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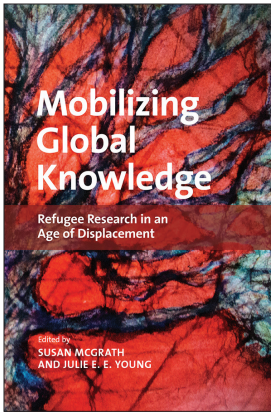
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MOBILIZING GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE: REFUGEE RESEARCH IN AN AGE OF DISPLACEMENT

Edited by Susan McGrath and Julie E. E. Young

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Transitions from Knowledge Networked to Knowledge Engaged: Ethical Tensions and Dilemmas from the Global to the Local

Wenona Giles and Don Dippo

Introduction: From Knowledge Networked to Knowledge Engaged

In this chapter, we are interested in the impacts of a global north-south education partnership on faculty in Canada and Kenya who currently engage in the delivery of university programs to students living in and around the Dadaab refugee camps in northeastern Kenya. The Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) Partnership emerged out of the Refugee Research Network (RRN) as a project of engaged scholarship (Boyer 1990, 1996) with the goal of applying knowledge gained about displacement into knowledge transformation of both students and teachers (Hynie et al. 2014, 2). Research that led to, fostered, and accompanied the emergence of the BHER Partnership and project originated from academic relationships within the international Refugee Research Network (RRN). Its “philosophy of open source and open access . . . designed to encourage online collaboration, networking, and information sharing among researchers,

policymakers, and practitioners” (Hynie et al. 2014, 4) inspired the creation of BHER in significant ways.

The partnerships involved in the development of the BHER project range from traditional macro transnational institutional and organizational relationships, such as the RRN and the BHER Canadian-Kenyan universities and NGO partnerships, to partnerships at the most interpersonal level between teachers and students. Much of what we experienced and learned about the ethics of partnerships through our involvement in the RRN runs like threads into our virtual and on-site classrooms; and much is also challenged and contested. This chapter is about our efforts to build ethical student-professor relationships with people living in Dadaab, in northeastern Kenya, in one of the largest and most insecure refugee camps in the world, while also continuously experiencing what we define with Mezirow (1995, 50) as ongoing “disorienting dilemmas.”

There is a sizeable and significant literature on partnerships (e.g., Baud 2002; Chernikova 2011; Hynie et al. 2014; Jazeel and McFarlane 2007; Ogden and Porter 2000). Clark-Kazak and Landau in this volume both refer to the challenges of developing ethical partnerships or networks between global north and south participants. An important strand that links the RRN to the BHER Dadaab classroom is a claim made by members of the RRN, building on Chernikova’s analysis, that “a successful partnership can support and meet different goals for the partners but that success is contingent on the partnership valuing this diversity of goals” (Hynie et al. 2014, 6; Chernikova 2011). Along these lines, respect by both teachers and students in the BHER project for each other’s socio-cultural and educative experiences has been paramount to the success of BHER. As Hynie et al. also point out, respect for diversity “is challenged by the context in which community-university partnerships occur” (2014, 6; Baud 2002; Chernikova 2011).

The BHER professor-student relations are impacted by a number of contexts, all of which combine at any moment to create unexpected, puzzling, and confounding dilemmas. We explore life in the Dadaab camps and town in some detail below, and we briefly define the Kenyan-Canadian BHER partnership. However, while we recognize the centrality of obligations to funders in global north-south relations (Baud 2002, 157; Sork 2016; Jentsch 2004) and the importance of the complex uses of technologies in the transference of knowledge to marginalized populations

(Dahya and Dryden-Peterson 2016; Etim 2006), these two latter contexts are beyond the scope of the current chapter.

We begin by defining the BHER project partnership and the spaces of that project, which for the purposes of this chapter include the on-site and online classrooms and courses offered at the BHER Learning Centre in Dadaab, Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Moi University in Eldoret, York University in Toronto, and the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, where courses offered through BHER originate. We then turn to several interrelated approaches that frame our analysis. Arendt's ideas of "worldliness," its interrelationship with "political action" and the role of the university in the world provide a foundation for our thinking (Kateb 1977, 142; Arendt 2006 [1954]; Bender 1998). Conversely, postcolonial critiques have provided compelling arguments as to why some definitions of worldliness have historically been perilous paths to follow (Dirlik 1994; Hall 1996; Said 1978; Spivak 1988). Thus, we also look to ideas about the gulf between "us" and "them" and the resulting disorienting dilemmas, exploring whether worldliness and postcolonial critiques may be less contradictory when defined or guided by an ethical encounter (Butler 2004)—and if so, how. Two case studies ground this chapter: the first addresses the use of English as a language of instruction; the second concerns the presence of patriarchy in the Dadaab refugee camp classrooms.

The Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) Project Partnerships

BHER is an international partnership of Kenyan and Canadian universities and a Kenyan non-governmental organization that, with the support of the UNHCR, work together to provide post-secondary opportunities to mainly uncertified teachers, as well as some other students living in long-term conditions of forced displacement. Most importantly for this chapter, BHER also includes professor-student relationships that can be thought of as a kind of partnership that is both local and interpersonal. On-site/online university credit courses are offered through the BHER project, enabling uncertified teachers and other refugee and Kenyan students in Dadaab to earn certificates, diplomas, and degrees in a variety of fields including health promotion, science and arts education, and geography. Refugee and local students in Dadaab and students located at partner

universities benefit directly through online exchange opportunities and by being able to participate in blended courses that often include students on the home campuses with students in Dadaab. University professors routinely express that their taken-for-granted and settled ways of knowing and doing have become both unsettled and refreshed by their BHER teaching experiences. These are among the experiences we explore in the two case studies.

BHER is built upon research that began in 2005 on long-term displacement for refugees (Hyndman and Giles 2017) that revealed a dearth of attention to higher education in extended exile. Other explorations of this issue reveal the possibilities as well as challenges related to the development and implementation of the BHER project (Dippo, Orgocka, and Giles 2013; Murphy 2012, 2016). The Canadian Government funded what became known as the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees project that developed and then began to deliver university programs in Dadaab, beginning in 2013.

Place

Access to schools and resources therein (e.g., teachers, learning materials, libraries, labs, classrooms) determine not only how youth are prepared, but also the aspirations they can build for the future. Appadurai refers to “the capacity to aspire” (2004, 59), among impoverished students, which he describes as “the social and cultural capacity to plan, hope, desire, and achieve socially valuable goals” (2006, 176). This is similar to the ontological security that Giddens describes as being predicated on a people’s ability to give meaning to their lives and avoid chaos or anxiety, and that Edkins defines as essential to personal survival and based on a continuing social order that gives our lives meaning and includes “family, friends, political community, beliefs” (Hyndman and Giles 2017, 16). For Appadurai, the possibility of aspiring is linked to having access to “systematic tools for gaining relevant new knowledge” (2006, 176) that comes from education and various forms of training (2006, 167–8). Giddens and others’ work on ontological security assumes a stable subject in a liberal democratic state (Hyndman and Giles 2017, 16). Edkins’ and Appadurai’s research, on the other hand, pertains to marginalized, poor, and militarized contexts and is thus more relevant to our understanding of educational spaces in Dadaab.

Described as one of the largest sites of extended asylum¹ in the world, Dadaab at present is home to some 245,126 people who have fled civil war, famine, and other disasters (UNHCR 2017a, 2017b). As of March 2017, thirty-two primary schools in the camps serve 50,509 displaced children ages six to seventeen (Giles and Orgocka 2018). Only 62 per cent of school-aged boys and 52 per cent of school-aged girls were enrolled in these schools. Seven secondary schools in the camps enrolled approximately 4,838 (1,269 girls and 3,569 boys) students or 10 per cent of the secondary school age students.² Class sizes are immense and learning materials are scarce. Most teachers are recent secondary school graduates themselves with no particular preparation to teach. Assessment of the quality of education delivered in these schools points to several challenges, the most significant being that they are poorly resourced and the curriculum does not address adequately the psychological needs and practical knowledge and skills that these youth need. Teachers are unprepared to take on the challenge of nurturing a new generation.³

The BHER project provides both challenges and opportunities for educators attempting to work within and across social, political, economic, and cultural differences. The camps and local communities are complex settings where histories and politics are a defining feature of everyday life. Within camps, there are politics of inclusion/exclusion among national, ethnic, tribal, language, religious, and other groups. Between camps and local communities, there are politics of resentment and condescension. Among local communities, there are politics of distribution and competition for the economic benefits of a so-called “refugee industry” (Enghoff et al. 2010; Rawlence 2016). In such a politicized context, the idea of a professor-student partnership among those engaged in teaching and learning in the BHER project may seem presumptuous.

All professors from Kenyan and Canadian universities who have offered courses through BHER have had to deal with the complexities of offering higher education in a context of prolonged encampment. In attempting to initiate what is likely an unfamiliar professor-student relationship, they have all had to ask themselves about curriculum content. Is this course material interesting, relevant, appropriate, culturally responsive, challenging, and critical? They have all had to consider approaches to pedagogy. Are these inclusive, participatory, inquiry-driven? Will students understand, participate, and extend their knowledge and

pedagogical skills? Or will they be confounded, compliant, and suspicious of new and unfamiliar approaches to teaching and learning? Will assignments be meaningful? Will technology frustrate or facilitate learning? The disorienting dilemmas associated with these and other questions are connected to the theoretical underpinnings of this chapter. In the next section, we define and question the politico-historical understandings that anchor this chapter.

Where We Stand: “If I Am Not What I’ve Been Told I Am, Then It Means *You’re* Not What You Thought You Were *Either*”⁴

Our approach juxtaposes Hannah Arendt’s idea of worldliness, which she regarded as a mode of active engagement in the world (Arendt 2006 [1954]), with a postcolonial critique of the imposition of Western forms of education in marginalized settings throughout the world. Recognizing that “the idea of the postcolonial is located within a highly contested political and theoretical terrain” (Rizvi et al. 2006, 249), we argue that the contradictions between these two approaches are potentially diminished when brought into dialogue with ideas about the ethical encounter as defined by Butler (2004, 2009), Scarry (2011), Fassin (2011), and others.

Instead of the common and frequent aspiration for a “world class university,” we follow Arendt in arguing for a worldly university and imagine what such an institution could look like. We see such a place as being engaged with the world and linked to new ways of defining prosperity, as connected to well-being and knowledge for all. A worldly university offers students, both young and older, the tools to be able to think and to judge and to be political in the world. Arendt describes freedom as having the possibility of being politically active, and worldliness as recognition of our dependency on one another. These are concepts that she prized most highly. To be political, she says, is to be alive and engaged in the world—to be human. Arendt called for educators to assume joint responsibility for the world (Arendt 2006 [1954])—promoting a worldliness by promoting the development of individuals so that they too can join in the making of that world. How then, to do so, in full recognition of the warnings from postcolonial scholars about the tragic history of powerful education

“actors” enacting irreparable harm on marginalized populations (Dirlik 1994; Fanon 1984; Said 1978)?

Cultural legacies and tragic human consequences of colonialism and imperialism are well documented (e.g., Gregory 2004; Hall 1996; Jayawardena 1986; Rizvi et al. 2006; Said 1993; Spivak 1988; see also chapter 5 in this book for a discussion of colonialism and identity politics in India’s northeast). And postcolonial critiques have challenged colonial and imperialist narratives that misrepresent the world (Narayan 1997) as composed of separate unequal cultures, instead arguing for and about hybridity as a philosophic value that challenges the ideological validity of colonialism as expounded during the colonial era (Bhabha 1994). The impacts of the politics of knowledge creation, control, and distribution, and its relationship to the exploitation of many in the global south continuing in the form of neocolonialism (Gregory 2004), has been disastrous in the area of education. We are reminded by Farhia Abdi (2016, 21) of the struggles by African countries to Africanize education in the postcolonial era and the tremendous struggles and indeed crises to which this has led. But as Rizvi et al. (2006, 257) succinctly point out, there is ambivalence in the relationship of education to postcolonialism: “On the one hand, it is an object of postcolonial critique regarding its complicity with Eurocentric discourses and practices. On the other hand, it is only through education that it is possible to reveal and resist colonialism’s continuing hold on our imagination.”

As an education project originating in the global north, BHER necessarily struggles to understand itself in relation to the historical legacy of colonialism. Local opposition to the project in Dadaab is a constant reminder that we are working among some encamped traditionalists for whom Western-style education is irrelevant, as well as militants for whom education is a threat. In academic circles in Canada and Kenya, we regularly respond to political accusations of neocolonialism by pointing out that our approach to education emphasizes a learner-centred, curiosity-driven curriculum that includes local, traditional, and scientific/academic knowledge, a participatory, inquiry-based engaged pedagogy, and an approach to course design and assignments that emphasizes “purposeful activity.” This kind of teaching is more in keeping with a post-independence, nation-building project focused on cooperation and the common good (Nyerere 1968) than it is with a neocolonial educational agenda. With

Jennifer Lavia, who writes about educational practice in the Caribbean, we endorse a “pedagogy of hope . . . within the context of postcoloniality as an aspiration” and an educational practice that is “inextricably linked” with the history, politics, and culture of the region (Lavia 2006 in Rizvi et al. 2006, 258). In the BHER project, we see ideas about educational practice as intricately linked to the nature of the encounter between teachers and students.

Ideas about recognition of the other provide a place for us to comprehend the concept of the educational encounter and it is Judith Butler’s ideas about recognition and the “ethical encounter” that we turn to here. She contends that “vulnerability must be perceived and recognized in order to come into play in an ethical encounter, and there is no guarantee that this will happen” (Butler 2004, 42–3). Recognizing the vulnerability of oneself and the other is a two-way experience, a reciprocal encounter (Hyndman and Giles 2017, 13). In other words, we expect in the BHER project that both professors and students will be transformed by the educative encounter, generating new subject positions for each. However, these encounters are not always easy or straightforward. Indeed, the context of our work in Dadaab is saturated with the kind of “disorienting dilemmas” (Mezirow 1995, 50), reconcilable and irreconcilable, that may always be unsettling. Writing about educative experience, Dewey says: “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some, experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience” (Dewey 1997 [1938], 25). To engage with the students in Dadaab is to open the possibility for a truly educative experience. If that engagement enables us to imagine meaningfulness beyond the horizons of our own understanding and enlarge our capacity to recognize the personhood of someone living the tragedy of forced migration, the experience will have been educative. If, on the other hand, we are incapable of transcending the limitations of our own understandings and come away from that encounter disturbed but reassured with a singular, one-dimensional understanding of a pathetic figure of a refugee, the experience will have been mis-educative.

The BHER project promises to be rich in implications for the theory and practice of transformative learning for students, but also for teachers.

The transformation of the progressive/critical educator (Dewey 1997 [1938]) is what we focus on in this chapter. Drawing on two case studies from the BHER experience, we explore some of the emergent and ongoing tensions and dilemmas in curriculum design and program development and ask about the mis-educative potential of transformative learning. Put another way, this chapter probes whether openness to transformation (and a willingness to revisit, reconsider, and revise principles) can be mis-educative? Moreover, can a principled stance in relation to conflicting political commitments be seen as a refusal to learn?

Case Study One: The Problem with English

“We appreciate your efforts to be respectful and not to perpetuate the colonial legacy, but get over it. You want to offer us tradition. What we want is a future.” (Paraphrased comment originally made by a refugee researcher for the BHER project at a meeting in Nairobi, 2011. The subject of the discussion was whether BHER classes should be taught in Somali or English.) There are passionate academic debates about the relationship between colonial languages and Indigenous languages; between national languages and local languages (e.g., Dryden-Peterson 2006, 2011; Gichiru and Larkin 2009; Hardman et al. 2009; International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) 2010; Kirk 2009). One consistent theme that runs through that literature has to do with the language of instruction in schools. English is usually characterized as somewhat of an “invasive species” that inevitably extinguishes local languages. Houwer’s research for the BHER project and Dryden-Peterson’s conclusions in a UNHCR report both directly relate to this question of the problem with English: “In contexts of forced migration where the language of home and the host community is different, the language of curriculum, instruction, and examination is often politically and culturally contentious and a challenge to achieving positive learning outcomes” (Houwer 2011, 25, based on Dryden-Peterson 2011, 61). Dryden-Peterson (2011, 91) has argued that education is a “fourth durable solution” for refugees displaced from their home countries, indicating that the language of the host community points to local integration while the language of home points to repatriation.

Up to the present time, universities involved in the BHER project are English language institutions. Building on the aforementioned

scholarship, BHER researchers advised that our teacher education program should provide instruction and training to student teachers about differences in teaching and learning in a mother tongue, or second-language, and how to address code-switching⁵ among their students. It was proposed that this would not only improve learning outcomes for BHER student teachers but would respect their cultural backgrounds. Houwer quotes Hardman et al., who argue that language adaptation is “central to making the curriculum more relevant by connecting the learning to the pupil’s experience, environment and culture” (Hardman 2009, 26–7; see also Abdi 2016, 26).

For the BHER project, this and other thoughtful analyses and sets of recommendations led us a) to explore the possibility of a bilingual Somali-English curriculum; and b) to develop a strategy and action plan to deal with university policies pertaining to the language(s) of instruction in our courses. At the time, we felt confident that we were indeed responding well to the challenge of being of the global north without being implicated in its globalizing, neocolonial agendas. Then we embarked on a year-long feasibility study in Dadaab and as described in the above quote, were told by refugees that they wanted English and only English in their university courses and in their schools. We were told that when schooling started in the camps some twenty years ago, they used the Somalian curriculum and Somali was the language of instruction. Then along the way, parents themselves, seeing little hope for repatriation, eventually insisted on adopting the Kenyan curriculum with English and KiSwahili, the two official Kenyan working languages, as the languages of instruction. In their view, this would better their children’s chances for integration (into Kenyan society) or out migration (to the global north).

Localizing the language of the curriculum presents particular challenges in Dadaab. Somali is the mother tongue of ethnic Somalis on both sides of the Kenya-Somali border, but not of the Kenyan central state. Thus, the Kenyan curriculum was adopted in the camps out of concern for accreditation. As a result, the language of instruction in the schools is English, pointing to local integration as a durable solution. But because of Kenya’s official policy of encampment, legal local integration is presently not an option. The INEE Minimum Standards advise that “learning content, materials, and instruction are (to be) provided in the language(s) of the learners” (INEE 2010, 77). This standard privileges the durable solution

of repatriation, but it is also founded on extensive research that demonstrates that language comprehension is the single most important factor in the learning process. In cases where the language of instruction is not the mother tongue, it is advised that the teacher should be fluently bilingual.

We understand this divergence between international policy and scholarship on the one hand, and the desires of Dadaab students on the other, to be a disorienting dilemma and a moment rich in transformative potential. But for the progressive/critical educator, is this experience educative or mis-educative? On the one hand, it would be a mistake to dismiss the analysis and understanding put forward by the refugees as being selective or ahistorical or undertheorized; but neither do we think that the analyses and understandings offered in scholarly literature are ungrounded or overdetermined. Wholly endorsing either approach is too simplistic and closes down possibilities for coming to a more sensitive, nuanced understanding, converting the disorienting dilemma into a mis-educative experience. The educative response, the one that would be enabling, is one that would open the way for further learning that would lead to a more complex and ultimately more useful understanding.

To begin to formulate an educative response, to begin to tap into the transformative learning potential of such a disorienting dilemma, requires both acknowledging the real hopes and aspirations of refugee learners and recognizing one's own undeniable implication in English language hegemony. It requires enlarging the analysis of language use and abuse to include the histories, the politics, and the complexities of the local context. It requires seeing the global in relation to the local; the abstract in relation to the concrete; the self in relation to the Other. Openness to transformative learning requires humility, vulnerability, and a willingness to change one's mind. It is in such moments that the possibility for Butler's (2004) "ethical encounter" between a professor and student (in the case of BHER) presents itself. However, what can just as easily happen is a "specific exploitation of targeted populations, of lives that are not quite lives" (Butler 2009, 31)—a valid concern echoed in neocolonial critiques. Following the lead of Butler and others, we look for ways to traverse the discursive gulf between "us" and "them," between teachers and refugee students. Elaine Scarry's consensus-building mode of deliberation "in which a community of people gathers together to collectively present and debate information and to make a decision" (Scarry in Beckett 2013, 96) can be applied to

the educative space of the BHER professor and student. She foregrounds “mutual protection” (2013, 97) and “equality of survival” (Scarry 2011, 52), which make an ethical encounter more likely.

Case Study Two: Persistent Patriarchy

Protracted displacement in a refugee camp in Kenya, as opposed to attendance at university in the home country, turns gender relations on its head for university level students. Not only are young Somalian women’s possibilities of attending high school and succeeding well enough to attend university undermined by the profound gender inequality in the Dadaab refugee camps, but most of these young women are more poorly prepared than men overall for university. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that these women are more likely to drop out of the BHER university courses than men (Giles and Orgocka 2018).

Parents, as well as young women students in Dadaab, have expressed concerns about the safety and security of women and girls travelling to and from schools, inadequate girls-only sanitation facilities, and the inability of young women to fulfil gendered domestic responsibilities if they are in school. These anxieties have led to a high incidence of early marriages and female genital mutilation that are regarded by some parents as protective and caring responses in a context where sexual and gender-based violence is rampant. However, the point in this chapter is not to review the parents’ position, but to recognize these narratives of gender inequalities. The goal is not to reiterate the counter-arguments about the history of pernicious patriarchy and neocolonialism that have contributed to the creation of long-term displacement in camps, but instead, to raise the question as to how teachers and students in Dadaab might nonetheless participate in ethical teaching encounters. Is it even possible to imagine, in such a context, the “two-way experience,” the “reciprocal encounter,” whereby both persons are transformed? Is a stance of vulnerability (by both teacher and student) even possible to conceive of in such an encounter? Does this disorienting dilemma have transformative potential? And can we even begin to recognize such encounters as disorienting (and will they even be dilemmas?) if we are unwilling and/or unable to doubt or reconsider our taken-for-granted political commitments?

All of BHER's policies and programs are based on a firm commitment to gender equity. BHER Kenyan and Canadian university instructors are expected to come to their virtual and on-site classrooms with a commitment to challenge patriarchy, to defy the odds and to achieve something close to gender parity in the certificate, diploma, and degree programs we offer. Is it possible to be vulnerable and open to learning in a context where patriarchy persists, without abandoning a fundamental commitment to gender equity principles and practices? We are constantly considering ways to locate more women students, include them in our programs in Dadaab, and then likewise to ensure their retention. In order to achieve a goal of 30 per cent representation of women in BHER programs, we lower entrance requirements for them, count non-academic experience, provide spaces near the classrooms for them to nurse and care for their children, allow them to repeat courses when they absent themselves from too many classes in order to deliver their babies, and provide extensive mentoring. In the autumn of 2016, we conducted workshops in the Dadaab camps to address reported gender harassment against women by some male students, with the aim of improving the safety of the learning space for women. The workshops were well attended and received.⁶

The danger for BHER instructors has been that the disorienting dilemmas that routinely present themselves as we seek to engage with people and communities in Dadaab, whose gendered customs and traditions, beliefs and values are at odds with our own, become disabling dilemmas wherein we are unable to hold onto both a strong commitment to a principle (in this case gender equity), as well as a strong commitment to openness and vulnerability. Confronted with a situation that is clearly patriarchal, our inclination is to respond (i.e., we feel "called upon" to intervene, to interfere, to disrupt the social, political, economic relations that so disadvantage, disparage, and oppress girls and women). And yet, the unfortunate history of well-meaning and well-intentioned humanitarian interventions, often perpetrated by people more like than unlike us, gives us pause (or ought to), and reminds us of the paternalism and neocolonialism that can easily be perpetuated in international development projects like BHER.

Can we begin to imagine the dilemma that would enable us to revisit our understanding and revise our "stance" vis-à-vis gender equity? Indeed, if we could imagine it, the dilemma would not be disorienting.

There are those who would argue that a human rights perspective justifies intervention; others would argue that history cautions against such interference. Which is the defensive stance and which is the principled position? Both may be a refusal to learn. If we are committed to openness and vulnerability, we must be prepared to reconsider our commitments to principles of gender equity as we understand them. If we are committed to principles of gender equity, we must admit our inability to be “open” and “vulnerable” and therefore unable to participate in the “ethical encounter.” We can’t have it both ways. Or can we? This is the predicament we find ourselves in. We can become paralyzed, or we can move forward with caution, humility, openness, generosity, inside the tension (of the dilemma), in conditions of uncertainty.

The work of some anti-nationalist feminists offers a possible way to live with, and possibly learn from this disorientation around gender inequity. They have long adopted a “rooting and shifting” approach in which people recognize rootedness in their own identity and culture, but at the same time try to shift so as to put themselves in a situation of exchange with others who claim other identities (see Giles and Hyndman 2004, 8). Defined as a “transversal politics of coalition building” by Italian feminists in the early 1990s, shifting does not involve self-decentring, and rooting does not make us incapable of movement. Rather, this approach calls on us to look “for connection with those among ‘the others’ with whom we might find compatible values and goals” (Cockburn 1998, 9, in Giles and Hyndman 2004, 8). Unlike these feminists, most BHER professors know and accept that they will engage in a teaching relationship with some students with whom they will have incompatible goals. But a transformative method espoused by BHER professors resonates with this feminist approach that has been tested by academics and activists working across ethnic nationalist boundaries in times of militarized violence and that focuses on empathy and openness rather than differences. It coincides well with Butler and Scarry, as we discuss in the first case study above, and their interest in traversing the gulf between “us” and “them,” using a “reciprocal recognition” approach (an “ethical encounter,” in Butler’s words) and consensus-building modes of deliberation.

Conclusion

Our argument in this chapter is that despite the challenges posed to worldliness by postcolonial critiques, these approaches are less contradictory and incongruous when defined through/guided by an ethical encounter. The transformative method that we refer to is thus embedded in a historical materialist methodology and involves at least three aspirational steps: the imperative to act as a result of an engagement in worldliness; a prohibition against doing harm in the name of good as a consequence of a critical engagement with postcoloniality; and an ongoing effort to enter into ethical student-teacher encounters. Despite ongoing disorienting dilemmas, as described through the two case studies, BHER educators have persisted in the continuing creation and recreation, the stop and restart of ethical relationships with Dadaab refugee students. This chapter is an attempt to answer why they have done so when the contestations from postcolonial critics and refugee students are so pronounced. There are the challenges of coming to terms with the politics of knowledge and the creation of a curriculum that incorporates both local and traditional knowledge and the knowledge required to meet international accreditation standards. There is the matter of knowledge critique and the obligation to call into question knowledge claims that underpin practices of inequity and exclusion. There is the challenge of understanding the relations among cultures of scholarship and cultures of violence. And still, Hannah Arendt asks whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it. Many faculty members who have been involved with BHER strive to convey that passion, that sense of “caring for the world,” to their students so as to likewise inspire them to take on the responsibility of loving and caring for the world.

Notes

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- 1 Otherwise known as “protracted refugee situations” in policy discourse, UNHCR defines these as situations in which 25,000 or more refugees originating from the same country have sought asylum in another country (or countries) for at least five consecutive years.
- 2 EMIS 2015. The age group served by secondary schools is fourteen to twenty-one years of age. Education Management Information System (EMIS) data is used by UNICEF to maintain school data. The BHER Project Liaison in Dadaab, Philemon Misoy, gathered this data in Apr–May 2017 through communication with humanitarian agency workers in Dadaab. The EMIS derived data is thus tentative and is rapidly changing as the camps close and children and youth move out.
- 3 In Dadaab, where there is a dire shortage of qualified teachers, a “trained” teacher refers to a teacher who does not necessarily have any qualifications beyond completing high school but has attended any kind of training to improve their teaching skills; this may be as minimal as a three-day workshop. A “qualified” teacher has full qualifications to work as a teacher under the Kenyan education system, i.e., has earned a “P1” certificate, diploma, or degree in education.
- 4 In her writing on the oppression of Hawaiian women through the colonized classroom, Julie Kaomea comments on Baldwin’s quote, which she says points to the importance of the inclusion of the historical perspectives of the colonized—knowledge that is not only significant and liberating to the colonized, but also to “white people who know nothing about their own history” (Baldwin 1988 [1963] in Kaomea 2006, 345).
- 5 According to Heller, “code-switching (is) the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode” (1988, 1).
- 6 By 2018, and as a result of the aforementioned supports, our data demonstrate that the BHER women students, although fewer than men students, were much less likely than male students to drop out.

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