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Mobilizing affect in the search for self-transformation: A case study of volunteer transformation in orphanage tourism

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ABSTRACT

Emerging work in tourism has focused on the affective dimensions of student volunteer experiences across diverse cultural landscapes. Affect shapes how volunteers interpret their experiences in the developing world and make sense of themselves through these engagements. Synthesizing theoretical approaches of affect management/mobilization and frame analysis, this research contributes to affect theory by presenting a case study on how affect is managed and mobilized by a charismatic leader to elicit particular responses within the volunteer experience. Through intimate engagements with orphans and other American volunteers on the trip, participants visiting Malawi experience a poor, Christian yet joyful place that the leader contrasts to American inauthenticity. The leader prepares students for an emotionally charged experience meant to lead volunteers to self-transformation.

Introduction

Every year since 2014, Justin, a charismatic man in his thirties that works at a Christian college in the American south, has taken small groups of college students to the same orphanage in Malawi for a 2-week summer volunteer trip. His purpose is to "heal" these students and have them discover their "real" selves through affective encounters with poor yet joyful Malawian orphans. During interviews, student volunteers reported feeling exhausted, gross, scared, uncomfortable, overwhelmed, sick to the stomach, hungry, and broken. They also reported feeling authentic, renewed, refreshed, clean, transformed, and joyful. Students described being changed by these intimate and emotional experiences.

Affect is often defined as bodily intensities that include the feelings, emotions, and sentiments one directly experiences (Athena & Pothiti, 2008; Massumi, 1995; Parreñas, 2012; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Following Sara Ahmed's (2004, p. 27) seminal work on affect, we take seriously the assertion that emotions and affect "do things" and "we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective." Moreover, she suggests this can be done with a close reading of texts, "showing not just the textuality of emotions, but also the emotionality of texts" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 27). In this study, we closely read the narratives of Justin and his student volunteers about their trip experiences to see how affect works in touristic contexts. By using Doerr and Taieb's (2017) theoretical framework of affect management in conjunction with Goffman's (1974) frame analysis, we argue that Justin actively manages affect to inform the way student volunteers interpret their sensorial experiences in Malawi that results in students perceiving themselves as transformed.

It is a unique challenge to conduct research on feelings and the ways in which the senses shape lived experiences. It is equally

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challenging to understand how the associated feelings and emotions related to visceral experiences translate into knowledge about the self and the place and people traveled. Despite these acknowledged difficulties, this study contributes new insights into work on affect by reporting on the ways a team leader attempts to manage affect and guide the way student volunteers interpret their sensorial experiences in Malawi. We argue that Justin's narratives about Africa and poverty frames the Malawi trip in a way that forwards his goal of healing and transforming volunteers.

Conceptualizing affect in volunteer tourism

While approaches to affect range from biological determinism to social constructivism (Leavitt, 1996; Lutz & White, 1986), a shift dubbed "the affective turn" emerged during the mid-1990s (Athena & Pothiti, 2008; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Skoggard & Waterston, 2015). Scholars like Massumi build on Spinoza's conceptualization of affect as an "impingement" on the body and differentiates "affect" from "emotion" (Massumi, 1995). The latter is a qualified linguistic capture of affective experience, while the former is autonomous from "conscious perception and language" and involves the involuntary operations and triggers of biological reactions to images, events, and experiences (Clough, 2012, p. 209).

Some scholars question Massumi's rigid distinction between "emotions" and "affect." For example, Mazzarella (2010) criticizes him for fetishizing immediacy, contending that the separation of affect from qualified emotion is artificial. In this article, we adopt this skeptical perspective on the bifurcation of "emotion" and "affect," a move that aligns with current scholarship on volunteer tourism.

There is an emerging body of research focused on the intersection of tourism, especially volunteer tourism, and affect (Buda et al., 2014; Doerr & Taieb, 2017; Everingham, 2016; Frazer & Waitt, 2016). Many emphasize the "aestheticization of poverty" that occurs within tourist encounters (Crossley, 2012a; Freidus & Caro, 2018; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Mostafanezhad, 2013a; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007). Research suggests that volunteer tourism to the Global South is framed and justified by a search for authenticity imagined to be most accessible in a poor, "natural" and non-commercialized setting (Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Mostafanezhad, 2013a). This trend to experience and "serve" the poor that has been an impetus to the growth of the volunteer tourism industry can be connected to increasing disillusionment with capitalist modernity (Crossley, 2012b; Freidus & Caro, 2018; Knudsen & Waade, 2010; Mostafanezhad, 2013a; Pearce & Coghlan, 2008). The escape from Western capitalist consumer trappings to experience an authentic, poor, yet culturally rich other is characterized by an affective encounter.

For Mostafanezhad (2013b, p. 160), affect "refers to what are perceived as prediscursive embodied feelings, movements, and human drive" and it is "central to volunteer tourists' experiences where the seemingly decommodified nature of volunteer tourism seems to buttress the affective response of the volunteer tourists." Additionally, there is a substantive body of literature that focuses on a particular type of affective response among volunteers – the compassionate or empathetic emotions generated through contact with the poor (Freidus, 2018; Mostafanezhad, 2013b). In these studies, volunteer tourism is connected to a search for authenticity, an escape from Western modernity, and the generation of affective responses that shape how those being toured are constructed, often in problematic ways (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Freidus & Caro, 2018; Knudsen & Waade, 2010).

While this paper draws on the literature from the broader field of volunteer tourism, it also connects to work done on short-term mission trips (STMs). From our perspective, the volunteer tourism industry overlaps with and encapsulates contemporary, youth-focused STMs that are characterized by charity, service, self-transformation, and evangelism (Howell, 2012). STMs differ from general volunteer tourism because there is a focus on the spiritual dimensions of both the host communities as well as student volunteers' spiritual growth (Freidus & Caro, 2018; Howell, 2012; Priest & Priest, 2008).

Short-term missions have grown exponentially since the 1990s as "American believers longed to share in the passion" they felt existed in places like Africa and Latin America, which are now imaged as places of "exemplary faith" and more ideally Christian (McAlister, 2016, p. 63). Global South believers are perceived as "embodying an admirable authenticity and zeal" (McAlister, 2016, p. 63). Children, and abandoned orphans in particular, with a committed, fierce faithfulness and joyfulness, become a model for American students (Freidus & Caro, 2018). This can be problematic because, "by casting people in the Global South as the spiritual saviors of young, white Americans, short-term missions ultimately fail to subvert the exploitative relationship that has long characterized encounters between Western missionaries and missionary 'hosts'" (Nagel, 2018, p. 2; see also Freidus & Caro, 2018).

Management and mobilization of affect

Recent tourism studies tend to discuss affect as a quasi-autonomous force that can escape the dominance of discourse, hegemonies, and imaginaries. For example, Griffiths (2014) argues that tourism scholars should "take seriously the conviction" that social relations and affective experiences "are not merely the residual effect" of hegemonic discourses like neoliberalism (p. 13). Similarly, Frazer and Waitt (2016) contend "volunteering may create moments of embodied empathy of pain that generate hopes which operate outside of neoliberal imaginaries of development" (p. 17).

In these studies, affect appears to be subversive, disruptive, and spontaneous. It is something that *happens* to tourists that sets other things in motion. However, while these scholars attempt to correct what they perceive as an over-emphasis of ideology over embodied intensities, such a theoretical perspective mystifies affect as something that unpredictably emerges between the interface of different selves and bodies. This leaves a theoretical gap that prevents one from interrogating the kinds of techniques key actors such as tour guides, organization leaders, and hosts deploy to influence the affective experiences of tourists. To address this gap, we turn to Doerr and Taieb's (2017) work on affect management and Goffman's (1974) frame analysis.

Doerr and Taieb (2017) move the discussion from exploring affect's autonomous and spontaneous influence on the tourist to explicitly examining how affect can be deliberately managed to direct volunteer experiences and learning. This novel theoretical

approach allows examination of affective learning as a pedagogical strategy explicitly incorporated into study aboard programs predicated on the purposeful generation of feelings such as romance, desire, fear, discomfort, and guilt (Rink, 2017; Shephard, 2008). In one example, a course lecturer has students crammed into the Langa Pass Office cell room that was used during apartheid to corral black South Africans awaiting pass hearings. The lecturer notes that this "sequestration proves uncomfortable in both physical and emotional terms, but once 'released' students invariably comment on the inhumanity of the apartheid pass laws" (Rink, 2017, p. 107). This exemplifies pedagogical utilization of affect, but we argue that research examining the impact of strategic management of affect on students and volunteers is still limited.

While we agree with Doerr and Taieb that focusing on affect's management and mobilization in tourism is productive, their approach lacks direction in examining *how* affect is managed and mobilized. We propose to expand on Doerr and Taieb's approach by pairing it with Erving Goffman's (1974) theory of frame analysis. Goffman's (1974) concept of "frames," the idea that individuals use a "schemeta of interpretation" to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" life experiences in order to make sense of them (p. 21) helps understand how affect can be mobilized to "make sense" to student volunteers. Frame analysis complements affect theory by explaining how discursive elements deployed before departing for a study abroad or volunteer experience can play a role in the management of affect. Framing influences the circulation and quality of affective experiences because it mediates, potentially unconsciously, what travelers perceive through their senses. However, these feelings may appear to the traveler as "primal" and immediate like "a punch to the stomach" when bearing witness to Malawians living in extreme poverty. Framing makes the creation of affective learning objectives possible.

Following Doerr and Taieb (2017) and Goffman (1974), we propose a more fine-grained approach in tourism affect studies in which scholars pay attention to the variety of techniques in which affect may be directed within power relations. In this view, affect is admittedly less autonomous and more "dominated" by ideology, but still worth applying in order to dissect and understand the connections between discourse and affect.

The intersection of affect and self-transformation

Research suggests that affective encounters have a tangible impact on volunteer subjectivities (Cheney, 2017; Freidus & Caro, 2018; Zahra & McIntosh, 2007). Transformation of the self is both a motivating factor for participants, as well as a reported outcome, either anticipated or not (Crossley, 2012a; Freidus & Caro, 2018). Recently scholars have tried to qualify the meaning of transformation. For example, Pan examines "self-growth" among Asian student volunteers that are coded as "willingness to trust others" and "admit deficiencies." The other "impacts" reported on in this research include feelings of thankfulness, the desire to care and support the disadvantaged, less focus on materialism, having a more open mind, and self-relaxation (Pan, 2017). Freidus and Caro (2018) found that student volunteers felt "changed" when they returned from Malawi by becoming less materialistic and thus happier, more "grateful" for their privileged access to clean water, food, and electricity. In terms of affective engagement, volunteers in Kenya felt they needed an "unpleasant" experience to elicit sadness and guilt that led to self-transformation (Crossley, 2012a).While these works provide comprehensive analyses of participant transformations, there are limited published data on the role of team leaders in shaping these experiences.

Of those studies focused on transformation in STMs, a variety of themes emerged that range from increasing religiosity and encouraging participants to be better stewards of their resources, to creating a generation of global citizens and overseas missionaries. Trinitapoli and Vaisey (2009) found that short term missions somewhat increase religiosity among volunteers. Using self-reported survey data, they found that short-term mission trips were "transformative" and "transcendent" as measured by church attendance, bible study participation, prayer frequency, and increased proselytizing. Nagel's (2018) research finds that participants are encouraged to explore diversity and recognize cultural difference with an eye toward spiritual transformation. This study does ask pastors and youth ministers what their goals are in guiding student experiences. Nagel (2018) provides limited data but suggests the objective is encouraging global citizenship and increasing commitments to missionary life. What's missing is an understanding of how they attempt to guide these experiences and what activities. The current study illuminates not only the role of affective experiences in touristic self-transformation, but also shows how affect is managed to guide self-transformation in certain directions.

Methods

This qualitative study focuses on how one volunteer tourism leader attempts to mobilize and manage affect to inform the way American student volunteers interpret their encounters with Malawian orphans as well as other student volunteers. A purposive sample of 16 in-depth, open-ended interviews was conducted between March 2017 and August 2018, including one with the team leader. Nine student volunteers were interviewed after returning from their trip, three student volunteers were interviewed both before and upon return. The students all attended one small, Christian university in the United States. Student interviewees were between the ages of 19–24 and included three men and nine women. Freidus reached out to the team leader who facilitated contact with past student volunteers by sending emails about the research that included Freidus' contact information. We interviewed all students that reached out to Freidus, which were recorded and transcribed. Interviews lasted between 45 min and 2 h, the longest being with the team leader/organizer. This project was approved by IRB. All names are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the research participants.

During in-depth, open-ended interviews with student volunteers, we asked about their motivations to participate, the nature and content of their preliminary meetings, what they did while in Malawi and how they "felt" about their experience, how they processed the experience upon return, and how they felt they had changed. We conducted Justin's interview last. Questions focused on his

personal introduction to volunteer tourism, kinds of students he recruits and why, what he includes in his preliminary meetings, activities they undertake while in-country, and how they process the experiences upon their return.

We collected comprehensive narratives about volunteer tourism to better understand what motivated these students to participate and how they interpreted the experience. There were no pre-determined codes or theoretical frameworks. Instead, we used a grounded theory approach and the qualitative texts produced key categories and concepts that were linked to formal theories (Strauss & Quinn, 1990). After the interviews were transcribed, both authors independently coded key themes. Comparing the themes that were generated, both had independently identified emotions, feelings, and sensory descriptions as key emerging themes. Once these codes were identified, both authors re-reviewed the interviews using Nvivo software to better identify and review types of affective responses present in the texts.

There are several limitations to this study including the small sample size and inability of either researcher to be present to observe the encounters discussed by participants. It should be noted, however, that the first author has conducted research at this orphanage site since 2008 and has witnessed numerous student volunteer trips in the past. Finally, this paper relies on participants to assess their own perceptions on self-transformation which is common in tourism research (e.g., Nagel, 2018; Pan, 2017; Zahra & Mcintosh, 2007).

We have organized the data into four sections: 1) how students come to understand themselves as broken and needing to be transformed. Malawi as a useful site for self-transformation simultaneously 2) as a place of dirt and discomfort that forces students to psychologically confront their failings, as well as 3) a place of healing and joyfulness. Finally, 4) the mechanisms through which transformation is achieved. Student narratives presented a focus on unmasking an inauthentic self and building trusting, authentic relationships among team participants and with Justin. Throughout the findings, we emphasize the ways students report about their "feelings," emotions, and sensory experiences in relation to the trip that include, but are not limited to, feelings about the self, feelings about other volunteers, and feelings about Malawi and Malawians.

Findings

Beginning transformation: feeling broken

Self-transformation is an explicit goal stated by nine student volunteers, likely influenced by what they were told by past participants as well as by the team leader when recruited to participate in the trip. Justin explained that each year during the orientation he emphasizes the trip as primarily focused on self-transformation and less on "doing good."

> I'm like, 'I'm not joking. If you want to go on a trip to pat yourself on the back, this ain't it. This is a trip where you can be broken and changed in all the right ways.' And I just tell them upfront, I tell them in the informational meetings, 'I would rather you not go, if that is what you want to do…You can go anywhere if you want to do good'. But I tell them my expectation is more because I want you to be affected by this.
>
> (Interview 08/23/2018)

Being broken is a prerequisite to healing the self or "changing in the right ways." Justin's use of the word "broken" alludes to a prominent evangelical trope in which the sinful nature of humans prevents them from achieving happiness (in communion with God). The broken can be healed and happiness can be achieved. While Justin's goals are informed by Protestant values, the majority of the participants do not exhibit overtly religious or spiritual motivations in their narratives.

What is consistent, however, between Justin and the students is the goal of transformation to a better, more genuine self that is achieved through affective encounters. Student volunteers need to feel emotionally, spiritually, and physically challenged. This happens most effectively in the Global South, in places like Malawi, and away from the United States. He explains to participants:

> …you're going to be moved and you're going to be punched in the stomach and all that stuff. But the reason I take the team is I want them to heal. I want the Americans to heal. I want them to unplug, get away from Mom and Dad, get away from social media…
>
> (Interview 08/23/2018)

Feeling moved and the metaphorical use of a "punch to the stomach" are part of how Justin prepares students for affective encounters. Framing Malawi as a place of healing and liberation generates a desire to travel in order to change oneself for the better, and it is through the felt experience this can be achieved. This is a strategic mobilization of affect. The travel narratives of student volunteers emphasize their goal of feeling and confronting their brokenness and moving toward self-improvement ("healing"). Nearly all student volunteers suggest a desire to discover a better self. Jan reflects the desire for self-transformation that influenced her decision to participate:

> Freidus: What were some of the things that they were saying about it that made it attractive to you as a possibility?
> Jan: I guess from like everyone's point of view…I just heard like it was life-changing and it was an experience that everyone should get to experience, you know? People go and it changes [them]…like it literally changes your view and perspective on a lot of things, too.
> Freidus: Did they give any examples of how it changed their lives that you can remember in particular?

> Jan: Not really. I mean I heard- Justin's told us stories where people have went there and they found God and it's helped people with struggles that they deal with. It's kinda like a way out.
>
> (Interview 3/21/2017)

In a similar vein, Jill expressed the transformative nature of the trip and discussed how her heart has changed.

> Jill: I'm just so excited. Like I can already feel God like changing my heart as I get closer to the trip. And so like I'm just so excited for it.
> Freidus Do you think you can describe how you feel like your heart is changing?
> Jill: Um…I feel more joyful in like everyday things.
> Freidus: Why do you think that is?
> Jill: I struggled with that for a long time and last year God made me a promise of like "you're gonna live a life of joy" and I think just starting to see the changes he's making around me in my life of like "Okay, I'm gonna lead you on this mission trip. And okay, I'm gonna give you these group of friends that love God and want to do missions." Things like that. They just make me happy.

Several students, in addition to Jan above, said they wanted to go to Malawi because they heard it was "life-changing".

Justin's framing of Malawi as a place for healing requires student volunteers to buy into the idea that they are somehow flawed. In the process, he frames America as a site of superficiality and brokenness, which gets juxtaposed to Malawian faithfulness and happiness. According to Justin, young American students struggle to find their best selves because of the complicated trappings of living in America. He explained:

> People just say, 'I'm changed, and I'm fundamentally changed. I need to go back' because what they need is they need to refill their battery… America wears on them so much that they start to forget and lose that feeling. Some of them will describe it as numb. They can remember feeling one way. I ask them how they feel, and they're just like, 'I don't have words. I feel on a high with God, I feel like everything matters. I feel like I am the best version of me. I don't have a mask there…' They want to go back because they feel like that is the real them and they feel like they have to mask up here.
>
> (Interview, 08/23/2018)

According to Justin, and reported below by the student volunteers, the "best version of oneself" is one whereby students are not wearing a mask and putting on false pretenses, but rather are "real", especially with each other. America, according to Justin, makes them "feel numb" whereas Malawi makes them feel on a high. Since the narrative involves an ending in which the participant "becomes" more real, then a fake or numbed state ("masked") is what the participant must overcome.

Justin aligns volunteers' flawed selves to American modernity. America is framed for students as a place that promotes conformity, materialism, and an obsession with social media. The participants echo the constant need to perform an idealized version of themselves that conforms to America's standards exacerbating their "brokenness." Justin expressed this during our interview:

> … they feel like they have to mask up here [in the US]. They have to fit in. They have to be a particular person…They have to be a tough guy if he plays football. They have to suck it up because that is what our culture demands of them. They have to be on social media…

He goes on to explain how one participant expressed frustration in the urge to track how many people "liked" her posts. When he suggested she should stop looking at social media, she said she wouldn't be keeping up with what was going on and would worry about being "left behind." Several student volunteers also mentioned the need to post things they hoped would generate "likes" and that they were therefore selective in what kinds of images they used on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram.

During interviews, student volunteers themselves acknowledged the deleterious impact living in America can have on them and their "real selves". For example, Marcus, an Afro-Caribbean athlete from Miami, explained that before he went to Malawi he felt out of place in college. He felt he was closed-off from others as a means of self-preservation. He admitted to "having barriers" and not trusting people. He noted that Malawi "molded" him into a better person. Marcus stated Malawi taught him to be more open to people and explained that as a result of his experiences:

> …you're more gentle, you're kind, you're loving, you're trying to give out whatever positive vibes you have and it's noted (by others), you know? So I guess it [Malawi] breaks down those barriers. So now I'm more open and not closed off to people, but I can always go back to my 'Miami ways'.
>
> (Interview, 06/23/2017)

"Breaking down barriers" is an acknowledgment of not allowing oneself to be vulnerable to others, which suggests being less genuine. Marcus picked up on this idea of vulnerability and openness by being and experiencing Malawi with this group. In the process, he also constructs America/"Miami" as the opposite; it is a place that is less real, less trustworthy and less positive.

Marcus' anxiety of regression from the better self he found in Malawi appeared in the narratives of other volunteers. Ana, a senior Counseling Psychology major, expressed how she didn't feel as intimately connected as she expected with her team during her second trip to Malawi. Upon returning home, the team bonding she built disintegrated leading her to ask, "Who are these people I just traveled with?" Ben also mentioned how his regular ministry work at home drains him and that "I know that in Malawi, somehow, someway, I'll be fed" spiritually.

Malawi as the affective site of transformation: feeling dirt and discomfort

For these students, feeling brokenness and experiencing discomfort is the necessary first step in self-transformation. Students are encouraged to psychologically and physically confront the uncomfortable reality of their flaws before they can embrace change As seen with Marcus, and also discussed in-depth by Ahmed (2004), people often define themselves by identifying what they are not. In this way, Malawi becomes a useful juxtaposition and gets constructed in a particular way in the process. Justin explained why Malawian's literal poverty matters:

> What Malawi itself does, is it's rustic enough that people feel they're having an experience. They don't have skyscrapers. There's no monorails…they see it's a place where they can go and it's literal poverty. And they've seen people starving. They've seen people without. And, that experience combined with them getting enough out of their own culture for a little bit…You cannot go to one of the top five poorest countries in the world and not feel crazy out of bounds.
>
> (Interview, 08/23/2018)

Students express these feelings can lead to self-reflection and change. Justin frames Malawi as a transformative place by drawing attention to how it is simultaneously uncomfortable yet liberating. He achieves this by managing physical, emotional, and spiritual expectations often before students make it to Malawi. There are many inconveniences involved with the trip that can produce discomfort among student volunteers, including the length of travel, harsh environments, and homesickness. In the orientation meetings, Justin makes a point to list the potentially negative aspects, but he always follows up with how this discomfort is productive. He explained:

> The first thing I tell them to do was to get your pen and pencil out. I'm going to list every single possible negative con that can happen to you between now and the time we go there… what I start with is every single bad thing that could happen to them. I've never had anyone get malaria, [but it's possible] you get malaria. You get air sick, you could be homesick. Somebody could make you mad… And, I go through every little thing. But then I say, I flip it over and say okay, but I can tell you this. When you go to Malawi and, say, when you breath in deeply, you're going to breath in dust, and soot, and smoke, but you're gonna feel like you've never breathed cleaner air. And you're gonna be so dirty at the end of the day you can't scrub all of the red clay off your toes, but you're not going to want to.
>
> (Interview, 08/23/2018)

The participants corroborate that Justin did stress the dirtiness during meetings, but that through the dirt participants would feel clean. Tracy, for example, echoed Justin's emphasis in connecting uncomfortable physical dirtiness to spiritual cleanliness during orientation meetings:

> Tracy: I remember in meetings, Justin would say "It's extremely dirty over there but you're gonna feel the cleanest even when you're the dirtiest."
> Freidus: What do you think he meant by that?
> Tracy: The dirt. The dirt. Literally the dirt.
> Freidus: But what did he mean by "you'll feel the cleanest…"
> Tracy: You feel renewed. You feel refreshed. You literally feel like you just wiped everything out of your body and you're just the purest that you've been. And it's honestly the people over there.
>
> (Interview, 04/18/2017)

Justin described the things that can go wrong with the trip and what holds the potential to produce unpleasant and unwanted feelings, including sickness, dirtiness, loneliness, interpersonal conflict, and frustration over suddenly changed plans. Implicit in this argument is that the costs are outweighed by spiritual and emotional benefits. To achieve the status of "healed" one is required to become outwardly and materially dirtied by Malawi. In this sense, engaging with the elements of Malawi that cause dirtiness and discomfort become an integral component for healing.

Malawi as the site of transformation: feeling joyful poverty

Through these narratives about what students should expect from their trip, a particular "type" of Malawi is constructed. Witnessing a "joyful poverty" in the children is a key step for student volunteers to acknowledge their own broken self. Student volunteers experience Malawians as joyful, but what is emotionally and spiritually unsettling is their inner struggles with consumerism and lack of faithfulness that result from comparing their lives to the Malawian children's. Justin explained:

> So, going somewhere that is that impoverished, but the people are friendly and worship God like no one's business…They're super joyful about a lot of things…When you go there and go "A-ha!" Truly it's not tied to things, it's tied to community.
>
> (Interview 08/23/2018)

Justin wants his participants to encounter poverty and Malawi happens to supply a people that are impoverished and yet are "super joyful about a lot of things." Justin says that he hopes these encounters generate an "acceptable and appropriate guilt" showing that true joy is found in community, spirituality, and building authentic relationships. Learning that joy is found in a reliance on God and

community and not material things is intrinsic to healing.

Learning how to be joyful through Malawians was echoed by participants. They were shocked by how Malawians are "so poor" and yet are so "joyful" which is a common observation in volunteer tourism research in the Global South (Crossley, 2012a, 2012b). They described scenes that juxtapose these two seemingly paradoxical elements. Hannah explained:

> One of their phrases that they always use is "Kuli chimwewe" which means "there is joy." And so now that's like a life motto of mine because these beautiful people who just radiate light, and you see their circumstances or you see the same clothes they wear every single day and how they only have on one shoe, if any shoes. And it's just like there's always joy. There's always a light…I wouldn't have experienced that, I don't think, if I didn't get outside of my little Western bubble.
>
> (Interview, 04/10/2017)

Malawi allows Hannah this opportunity to bear witness to those that radiate light in their poverty. This is similar to Marcus' narrative focused on material discrepancies:

> You walk into the village or whatever, and you see how humble they're living and then it kinda brings you down. Like it's "Wow," like I'm sitting over here in this space like "Well. Okay. Well. Dang. I want to figure out if I want a better car." I'm like "This doesn't matter." We got kids here I'm walking up to that shows unconditional love, that have true joy, that shows actual friendship, that wear the same clothes every day, always in them, and are all playful like "Oh hey, what's up?" It's like "Oh man," like I'm out here in another pair of pants…It just reminds us to be mindful to be grateful and thankful for everything I do have.
>
> (Interview, 06/29/2017)

Scenes including the poverty, the perplexing gratefulness, and orphans smiling and playing with student volunteers permeate participant narratives. Witnessing Malawians as joyfully poor affected the volunteers with a mixture of fascination and guilt.

One of the most affectual experiences reported by student volunteers was when Justin led them to visit a mother living with her disabled 23-year-old daughter in a nearby village. According to the volunteers, the daughter's father died during a famine before she was born. The mother gave birth to her prematurely, but the baby lost her legs due to complications. During this visit, Justin informed everyone that the leftover money they raised was used to help the family purchase a new roof, a year supply of food, and a new bed for the daughter. This caused the Malawian mother and student volunteers to "burst into tears." Rachel described the scene:

> So, we went and saw her [the mother] and we brought her a bunch of food and I remembered she looked us all in the eye and she was crying. This lady, she didn't speak any English. So, we had [a Malawian] go with us to translate and she looked us all in the eyes like one at a time and said something and none of us knew what she said and she said "I'm looking into the eyes of angels sent here from God." I just lost it. I was crying. I was crying. Like bawling. And Justin had a picture of me, and he said it's his favorite picture from the whole trip, but it's just me with just snot, in the ground, like I'm dirty, crying. … I remember we were sitting there afterwards and I just had no clue what to say to anybody. We were all like, 'Wow!' And I didn't know what to say, and you just feel like- I think it's in Romans where it's like a spiritual groaning and then the spirit will intercede, and I totally felt like I was living that. So, it was like crazy. Sometimes it's not necessarily words per se, but, gut-wrenching feelings as well. And then also to appreciate things more, to be more thankful, to come back and tell people about it and maybe hope you motivate them to live a little bit differently…
>
> (Interview, 05/16/2017)

The physical discomfort of dirt, snot, crying on the ground and the feeling of a "spiritual groaning" coupled with the psychologically unsettling experience, the "gut-wrenching feeling", of witnessing adversity and poverty, combined in this moment to cause Rachel to more deeply understand and strengthen her relationship with God and be introspective about her own self. It invoked "appropriate guilt" and as a result she reflected on her life and became more appreciative for what she had. Noteworthy is her acknowledgment that "it's not necessarily words per se, but gut-wrenching feelings, as well" that can change someone. She highlights that the affective encounter was powerful in ways that supersede language.

Achieving a better self: unmasking and team bonding

The data also suggest that comfort, identified in participant narratives as feelings of safety and trust among others, is vital to healing and achieving a better version of themselves. These feelings foster interpersonal bonds between the student volunteers. Interspersed in the above quotes, we find language of "taking off a mask", that is expanded upon here. Unmasking is related to the idea of "being real" and was something nearly all participants discussed. Moreover, unmasking is seen as powerful only when it is relational, meaning the unmasking requires witnessing by student volunteers and/or Justin. Justin related this sense of finding a real self in an exchange he had with students:

> All this darkness and all these things that have been torturing these people came out [one night in Malawi] and I just looked around the room like… "Guys, what's going on here?" They're like, "We ***feel*** safe here. We ***feel*** like we can trust each other enough." That's when I realized the most important thing in any trip was a team, and my team did everything together…they share, and we build that in before we go…if they need to get stuff out. If you want to confess… it is happening almost every

> year…I have a girl that is going this year that's like "I need that... I need to go, I need to open up. I know I can do it there." I'm like you've never been. She's like, "I know but I've heard and I know that's a place I can do that." And so that's kind of what my team has become. (emphasis added).
>
> (Interview, 08/23/2018)

Healing and discovering one's true self requires feeling safe and for some confessing past transgressions. Student volunteers need to feel comfortable enough with their team members to be vulnerable. Justin purposefully incorporates activities that promote bonds among participants. Hannah reported:

> Normally, when we get together, we pray, and we talk about scheduling and language and what to pack and what we need to be prepared for overall. But also, we talk about being prayerful and being intentional and kinda being wide open. The past couple times we've kinda broken up into small groups and talk about deeper things and just ignite our relationship or ignite a bond or something like that. This last time, Justin had us break up one-on-one with each other and just pray to each other, talk to each other and then see what we need to be praying for and then pray for everyone there.
>
> (Interview, 04/10/2017)

Justin's effort to build team cohesion is not limited to the orientation meetings. He tries to generate strong emotional relationships between participants through purposeful management of their arrangements while in Malawi. He says:

> We have team [dishwashing] and I am always matching up people that I know are not in the same clique. I assign beds. I make them stay in certain rooms with people. I've got three softball players going and they're in three different bedrooms. They are not going to be together.
>
> (Interview, 08/23/2018)

The maintenance of pre-existing cliques and groups of friends that coalesced outside of Malawi is counterproductive to Justin's goals. He wants to ensure that student volunteers are spending time with other student volunteers who are not so familiar and placing individuals together in close proximity allows for strengthening of social relations.

For the most part, Justin succeeds in this based on what student volunteers report. Shelby, a 24-year-old teacher, explained:

> I mean we had nicknames for each other. I mean I got called the mom of the family. I mean it's just, you know, it's what we did. And we got close because Justin did a schedule where we cleaned the kitchen and we had morning duty of doing a lesson and somebody [ran the] singing, so you'd have to get together and see if they had a song that they wanted to go with the lesson. Or like doing dishes. We really got close doing dishes… why not talk when you have the chance. It is a big deal.
>
> (Interview, 03/09/2017)

Laborious side-by-side activities encourage relationships that are more intimate. Previous studies also note how NGO leaders organize shared labor activities to promote "warmth" between volunteers and locals (Richard & Rudnyckyj, 2009). In this case, these arrangements that generate feelings of trust and safety between student volunteers allow for them to confide in each other and to be emotionally vulnerable. The ability to "take off masks" is a necessary component in the transformation process. Megan exemplifies this when she recounts a particular night that four other student volunteers also reference as being the most powerful positive experience they had while in the country:

> A big deal for me [was] to be able to take my mask off and tell a group of people who I really was and be able to be myself. We had that night at the very beginning of our trip probably two days in. It didn't start like that. The power went out and we were just talking about college and things we didn't like about college and then it got real and people started kinda just saying things that they were struggling with…I felt that I had no walls anymore and that was a huge deal for me to not have walls and to not have a mask. I can be who I was supposed to be…
>
> (Interview, 03/09/2017)

Being broken and then healed among trustworthy peers in Malawi is Justin's goal. For Megan, no walls, no mask, and being who she was supposed to be was the foundation of building a community based on a transformed self. Justin's ability to influence and direct affective encounters with Malawians and with other students was central to informing how Megan thought about herself and her transformation. These data demonstrate his diligence in managing and mobilizing affect during the orientation and pre-departure meetings and while he does not control all of the activities of the student volunteers, he does provide a particular framework for how they interpret their engagements and experiences with the explicit purpose of achieving self-transformation.

Discussion

Previous approaches to affect would have us pay attention to the kinds of social phenomena that emerge from the interactions between the student volunteer team and Malawians (Frazer & Waitt, 2016; Parreñas, 2012). However, this research follows Doerr and Taieb's suggestion to pay attention to affect management. Coupling this point of view with Goffman's frame analysis we interpret this case study differently and, we argue, more effectively. This study demonstrates the powerful influence leaders like Justin have in guiding the affective experiences of his volunteer tourists. Justin attempts to direct his participants through different approaches

including choosing roommates, planning activities, restricting access to social media and make-up. However, Goffman's frame analysis allows us to interpret Justin's predeparture orientation meetings (and overall rhetoric) as reported by himself and other volunteers as another crucial technique in his management of affect.

Goffman allows us to interpret Justin's rhetoric as framing the volunteers as flawed subjects that need to be redeemed by traveling and bearing witness to Malawi. Taken together, the data demonstrate Justin's intentional management of affect to reach a desired goal: self-transformation. For the most part, it appears that participants achieved this while in Malawi. Justin, echoed by his participants, associates realness or authenticity with the lack of a "mask" and engaging in more open, vulnerable relationships with others. Social media, consumer materialism, and lack of appreciation for everyday conveniences were identified as factors that contribute to the making of broken selves.

On the other hand, Malawians are framed by Justin and the student participants as the antithesis of America. Malawians are experienced as poor, yet full of "joy" and exemplify a way of life that is conducive to the making of a more genuine self instead of superficial relations where people are not "real" with each other. Team participants bear witness to this example of realness and bond over their shared experience. This culminates in the participants' "unmasking," confessing, and confiding their flaws to each other. The result is a transformation to a better self that is more grateful, less materialistic, and, in the end, more "joyful" like their image of Malawians.

Malawi, America, and the students themselves are framed by the leader in a deliberate effort to direct how they experience Malawi and consider the self while in the country. Affective encounters are dependent upon social and cultural contexts that inform how student volunteers make sense of their felt experiences. Malawi is constructed as a conduit for student transformation but so, too, is America. The engagements that occur between American student volunteers and Malawian orphans does not happen in a vacuum but is informed by a combination of historically rooted understandings of the "other," the self and America by the team leader. Here we see that this affective encounter is only possible as an intersubjective force that occurs between actors - between students themselves and between Malawian children and students. Affect is generated as participants encounter each other (masked or unmasked), Malawi's harsh elements (heat, dirt, pollution), and Malawians (poor, joyful, authentic) – including children and adults.

Goffman's concept of framing is productive in understanding how this works. The data demonstrate that participants understand their sensorial experiences by drawing on both their understandings as well as misunderstandings of "Africa" and Malawi as a "dirty," "joyful," "poor" yet spiritual place and the construction of the self that is associated with a polluted, inauthentic America that leads to their "brokenness". These frames allow us to understand how transformation, or at least how volunteers *felt* they were transformed, occurs and could be useful to future scholarship asking similar questions.

It is important to note, however, despite Justin's intentions, how different volunteers did report varying anxieties of "slipping back" to their broken selves. While Ana mentioned her lack of feeling connected to her team, potentially disrupting accessing her authentic self, both Ben and Marcus indicated that living their everyday life back home in America presents challenges in maintaining their discovered "real" selves. This threat of regression may indicate two things. First, it reveals how affect management is not a completely deterministic process. Tourists themselves may either be influenced by other factors, including their agency, which will lead them to reflect on their affective experiences differently. Second, the threat of regression may motivate these volunteers to return to Malawi to cleanse themselves from the trappings of American modernity that lead to regressing to their flawed self.

We argue that the theoretical perspective we develop in this paper can be applied to different contexts beyond just STMs or religiously motivated tourism. While there are studies that examine the role of leaders in tourism programs (Pond, 1993; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), they do not focus on the affective dimensions. Through the lens of affect management and frame analysis, one can study discursive framing as a technique deployed by other kinds of leaders like tour guides, hosts, and teachers to direct the affective experiences of the people they guide. We argue the need for more research that examines how and why transformation occurs (often in particular ways) beyond assuming it was just the experience of "being there".

Conclusion

This article contributes to theories of affect in several ways. First, we provide a case study that takes seriously the role of emotions and sensorial experiences in shaping the way student volunteers traveling to Malawi create knowledge about themselves and to a lesser degree the orphans they visit. We find that the charismatic leader is a crucial actor who informs the affective experiences of participants principally through his rhetoric, which frames students as deeply flawed moderns that need to bear witness to joyful, real, Christian Malawians in order for them to be transformed. Secondly, we developed a theoretical approach that builds on Doerr and Taieb's call to focus on the management and mobilization of affect by repurposing Goffman's frame analysis to examine how discursive framing can be used as a technique to attempt to guide the affective experiences of tourists. To date, there is little tourism scholarship that takes a similar approach in exploring how affective encounters can be informed or directed by leaders. We encourage other scholars to engage with this theoretical perspective when examining not only other STMs, but other kinds of tourism programs as well.

We conclude by acknowledging that there are many processes involved in subject-making ranging from the affective experience itself to the recursive processes of remembering and reflecting on such experiences over time. We have provided data that demonstrate the affective encounters recounted by newly returned student volunteers. Future studies might take up where this research has left off by examining the long-term reflections of student volunteers and how their recounting of these affective encounters changes over time.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to

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