

Shifting the focus of development: turning 'helping' into self-reflexive learning

Nancy Cook

Brock University, Canada.

In her article *Global Citizenship and Study Abroad: It's All About U.S.*, published in the last issue of *Critical Literacy*, Zemach-Bersin (2007) confronts American university administrators who uncritically encourage their undergraduate students to study abroad. In promoting the internationalization of higher education, these administrators - supported by federal initiatives and funds - hope to recuperate America's reputation around the globe, which has waned in the wake of the U.S. government's responses to the World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001. In particular, they anticipate that sending American students to live and study in other countries will encourage cross-cultural understanding and 'global citizenship,' alleviate ignorance, and compensate for failed U.S. foreign policy. But this enthusiasm for taking learning on the road, Zemach-Bersin (2007:17) argues,

overlooks the many ways in which the discourse of study abroad surreptitiously reproduces the logic of colonialism, legitimizes American imperialist desires, and allows for the interests of U.S. foreign policy to be articulated through the specious rhetoric of global universality. Though presented with an appealing veneer of multicultural understanding and progressive global responsibility, the current discourse of study abroad is nationalistic, imperialistic, and political in nature.

If American university administrators and the federal government fail to acknowledge the 'unintended consequences' of studying abroad and becoming a 'global citizen,' then it is likely that most of the participating students (the majority of whom are women) are not aware of their inculcation in contemporary forms of imperialism as they 'harvest the resource of international knowledge' (Zemach-Bersin 2007:22) and bring it home to advance and strengthen American economic, cultural, and political interests.

Heron (2004, 2005a, 2005b) is also concerned about how social work students who go abroad to fulfil their program practicum requirement are implicated in contemporary transcultural power relations that linger in non-linear ways from the colonial era. In her more recent work *Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative* (2007), Heron turns her attention from students to Canadian women who have travelled to Africa to do development work. Heron argues that these women's desire to do the good work of development is largely motivated by the personal longing to construct a helping self, an identity as a global 'good guy' who makes a positive difference in the lives of needy others by implementing Western-derived reforms. She draws many of the same conclusions as Zemach-Bersin (2007:24), particularly that development workers, like students who study abroad, join the ranks of 'missionaries, colonizers, anthropologists, and humanitarian aid workers who have served as 'goodwill ambassadors,' promoting the soft power interests of the metropole.'

I am also interested in analyzing the effects Western development workers have on global power relations as they live and work abroad, often in once-colonized locales (Cook 2005, 2006, 2007). The political aim of my research, as outlined in this paper, is to encourage development workers to undertake the difficult work of reflecting on how they forge a life

abroad, how they understand their development work, and how they represent the supposed 'recipients' of development in order to understand the unintended consequences those decisions and representations have for both the people among whom they live and global relations of power. But the new American rhetoric about the 'global citizen' which Zemach-Bersin describes, and universities, governments, and development agencies claim to be fostering, obscures these power relations. While the 'global citizen' is increasingly invoked, 'rarely is a concrete definition presented or explored. Typically the term is employed as an empty signifier, without even a contextual definition' (Zemach-Bersin 2007:19). I want to use this article to fill that signifier, to develop the concept of 'global citizen,' but not as someone who unwittingly uses it and its related practices to maintain Western hegemony. Rather, I want to understand and claim a 'global citizen' as someone who reflects on their complicity in global power relations, considers their responsibilities to those who are disadvantaged by current global arrangements, and who actively resists perpetuating them so that Othered groups can actively exist in a more just social reality. Advocating for Western development workers to become this sort of global citizen requires encouraging them to reflect on their work goals and motives, as well as their everyday practices abroad.

How do we begin to do this self-reflexive work? Andreotti (2006a, 2006b, 2007), who has been working with Voluntary Services Abroad to help development volunteers consider these issues before they go overseas, argues that self-reflection often productively begins when volunteers are asked to shift their development focus from 'making a difference to them' to 'mutual learning,' which involves volunteers learning to listen, to learn from others, to learn about difference, and to learn how to alter harmful practices and representations. As Andreotti and Warwick (2007:7) argue, this kind of 'critical literacy' helps Western development workers 'analyze the relationships amongst language, power, social practices, identities and inequalities, to imagine 'otherwise,' to engage ethically with difference, and to understand the potential implications of their thoughts and actions' at both the local and global scale.

Considering these concerns about initiating processes of self-reflexivity and critical literacy in development workers to engender socially just global citizens and less oppressive development practices, my aim in this paper is to provide an analysis of the lives of a group of white Western women development volunteers I studied while they were living in the Muslim community of Gilgit, northern Pakistan in 1999 and 2000. In describing their work motives, everyday practices, and representations of the people they were 'helping,' I show how they act to increase their own autonomy through global travel and benevolent development work while simultaneously thwarting the autonomy of Gilgitis. These negative and often unintended outcomes are rooted in imperial power relations that linger from the colonial past. My hope is that development volunteers can use this analysis as a tool to help them reflect on their own goals, motives, and daily lives abroad so they can begin to act and imagine otherwise.

Making a Difference to Them

The 'helping imperative' that Heron discusses pervades the testimonials development volunteers post on the Internet when they return home from a stint abroad. Here are a couple of examples from the Cross-Cultural Solutions (2007) website:

Sometimes I did wonder how my being there was helping, but when I saw eyes light up and people rush to greet me at the center, or welcome me into their homes with open arms, I knew that just my presence let them know that people care, and for that they were so grateful.

It finally hit me full force one day when working with a student...I realized then

that I was making a difference and a contribution just by being who I was. I never lost patience with that student, or any other. No matter how many times he called me over, I would stand by him. In that or any other moment, when faced with someone's need to feel connected, all I had to offer was myself.

This desire to improve the lives of others is also an important factor that encouraged my research participants to travel abroad, the 'official' reason most of them gave for why they took development placements in Gilgit.¹ Most women told me they felt lucky to have had a good education, comparatively satisfying and well-paid work, and materially abundant lives. They wanted to share the fruits of their good fortune with less privileged people by putting their expertise to work in a developing country. Elena,² a single 29-year-old British teacher trainer, told me that

I've been really lucky, because I've done anything I wanted to do...I wanted to go to university...and become a teacher, and I was able to do that. And then, I always wanted to live and work abroad somewhere, but not earn like loads of money...I feel, honestly, that we're still much better off than a lot of people here, but a local wage is what I wanted. So I'd describe myself as being very lucky. And I want to give something back.

Joan, who is a 50-year-old British school principal, has also wanted to help for a long time: "I think there were lots of reasons why I got to the point of deciding to come. I'd always had it in my mind that I would like to come and work in a developing country - that's not Pakistan, just a developing country - at some point in my career, to help."

The women I interviewed and observed in my study are not unlike many of the volunteers who discuss their development motives on the web. They are a group of 30 British, Canadian, Dutch, American, and Australian volunteers working for international development agencies in Gilgit, many on two year contracts negotiated through Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO). They are health workers, teachers, librarians, English-language coaches, and teacher trainers who instruct local educators on new methods of teaching the curriculum in English. None of these volunteers have educational degrees in international development studies or consider themselves 'professional' development workers with international experience and in-depth knowledge of the context in which they work. Rather, they are lay teachers and health care workers who understand themselves as 'volunteering' two years of their lives to help others by unproblematically transferring their skills and expertise into a different social context. Most are paid a local wage in local currency, and are prepared for their tenure abroad only through a short VSO training session (with VSO library access) in London and another in-country session once they arrive in Pakistan to learn the basics of Urdu and Islam.

Critical perspectives on development are not discussed in either preparatory regime. Surprisingly, even the NGOs for which women work do not 'train' or educate them about the local social setting, work context, or goals and philosophies that drive overarching development agendas. NGOs limit their role to assigning foreign volunteers particular responsibilities and jobs in the field and assisting them as they learn to negotiate the practicalities of everyday life in Gilgit. Consequently, these volunteers may have different perceptions of their work and a different sense of themselves and their limitations than other types of development workers. Their understanding of 'development' is framed, not as much

¹ Gilgit is the largest town in the Northern Areas, a federally administered province of Pakistan. It is located in the far north, near the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan and the Chinese border, and lies in a steep valley at 1400 meters at the confluence of the Hindukush, Karakorum, and Himalaya mountain ranges.

² Pseudonyms chosen by individual research participants are used throughout the paper.

by the official institutions of international development such as universities, nationally-funded development agencies, and grassroots NGOs, but more by a non-organizationally rooted helping imperative.

Interestingly, a desire to help is not the only thing that motivates volunteers to do development work abroad. Here are a few more testimonials from the Cross-Cultural Solutions (2007) website that draw our attention to what I call the 'self-development' motives for volunteering:

This was a life changing experience! It has opened my eyes up to the reality of a new culture and it has given me the courage to face challenges alone.

This is an amazing experience! Every aspect of it, the volunteer work, the cultural immersion, the travelling, extracurricular activities, and the personal sense of satisfaction that it all brings is overwhelming.

I learned a lot about myself and how to survive even when I don't speak the language. It taught me a lot about myself and how self-sufficient I really am.

My research participants are equally straightforward about these less altruistic benefits of doing development work abroad. Evelyn, a 43-year-old Canadian teaching consultant, concludes that "nobody has 100 percent pure motives...I'm at the point where I can't define who's here because they really want to help people, or, as in my case, part of the reason for me taking the job was that I needed the *money*...I want to do good work, but I can only take that so far." In explaining to me why she decided to do development work after just getting her feet wet in a teaching career, Susan says, "It sounds a bit *crass*. I wanted to do something, I wanted to feel worthwhile...If I'm honest, I'd say the main reason I'm here is for selfish reasons. The job opportunity is *great*. We get a lot of professional freedom here, which you don't get in Britain."

These 'selfish' motives intermingle with the helping imperative in each of my research participants' stories of development travel. However, they tend to put far more emphasis on what 'pushed' them, rather than what drew them to development work in Gilgit. Some women were unable to find well-paid jobs at home. Others were fleeing an empty nest. Troubling family relations, including divorces, elderly parent nursing responsibilities, and bereavements, compelled several others to leave home. But no matter the source of the push, almost all of the women in my study claimed some kind of 'emancipation aspiration' in their departure narrative, which they hope to fulfil through development work and the experience of global travel. Janet, for instance, concludes that her experiences in Gilgit have improved her preparedness for old age: "If I've had an experience of having just *physically* survived here, it brings me into a slightly more confident old age in Britain...I had hoped that as an outcome that I would be a *stronger* and less *fearful* old lady, going into old age knowing that you can cope with things and not be fearful." Gaining confidence through her work abroad has helped Dolly escape an increasingly dull life at home: "I don't think I can settle back in the UK. It's just not enough...I think I need the variety...I don't know what's missing there. I've outgrown those experiences...I wouldn't be satisfied to go back to that. But I'd quite like to go and see what's around a few more corners, now that I've got more experience of travelling and more confidence about travelling with VSO." Travelling abroad to do development work seems not to be solely a selfless venture of helping for Western women in Gilgit, but also, as it was in the colonial era, a means for metropolitan women dissatisfied with their lives at home to constitute themselves as full, independent, and authoritative individuals, and thereby achieve some sense of personal autonomy (Knapman 1986; Ware 1992; Sharpe 1993; George 1994; Kaplan 1997; Ghose 1998).

Scholars have claimed that the function of travel for Europeans in the colonial era was to realize a fuller sense of self (Buzard 1993). I argue that this is still the case, especially for women who historically have had a marginal relationship to travel. The traditional requirements of femininity involve sticking close to home, making travel a largely masculine activity. By choosing to leave home, my research participants disrupt these requirements and thereby enhance their self-understanding as independent individuals. Their strategies of escape through travel enact personal autonomy by allowing women to transgress gender norms at home; to shape a self-confident, somewhat elitist feminine identity; and to gain some sense of control over their lives. The feelings of independence and confidence Western women achieve from travelling helps them to realize other, more autonomous selves.

If volunteering to do development work is inspired by motives of self-development as well as the helping imperative, then in helping others volunteers can simultaneously help themselves. Sounds like a win-win situation. But is this the case? In many instances it isn't because, as I will show, helping Self often involves implicitly and unintentionally denigrating Others.

The 'Recipients' of Development

During formal interviews, the women in my study, without prompting, spent considerable time describing local women, the people they had come to help, despite also confessing that they were not intimately familiar with Gilgiti women's everyday lives. And those descriptions were fairly uniform. Most of my research participants understand these Muslim women as a homogenous, undifferentiated group with identical interests, experiences, and goals that is oppressed by the dictates of Islam and patriarchal husbands and that has little ability or aptitude to challenge their oppression. Amanda, a 37-year-old Dutch teacher, provides a good example: "Here, the women are always suffering. They give too many children birth. And they let men handle them like weak people. That's their lot. They can't be seen or heard. That's a big problem here for me, the plight of Pakistani women." Gilgiti women's apparent lack of agency to fight their 'lot' is almost as bluntly represented by 26-year-old Andy, who was "brought up in the UK to know that I did have a say, and that I could say 'No!' to [men]. And I think women here *don't* have that. When my girlfriends were visiting, we were talking about women here who don't even know they have the right to say 'No.' Is it abuse or is it rape? Probably not, it's just *life* here." Why do my research participants have such ideas, especially when they have no close friendships with local women and therefore do not know the intimate circumstances of their lives? We need to look to history for an answer to that question.

From its very inception, Islam has been represented in the West as one of the most powerful threats to metropolitan civilizations (Al-Azmeh 1993; Bulbeck 1998; Kepel 1992; Said 1978, 1981). It is stereotypically imagined by white Westerners as composed of consenting masses of maniacal men, who keep their veiled women shut up at home, postured in prayer before a howling mullah. Anxiety about Islam has heightened with the increased migration of Muslims to Europe, North America, and Australia, the Iranian Revolution (1979), the Salman Rushdie affair (1989), the World Trade Center attacks, and most recently with Western military incursions into Iraq and Afghanistan. News reports, media and state representations of veiled women, political cartoons, and everyday interactions with Muslim women in the West encourage my research participants to 'know' an irrational, oppressive Islam and of Muslim women who passively accept their subordination under Islam. These 'facts' prompt them to feel sorry for victimized Muslim women, to understand them as essentially different from and subordinate to 'liberated' Western women who are free to travel, do development work, and make their own choices. They also make patriarchal practices in Europe and North America disappear.

This tendency to homogenize women from the so-called third world and represent them as oppressed and different from white Western women is common when referring to non-Muslim groups too. Mohanty (1984) argues that this construct of the 'Third World Woman' as a singular and monolithic subject is a racist and imperialist move, meaning that it is based on white-centered experience, knowledge, and judgments that gloss over the differences between third world women and ignore that the experience of oppression is diverse, contingent on time, place, and culture, and is just as much a part of social organization in Europe and North America as it is in poorer regions of the world. For example, in their ethnocentric 'helping agendas,' development agencies and volunteers, like many researchers, judge third world economic, religious, and familial structures by Western standards. Rather than trying to understand the ways in which women are situated within and negotiate these social structures, Westerners insert a preconstituted 'Third World Woman' into them, in the process defining her as religious, housebound, illiterate, and completely subject to the whims of her husband, extended family, and state and religious leaders. These depictions of passive and oppressed third world women are paternalistic; they imply that these women cannot emancipate or develop themselves, but rather must rely on benevolent Westerners to supply ideas and implement programs that both organize social chaos and initiate progressive social change. Furthermore, representations of the 'Third World Other' enable white Westerners to understand themselves, in contrast, as liberated and independent people who control their own lives and have valuable knowledge and expertise to share. What is implied here is that third world women are stuck in history; they have not yet 'evolved' as far as the West has, and, therefore, need help to 'modernize.' These ideas, and their related practices, are racist and imperialistic.

Relational representations of 'liberated' Self and 'oppressed' Other emerge clearly in interviews with my research participants. When I asked the women in my study to describe themselves for me, they almost always characterized themselves as 'free' Western women who contrast favorably with Gilgiti women. Marion thinks that "what [Gilgiti women] envy about us is our independence, our ability to live alone and to make our own decisions, to make our own money. I point out to them that there can be *too much* independence, and that people can become very lonely and very isolated, but they, of course, like everybody else, can only see good in what they don't have yet." My research participants often see their independent selves as sources of inspiration and redemption for Muslim Gilgiti women. Andy believes "You can't solve the world's problems. You can't fight all the battles. And I prefer, in a way, to work at empowering local women to do it themselves. But I sometimes make a point of walking through the bazaar wearing a t-shirt and pants, because I think if I don't, no local woman will ever be able to." Using the ethnocentric logic I describe above, Andy assumes that Gilgit women want to dress as Western women do, but are prohibited. She also invokes the imperialistic and racist 'helping imperative' by positing herself as a model of emancipation and an urgently required agent of modernization.

Although my research participants sometimes have conflicting ideas about the status of Gilgiti women, they most often see these Muslim women as radically different from white Western women. By viewing local women through an imperial lens as 'oppressed,' they can perceive themselves as 'free' and autonomous. But in these representations, Muslim women remain faceless and silent. They are absent objects, muted figures, foreclosed Others with no independent condition of existence (Spivak 1985, 1988). The heterogeneity of Gilgiti women's lives are colonized so that their voices are rendered inaudible, their material realities and daily struggles are overlooked, and their cultural productions disregarded. Their subsequent lack of subjecthood robs them of agency, making them seem reliant on outside development initiatives. Transcultural relations between groups of women in Gilgit, then, are situated within a colonial legacy of power relations that strengthen Western women's self-images and social efficacy at the expense of local women's autonomy, understood as their

capacity to achieve an independent subjecthood in transcultural interactions, as opposed to the object status that has been already constituted for them through imperial representations. If we grant that these are unintended consequences of my research participants' desire to help coupled with their quest for self-development, then contemporary development practice is risky business for its 'recipients.'

Development Practice

Harmful ideas about the recipients of development structure most volunteers' understandings of their development work and their everyday development practices. Most women in my study understand their development work as helping work (or philanthropy), as well as a sign both of their freedom to travel as independent women and of their cultural superiority. Consequently, the racism implicit in Self/Other representations is sustained as my research participants strive to differentiate themselves from Gilgiti women through the world of work. But once this racism becomes enmeshed in material practices of development that are meant to 'improve' Gilgiti people and socio-cultural systems, some of my research participants also enact imperial power relations.

As I mentioned earlier, most women in my study are working overseas in educational development. Teaching abroad is part of a strategy of self-development as it allows Western women to increase their knowledge, specialization, and experience, which can translate into professional advancement, work autonomy, and pay increases once they return to the West. Although they are involved in the nurturing, feminized field of education, my research participants gain cultural authority by being Western educated, thinking of themselves - in contrast to Gilgiti women - as independent and smart enough to do the work, and representing that work as an essential cultural 'improvement' project. The sense of achievement they experience through their development work helps them develop a sense of themselves as confident, capable, and worthwhile people in various spheres of life. The second set of Cross-Cultural Solutions testimonials I quote above provides further evidence of this claim.

But development work fulfils more than volunteers' aspirations for personal growth. It also allows them to effect modernization and local social change. For Louise, "Work's the most meaningful thing in life here. I do observations of teachers, and to look back at them, it's lovely to see that they've actually changed because of something I've done." Janet is also satisfied to shape a legacy as a cultural benefactor: "This whole crowd of people I *know* have benefited from the service I have helped to provide. And there's this [local] colleague who's *grown* in stature and assurance and competence. That's not a bad legacy." Christine more explicitly focuses on the 'improving' aspect of her work: "I pointed out [to the teachers I train] that I was here to do a *job*, and the way we worked in the West was that you took your job *seriously*. I was here to do something, not just to drink tea with them and have a laugh all the time. Obviously I tried to make training as light-hearted as I can, but, at the end of the day, they're to do a job and I'm here to train them to do it better." By stressing her superior leadership, Christine contrasts herself - an independent, competent British woman with a good education and important work responsibilities - to local teachers who are represented as professionally uncommitted, rather than as individuals who work according to a different set of values and a different understanding of an appropriate home/work balance.

Development work poses several difficult challenges for my research participants. They have to cope with being alone on training courses in neighboring villages, where they are unsupported and alienated for several weeks at a time. They do not speak local languages. NGOs usually provide educators with very little information about their work context and even less guidance regarding local learning, teaching, and management styles. Women also work long hours, six days a week, to meet the high expectations NGOs set for dramatic

development results. Despite these challenges, the volunteers in my study aim to address as many facets of local education as possible, bringing them in line with Western standards and methodologies. Conforming to an ethnocentric logic, they try to 'improve' local teaching and learning styles, teachers' fluency in English, math, and science, the dominant work ethic, classroom discipline, school management and schedules, hygiene standards at schools and in local homes, and the status of local women through educational initiatives to meet a 'higher quality' Western standard. To their credit, they also strive to promote educational content that is cosmopolitan in perspective, but still meets the needs of people whose culture, geographical location, and unwritten first languages are not addressed in government-issue textbooks.

Most of my research participants believe these changes are valuable and welcomed by local people. When they learn otherwise, the sense of autonomy they gain through development work may be unsettled. Jane, a 40-year-old teacher, reflects that "You have these ideas back in the UK that you're going to be able to do something and really make a difference to people's lives. And yes, there has been a lot of that, but we hadn't realized that there'd be opposition from *within* communities. Who would guess...people are not sure they really want our education and have misgivings about what it might do to the structure of society?" Ignoring the limited scope of many educational curricula in the West, Lyn also believes her teaching initiatives can improve local education and local culture by extension: "One of the *biggest* problems is this incredibly *narrow* education they have. Ask somebody where Canada is and they won't have a clue. They have no concept of anything. And the biggest shock to me was that they don't *want* to know...So better education comes first, and I think through education that would flow to the culture more generally. We *have* to free up the girls." Using the same ethnocentric logic that assumes locals do and know nothing, Rose, a 54-year-old Dutch teacher trainer, finds the local work ethic "*unbelievable* ...It's nice [for teachers] to have this salary, but no one worries about work...About maths they know nothing. They even can't teach in Urdu...I can only show them how to do everything, giving demonstrations. Yeah, and basic things...like washing their hands and bringing a notebook...These teachers don't know how to do this...I hope my example will work."

By drawing on this sense of themselves as improving philanthropists, which incorporates racist and imperialistic impulses, my research participants forge liberated and authoritative, yet nurturing, self-understandings as they do their development work. Development work thus constitutes and confirms their identities as autonomous, benevolent, and superior metropolitan women. And the notion that local women are not allowed to do this work, or do it poorly, substantiates this construction of Self. For example, Joan told me, "There are only two or three professional women that I know here who have jobs that bring in money. And they say to their families 'I have a full-time job, I'm having children. I'm prepared to peel potatoes, make the *chapatti*, but I will *not* maintain animals or go to the fields.' They're creating a different work role for themselves...but these are *very* small beginnings." The women in my study, as I have briefly shown, often depict Gilgiti women as economically dependent house servants with few life opportunities. Therefore, they believe Gilgiti women rarely obtain the education necessary to teach, the opportunity to land a job, and the time to do the work well, often despite what they see every day to the contrary during teacher training sessions.

At the end of this analysis, what inferences can be drawn from my research with these development volunteers in this setting that are relevant to my project of creating global citizens with critical literacy? First, my research participants forge a sense of personal autonomy and professional empowerment through their social philanthropy. These salient aspects of self-development often override altruistic helping impulses. Second, 'benevolent' development work often incorporates racist representations and practices that define differences between Gilgiti women who are ostensibly homebound, needy, and dull-witted,

and metropolitan women who are free to work abroad as capable benefactors. Third, 'improving' initiatives frequently enact imperial practices and identities as Western volunteers represent Gilgitis, in deeply patronizing ways, as unable to improve themselves. By denigrating most aspects of local education systems, they justify Western interventions, especially into the lives of local women, as part of a contemporary 'civilizing' mission. These dominant understandings have a long, but fractured, legacy in South Asia (Spivak 1985; Ramusack 1990; Jolly 1993), as do practices of social, cultural, and intellectual reform through white women's burden of education and health care (Ware 1992; Jolly 1993; Ghose 1998). While these well-established practices and perceptions have always been contested by particular Westerners and thus have shifted over time, they have been further unsettled by anti-racist agendas within contemporary feminist and multicultural movements that caution teachers against prejudiced, ethnocentric worldviews and activities, especially in the classroom. However, some women in my study recuperate imperial practices of conversion when they try to mould Gilgiti lives to fit a Western prototype and to impose metropolitan, yet ostensibly universally applicable, models, principles, behaviors, knowledge, and values through education - especially in the English language (Jayaweera 1990; Ramusack 1990; Jayawardena 1995).

From 'Helping' to Self-Reflexive Learning

In this paper I draw on the insights of postcolonial theory (Andreotti 2006a; Loomba 2005; Young 2001) to analyze my research participants' development motives, practices, and representations of the people they want to 'help' in Gilgit. My aim was to show that the 'helping imperative' that purportedly motivates their volunteering is a trickster; it slips and slides alongside desires for self-development, among racist ideas and imperialist practices that perpetuate the marginality of 'Third World Others' in the twenty-first century. These contemporary processes are linked to ventures in the colonial past, but not as part of the pragmatic and diverse sets of practices used to establish and manage colonies abroad that we now call colonialism (Young 2001). Rather, they are elements of a lingering imperialism, a system of global social, economic, and cultural domination that operates from the metropolitan center over ostensibly inferior subaltern populations without the agenda of political rule. Overt missionary conversion in the colonial era, for example, has a legacy in contemporary international development because similar ideas and representations organize their practices. While they are different global mechanisms with particular trajectories, they are characterized by overlapping histories of global domination.

Global citizens are instituted as development workers undertake personally challenging reflexive work related to these processes and histories that have already predetermined what needs Others have. But if aspiring global citizens are not satisfied with the largely unintended and harmful outcomes I outline in my analysis, outcomes that result as these predeterminations are put into action, then they need to imagine and act otherwise. How do Others lead their daily lives and under what circumstances? What do they need? What do Western volunteers have to offer? How do relations of power organize current ideas and practices of development? How can those ideas and practices be changed to realize less oppressive development agendas and a more just social reality? As I suggest in the introduction, perhaps reconsidering the primary focus of development is a useful initial re-imagining site.

Entering the minefield of international development as a 'helper' seems to be risky business for those groups Othered by the process and its historical antecedents. Following Andreotti's (2006a, 2006b, 2007) advice, volunteers may be better served by shifting their focus to 'mutual learning' in an effort to reflect on the important questions I list above. Mutual learning as a way to develop critical literacy involves relinquishing the development driver seat. From the passenger sidelines we can listen (rather than preach) to others, learn from them what

their lives are like and what they need, what has not worked in the past and why, who are the best people to initiate change. Critical literacy encourages a respect for difference, as opposed to ethnocentric judgments and 'civilizing' agendas. It requires taking a generalized learner stance toward others that assumes they are competent and knowledgeable about their own lives and social circumstances. In this way 'Third World Others' are transformed from the objects of development into people with full subjecthood from whom valuable lessons can be learned. Becoming global citizens with critical literacy is a humbling experience. And considering the colonial past that haunts us today, that humility is long overdue.

References

Al-Azmeh, A. (1993). *Islams and modernities*. London: Verso.

Andreotti, V. (2006a). Theory without practice is idle, practice without theory is blind: the potential contributions of postcolonial theory to development education. *Development Education Journal* 12(3): 7-10.

Andreotti, V. (2006b). Soft versus critical global citizenship education. *Development Education: Policy and Practice* 3 (Autumn): 83-98.

Andreotti, V. and Warwick, P. (2007). Engaging students with controversial issues through a dialogue based approach. Published online by CitizED. Retrieved January 10, 2008, from http://www.citized.info/?r_menu=res&strand=3.

Bulbeck, C. (1998). *Re-orienting western feminisms: women's diversity in a postcolonial world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buzard, J. (1993). *The beaten track: European tourism, literature and the ways to 'culture,' 1800-1918*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Cook, N. (2005). What to wear, what to wear?: western women and imperialism in Gilgit, Pakistan. *Qualitative Sociology* 28(4): 349-367.

Cook, N. (2006). Bazaar stories of gender, sexuality and imperial space in Gilgit, Northern Pakistan. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 5(2): 230-257.

Cook, N. (2007). *Gender, identity and imperialism: women development workers in Pakistan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cross-Cultural Solutions. (2007). Volunteer voices. Retrieved January 10, 2008, from <http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org>.

George, R. (1994). Homes in the empire, empires in the home. *Cultural Critique winter*. 95-127.

Ghose, I. (1998). *Women travellers in colonial India: the power of the female gaze*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Heron, B. (2004). Gender and exceptionality in North-South research: reflecting on relations. *Journal of Gender Studies* 13(2): 117-127.

Heron, B. (2005a). Changes and challenges: preparing Social Work students for practicums In today's sub-Saharan African context. *Journal of International Social Work* 48(6): 782-793.

- Heron, B. (2005b). Self-reflection in critical Social Work practice: subjectivity and the possibilities of resistance. *Journal of Reflective Practice* 6(3): 341-351.
- Heron, B. (2007). *Desire for development: whiteness, gender and the helping imperative*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Jayawardena, K. (1995). *The white women's other burden: western women and South Asia during British rule*. London: Routledge.
- Jayaweera, S. (1990). European women educators under the British colonial administration In Sri Lanka. *Women's Studies International Forum* 13(4): 323-331.
- Jolly, M. (1993). The maternal body and Empire. In Gunew, S. and Yeatman, A. (Eds.). *Feminism and the Politics of Difference* (pp.103-127). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Kaplan, E. (1997). *Looking for the other: feminism, film, and the imperial gaze*. London: Routledge.
- Kepel, G. (1992). ReIslamisation movements in contemporary history. *Contention* 2(1): 151-159.
- Knapman, C. (1986). *White women in Fiji, 1835-1930*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Loomba, A. (2005). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. New York: Routledge.
- Mohanty, C. (1984). Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *Boundary 2* 12(3)/13(1): 333-53.
- Ramusack, B. (1990). Cultural missionaries, maternal imperialists, feminist allies: British women activists in India, 1865-1945. *Women's Studies International Forum* 13(4): 309-321.
- Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism: western representations of the Orient*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Said, E. (1981). *Covering Islam: how the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Sharpe, J. (1993). *Allegories of empire: the figure of woman in the colonial text*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Spivak, G. (1985). Three women's texts and a critique of Imperialism. *Critical Inquiry* 12(1): 243-261.
- Spivak, G. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (Eds.). *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp.271-313). London: Macmillan.
- Ware, V. (1992). *Beyond the pale: white women, racism, and history*. Verso: London.
- Young, R. (2001). *Postcolonialism: an historical introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Zemach-Bersin, T. (2007). Global citizenship and study abroad: it's all about U.S. *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices* 1(2): 16-28.