planning into *subjects* instead. It provides a set of prompts for prioritising ordinary people’s aspirations and experiences when imagining and implementing complex systems and services (Banerjee, Carney, and Hulgård 2019; Isaac and Dianna 2020). And it does so with an explicit openness to the intersectionality of power relations, and the associated experience of suffering and oppression at the intersection of overlapping forcefields of class, caste, racism, gender, sexuality, able-ism and so on (Chambers 2008). The HCD approach we adopted in our COIL course therefore sought to centre people, local communities and their concerns with inequality and marginality with intersectional care.

The HCD collaborative assignment was divided into three key phases, (a) inspiration, (b) ideation and (c) proof of concept for prototyping and implementation. One of the key objectives was to understand the intersectional subjectivities of diverse marginal groups and local communities across the global South and North (including the South within the North and interior South within the South) from a people-centred perspective. The different phases in HCD also provided the students a structured platform for ideating creative solutions for pursuing social justice.

- a) In the inspiration phase, our Indian and American students worked together in small groups on a particular thematic area to draw ideas from thematic literatures in a way that also allowed them to come to terms with the contrasting but also sometimes similar contextual COVID challenges in India and America. This phase provided the students a space to reflect as well about their own positionalities. An Indian student reflected thus that: *‘Global collaboration inspires me to examine myself, my communities, and my culture. It aids in the development of cultural understanding, communication skills, and knowledge and awareness of the world at large.’* Another reflected that: *‘HCD concepts helped [us] to analyze the problems with different perspectives and intersectionality based on region, culture, environment, countries’ policies, government structure etc.’* Through this focus on difference and divergent difficulties, though, many students also came to appreciate common opportunities. A US student mentioned in this way that: *‘This COIL class demonstrated to me the importance of taking advantage of the opportunities that we have to interact with people all around the world and learn about the difficulties they face as well as all of the wonderful things in their lives.’* At the same time,

comparative awareness of the obstacles to simple solutions grew. An Indian student concluded thus that: *'Comparative analysis of these topics in India and USA, introduced us to different scenarios in e.g., farming. One thing is for sure, farming in the USA is way ... different from farming in India. Caste, class, land ownership, or being a landless agricultural labourer play a vital role in th[e] vicious cycle of poverty of farmers in India.'*

- b) In the ideation phase students identified goals and brainstormed ideas for action together based on their shared awareness of the challenges. Beyond their ideas for action, the process itself was also skill-building. An Indian student reflected: *'COIL classes helped us to develop our communication skills, and cultural understanding and also build our knowledge and awareness about the wider world.'* Similarly, a US student mentioned: *'The COIL experiment helped me see beyond the lens of 'the other' and to operate from a more inclusive headspace. It challenged me to celebrate our similarities while acknowledging our differences as a society'*. Another Indian student mentioned: *'We are divided by different boundaries of different nations but courses like COIL give us insights that the crisis and challenges we face are globally somehow similar to each other. Also passionate people who are working towards building world solidarity, a global community, a common better goal through their different networks; can light a spark in the remotest part of the globe.'* This phase thus also led to expressions of global consciousness about the need for global solidarity. *'As a global citizen,'* an American student identified in this way what she called a *'duty to foster transformative social justice, community education and mass movements to move the arc of humanity towards justice and move towards community and local based solutions to tackle health disparities. Moving forward in my own life and studies I plan on using everything I've learned in this course.'*
- c) In the proof of concept phase the students worked on their video projects to describe opportunities to address the health and development vulnerabilities that we had introduced as being at once exposed and exacerbated by COVID. These short (7–15 min) videos shared on YouTube³ created a space for centering perspectives of multiple local communities across US and India. Creating them together strengthened the bonds between our students across their diverse time–space differences. An Indian student testified that: *'The whole process of team work on this project was a very fulfilling journey for me. I believe that as an international exchange there was more than just academic exchange. Because we have a team I have forged a bond of friendship as well and an exchange of cultures and various thought processes has also happened during this project.'* Another Indian student concluded that: *'COIL was a very new and different experience for me. The discussions in different groups, professors and laureates helped me widen my horizon of understanding Friday night sessions, connecting with each other across the world, were a beautiful experience.'* In addition to their proof-of-concept videos themselves, therefore, the student's reflections were another kind of proof-of-concept about the GCE benefits of COIL connections, including even for students who already had Indian-American family ties and travel experiences. A US student mentioned: *'For me personally, it was the sense of acquiring knowledge of different international issues in a local setting that fostered in me cultural empathy. Additionally, as I am Indian- American, this helped me navigate understanding my own cultural influence on my morals, ethics, and opinions on political thought.'* For others it was instead a totally new but no less formative opportunity for cross-cultural learning. An Indian student put this directly: *'As this was the first international class I was doing with people from USA, it helped me understand the people's perspectives and approaches'*.

Overall, their COIL connections led to experiences of personal growth for our students due to having to overcome the challenges of international communication. *'Sometimes, it was hard to catch the accent of our international peers,'* said an Indian student before adding with self-awareness.

They faced a similar issue understanding our Indian accent. But then, in just a few meetings, it was gone. We managed to understand each other's accents and perspectives. I was able to gain global perspectives and

knowledge of theories, ways of practice, and use of technology that I shall be using in my future endeavors working in the field as a social worker.

A US student saw this same skill development as giving her a new ability to express herself and communicate transnationally. *‘One new global response ability that this class was able to teach me was the value in my voice.’* And another US student echoed: *‘This ... transformative experience ... gave me personal insight and, more importantly, international friends and made me realize my spiritual connection as a global citizen.’* Such reflections, we think, indexed the deep interconnectedness of cosmopolitical engagement made possible through the COIL approach – the spiritual reference perhaps even pointing to a kind of insurgent cosmopolitics imagined outside of universalistic arguments about global citizenship (on religious ruptures with even insurgent appeals to universality see Seth 2022).

Section 3: GCE lessons about global health sub-citizenship in the pandemic

While a reference to ‘spiritual connection’ might also sound glib or aethereal and insensitive to real-world power relations, many of our students who reported personal growth in the COIL nevertheless further connected it to learning about power asymmetries. To be specific, they linked it with learning about their own privilege *vis-a-vis* others in both India and America who they came to realise through their research were being made extra-vulnerable to COVID because of oppressive social structures. The transnational reach of their collaborative research into such structures worked in this context to make the power relations of domination and sub-citizenship more obvious to many students at the same time as highlighting their own relative enfranchisement as global subjects with health citizenship rights. An Indian student reflected that:

To understand the depth of the crisis that other people are facing on a very different side of the world somehow made me feel connected to them more. I can now see structures that are oppressive and dominating through the different corners of this world.

Likewise an American student wrote that:

I learned many things from this course that have changed my perspective on my place within global issues. I got a job working in the Department of Public Health in Los Angeles county because although I may not be able to change the world by myself, I can become more involved in the healthcare of my community and ensure that I am actively doing something to change the health of those who are marginalized.

This same American student also used the critical vocabulary about neoliberalism that we had introduced in our teaching to come to terms with a major driver of healthcare marginalization. The course, she said, *‘taught me the possibilities of global organizing at a time where neoliberalism makes it increasingly difficult for certain groups to access healthcare as well as other necessities because so many value profit over people.’*

Three other major axes of social power and sub-citizenship that many students came to comparative global terms with through their international collaborations were patriarchy, ethnic marginalisation and housing insecurity. While intersecting with neoliberalism in causing embodied experiences of vulnerability in the pandemic, and while also therefore driving disenfranchisement from health rights, students nevertheless noted through their comparisons some important contrasts in how exactly they came to cause sub-citizenship in the two different country contexts.

In terms of patriarchy, the students who focused on women’s health in the pandemic highlighted how they chiefly saw commonalities. An Indian student wrote thus that

After the group meetings, we decided to focus on patriarchy in healthcare both in India and the US. And our final themes were the gender pay gap and the labour of love [in ...] the lives of women health workers.

Both the low pay for women health care workers and the extra exploitation of their care work in the pandemic were widely highlighted as patterns seen in both the US and India. One student summed

this up with the simple global conclusion that, in short: *‘Gender discrimination is prevalent everywhere.’*

In terms of ethnic marginalization, the students saw significant Indian-American contrasts as well as surprising similarities in the exclusionary treatment of deprived castes in India and undocumented migrants in America. An American student put this more complex picture of contrasting differences and intersecting experiences of vulnerability as follows:

Our project was comparing immigrant populations and those in the caste system in regards to healthcare. We were able to identify that although these populations are different, they still have commonalities. Both populations are marginalized communities that are treated unequally in their respective countries.

An Indian student noted in turn that the *‘the cultural differences quite visible as casteism were not there for the United States, but a similar variant of racism was present there.’* This student also went on to highlight how the transnational comparisons served to surface significant policy differences in healthcare provision also impacting access in the two countries, including the ways private health insurance and the privatized American healthcare system excluded undocumented migrants in ways that ended-up paralleling marginalization based on caste in the public parts of the Indian system.

Policy differences between America and India were also noted by students in their collaborative and comparative study of unhoused communities in the two countries. However, what was most striking in their findings and reflections was a shared sense of dismay at the huge scale of the associated health and development vulnerabilities. This dismay led in turn to more reflections by the students on their own relative privilege, but also to repeated statements of empathy and solidarity that were transnational in scope. An Indian student put his conclusions this way:

Lastly and most importantly, comprehending the challenges that homeless people experience living their lives without a shelter helped me to introspect my own privilege and how sometimes we take this privilege for granted. The values we share as a society should be more accommodating of all people, only then can we take pride in our heritage as human beings.

An American student echoed this, but, in further testament to learning ‘otherwise’ in the COIL context, he went on to articulate the same conclusions as an explicit rejection of the neoliberal model of human being that focuses on being an entrepreneur of the self rather than on the accommodation of others.

To say my fellow American group member and I were floored when our Indian partner brought in a real field interview of an Indian family experiencing homelessness wouldn’t be doing our true reactions justice; both of us will forever remain grateful for the literal legwork and empathy our colleague [Sanjay] showed in his interviewing and capturing of that family’s predicament. If the COIL experience has taught me anything; it’s that allowing the afflicted to express themselves should forever take precedence over whatever Anglo-American, capitalist ‘global entrepreneur’ type ideation we may have to offer, there’s no better way to address a community’s needs than by listening to the community.

Overall our students repeatedly testified to how conducting a COIL collaboration in the middle of a pandemic helped them learn about the intersectional complexities and contextualities of sub-citizenship while *unlearning* the neoliberal simplicities and decontextualised discourse of ‘Flat World’ entrepreneurial citizenship (cf. Shiva 2006). *‘This collaborative class helped me to learn about the contexts of both countries as well as compare and understand the intersectional differences that exist in both,’* explained an Indian student. An American student further underlined how this actually led, despite expectations, to more awareness of similarities too, including many that were not expected when the COIL began.

The similarities in health problems between the United States and India were a lot more similar than I thought they would be before beginning the work on the project. ... For the project I worked on with my group members, we focused on the healthcare access of undocumented immigrants in the United States and internal migrants in India. While the migrations were very different in both countries, they had many similarities in regards to the difficulties that migrants faced.

Such similarities in health vulnerability observed by our students across vast Indian-American differences underlined in turn the way in which their COIL experiences gave them new insights into the flip side of the so-called ‘biological citizenship’ once heralded as a liberating bioethical assemblage of personalised medicine tied to advanced liberal globalisation (Rose and Novas 2008). In contrast to the post-national promise of such biomedical enfranchisement delivering personal health for all irrespective of address, and in the context of a pandemic that was killing millions worldwide as a result of social inequalities and vulnerabilities tied directly to their addresses, it was instead biological *subcitizenship* that came into view for our students as they collaborated online internationally. So instead of the new global freedoms from national biopolitical control that Rose and Novas associated with ‘advanced liberalism’, our students reported in detail on pandemic vulnerabilities induced by advanced *neoliberalism*. In the concluding section that follows, we seek to sum-up how these sorts of conceptual capsizal represent a kind of critically cosmopolitical educational opportunity that we see in COIL-based approaches to GCE more generally.

Conclusion: COIL contributions to critically cosmopolitical GCE

Truly listening to the Indian students for what they had to say, not for a response, rather understanding the reasoning for their perspectives helped a lot when coming up with solutions for COVID-19 responsibility. US student

At least three kinds of critically cosmopolitical educational opportunity became clear through the course of our COIL collaboration, each illustrating how learning ‘otherwise’ through online international collaboration can help with unlearning elitist cosmopolitan callings - such as the place-less neoliberal appeal of entrepreneurialism – and advance their replacement by more place-connected and responsible concerns *for* others and *with* others who are traditionally excluded from the ranks of the globalised business class cosmo-corps. We are harkening back here to the disruptive aspects of the ‘cosmopolitical’ articulated at the turn of the new millennium by cultural and social theorists interested in ‘thinking and feeling beyond the nation’ (Cheah and Robbins 1998). But, following critical scholars of cosmopolitan education, we are interested in the more intricate, intimate, and intellectually instructive aspects of such cosmopolitical competency in places of learning that can also be places of witnessing, remembering, caring and even mourning together across borders (Mitchell 2007; Rizvi 2009; Rizvi, Lingard, and Rinne 2022; Sakhiyya 2022). Specifically we are interested in the kinds of cosmopolitical competency that we saw as learning outcomes in a COIL context that was itself overdetermined by a COVID context of acute but extremely unequal global suffering, death and bereavement. What was intellectually instructive in this doubly displaced classroom conjuncture, we think, was so in large part because it was unruly and interruptive in relation to the increasingly common taming tendencies of neoliberal civics (Baildon and Alviar-Martin 2020). By being disruptive of globalist platitudes and cosmopolitan business as usual, it instead opened opportunities for students to be cosmopolitically creative.

First, based on listening to and learning from one another in the manner described by the American COIL participant quoted above, many of our students reported increased solidarity and empathy with distant others who were suffering in the context of the global pandemic. While we were daily witnessing cruel indifference to vulnerable communities in both America and India, the COIL connections opened intimate and emotionally meaningful opportunities for our students to explore and express care across borders. Second, thanks to approaching pandemic vulnerabilities with a focus on their embodied variations and experiential inequalities on the ground in two very different countries, the students nevertheless also came to see many commonalities in vulnerability as well, not least of all of poor and unhoused communities, women health workers and migrants in *both* India and the US. Awareness of difference seemed in this sense to lead still further away from indifference towards an appreciation of social structures, including patriarchy, systemic racism, caste-ism, that were coming together with COVID to lead to especially extreme and deadly forms of social abandonment in both countries. Third, as an additional emergent effect of such

awareness we saw a related cosmopolitical competency in the ability of our students to rethink what global citizenship actually might mean when reimagined ‘otherwise’ and freed from the abstract normative codes of neoliberal globalism. For many this was truly transformative, making meaningful ties between GCE in the COIL and ideas about resistance and the human centred redesign of social relations rather than just resilience in the globalised job market. Instead of accountability to the global ideals of neoliberal entrepreneurialism, then, most reported a new accountability to the needs and knowledges of others, or what some came to refer to in their course evaluations, as a new sense of ‘response-ability’ to others based on new awareness of both global connections and contrasts at the same time.

At the end of the COIL collaboration we explicitly invited the students to reflect on their experience of GCE in the COIL by giving them the article by Guimarães and Finardi (2021) as a prompt. One American student subsequently summed up his own learning in response as follows. ‘*Their definition*,’ he said, quoting Guimarães and Finardi,

combines [into] GCE a transformative social justice oriented educational curriculum that addresses the political, social, economic, and cultural inequalities caused by colonisation and neoliberalism on the global and local levels. Reflecting on what it means to be a ‘global citizen’ in the context of [this] definition of GCE, I can say that the COIL experience was a profound success.

Meanwhile, another Indian student reflected that: ‘*the COIL classes were indeed a blessing in disguise. We, the students, were already burned out due to the one and half years of online learning and wanted something innovative.*’

This last comment underlines that another transformative innovation made possible by the COIL collaboration was in pedagogy itself and not just GCE. It turned what was an extraordinarily challenging environment for educators into an opportunity for teaching experimentation that in turn offered our students an alternative to the low quality remote instruction too many endured with instructors who suddenly had to teach remotely with little preparation in the basic tools and best practices of online education. By contrast, the COIL approach provided a way of transforming the pandemic teaching problems into an innovation that really advanced critical thinking by students, thereby also helping to avoid the pitfalls of passive rote-learning and student alienation that too many of the perma-skeptics of online teaching ironically reproduced in the pandemic because of their own refusal to learn about the transformative possibilities of online teaching. For these reasons, we want to suggest in closing that a COIL approach to GCE offers at least one illustrative answer to the dilemmas posed by the EPAT collective as COVID forced campus closures around the world. ‘[W]hat kind of sociality is possible when students and their faculty only meet in the digital space?’ they asked; or, as Susan Robertson put it in her contribution: ‘What can we do better when using digital technologies ... ? ... And how can we hold on to the social, so that it finds expression not in the idea of distancing, but in creative ways of being together?’ (Peters et al. 2022, 718 and 726).

We do not want to claim that COIL contributions to GCE are the only practical ways of answering these questions; nor that they are they are pedagogically analogous to online cooking instructions that somehow make up for how ‘there are [*still*] few recipes for fostering cosmopolitanism’ (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, 21, our addition). But, as we have tried to show here, COIL responses to such teaching challenges do nevertheless illustrate opportunities for fostering student response abilities ‘otherwise’ by cultivating heterogeneous kinds of collaborative and cosmopolitical awareness rather than individualised neoliberal responsibility (on the post-neoliberal upshot of spelling-out responsibilities as ‘response abilities’ see Sparke 2013, chapter 10; and Grobelski, Versluis, and McClelland 2023). We have seen thus how the collaborative online international work helps cultivate critical cosmopolitical capacities for global citizenship that are truly transformative. And so, with Michael Peters and Fazal Rizvi, we also therefore want to conclude here by concurring that COVID-era online education portals could indeed open into ‘new models of sociality and social

relations based on collective responsibility and action, *and* as Peters and Rizvi added as a cosmopolitical coda themselves, ‘the ethics of the other’ (Peters et al. 2022, 759).

Notes

1. All our quotations from student reflections on the course are fully anonymized. As human subjects in educational settings evaluating their own experiences of teaching in a way that would have happened normally irrespective of any research, they qualify for exemption from ethics committee approval and a waiver from informed consent rules.
2. Our universities are campuses of the Right Livelihood College, a global research and education network linking students and faculty with winners of the prestigious Right Livelihood Award, known as the ‘Alternative Nobel Prize’. We were able as a result to add another layer of cosmopolitical commentary and critique to our COIL by interviewing Right Livelihood Laureates in Italy, Nigeria, the Philippines, Canada and Nepal to help students make sense of how COVID health vulnerabilities were shaped by context. These video interview recordings are now available along with a copy of our full syllabi and a systematic description of the main assignments we used on the website of the Right Livelihood College at UC Santa Cruz at <https://rightlivelihood.ucsc.edu/undergrad/> under the tab for the course *Politics 189B: Global & Community Health Policy in Practice*.
3. https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLKOxIgLZgUir0kFsKo3ARlrYN_RT_OUdt

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