

Canadian Youth Volunteering Abroad: Rethinking Issues of Power and Privilege

Mai Ngo
University of Toronto

This paper discusses the role of institutions in the ethical engagement of Canadian youth volunteers abroad. In recent years, researchers and practitioners in the international field have questioned the ethics of volunteering as part of development, with scrutiny on who actually benefits from volunteering initiatives. Since the 1960s, over 65,000 young Canadians have participated in volunteer abroad programs (Tiessen, 2008), and criticism has increased towards youth volunteers going overseas to fulfill their aspirations to “change the world”. This study considered how complex social relations and institutional structures in international development have shaped the issues of power and privilege of the young person’s experience in volunteering. The research used Institutional Ethnography (IE) as a method of inquiry, and mapped out the social relations between the experiences of seven former youth volunteers and field staff, and their organizations. Westheimer and Kahne’s Active Citizenship and Dei’s Anti-Racism theories were proposed as frameworks to examine the presence of equity in youth volunteer programs.

The Individual and the Institution

Since the 1960s, over 65,000 young Canadians have participated in volunteer abroad programs; this number continues to expand each year as young people travel to developing countries for a variety of reasons that range from self-discovery and adventure to the desire to make a difference (Tiessen, 2008). As the number of young volunteers going abroad grows, so does their impact on the communities that they visit. International development critics have resurfaced terms such as ‘Western imperialism’ in the debate concerning volunteering overseas. The question ‘is volunteering another form of colonization?’ permeates voluntourism or ‘backpactivism’.

The research on international voluntary service (IVS) indicates that volunteers contribute to issues of power and privilege in international volunteering. The nebulous meanings of power and privilege can be put into context using Peggy McIntosh’s work *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (1988). Her essay serves as an entry point into power and privilege while acknowledging that the definition of these two words are evolving and complex. McIntosh describes a political system that works “systematically to empower certain groups” (1988, p. 5), and privilege can be seen as dominance in a system due to one’s race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, physical or mental ability, and so on. Volunteers can exert power on the community in forms that include economic, racial, heterosexual, gender and political privilege (Lewis, 2006).

Yet there has been less focus on Canadian youth volunteers who make a conscious effort to counter the harmful actions that youth volunteers have the reputation for bringing with them. The comparison between these experiences leaves a gap in the depiction of international volunteering as either positive or negative. The focus on the institutional structures of volunteerism has been neglected, while the onus has been put on the individual. As long as individuals have the desire to go overseas, and governments are investing in youth as global citizens for social and economic capital, the solution of eradicating youth volunteerism overseas remains unrealistic.

This paper considers the network of relations and institutional structures in IVS so that practitioners and organizations can rethink and restructure issues of power and privilege by focusing on institutional pedagogy rather than framing problems abroad solely as a result of individual power; it also uses Institutional Ethnography to explore the challenges faced by Canadian youth volunteers trying to engage as “global citizens” in international development and cross-cultural exchanges, and examines seven case studies to highlight the relation between a youth volunteers’ challenges and their relation to the institutional structures in the international voluntary services sector. The research also commits to a vision of sustainable and equitable community partnerships.

A Brief History of Canadian Volunteer Sending Organizations

At the end of World War II, the United Nations (UN) officially came into existence as the first internationally governed organization that aimed to promote international cooperation and peace. In the post-war era, the late 1950s and 1960s, as volunteering became recognized as a form of international development (Lewis, 2006), Canadian NGOs in Canada flourished and began to send adult volunteers overseas. The message to promote peace spread, and the movement influenced people such as Dr. James Robinson, an American preacher, to start international NGOs such Canadian Crossroads International (CCI). In the early 1960s, organizations such as CCI, CUSO-VSO and World University Service of Canada (WUSC) spread the new volunteer movement to Canadian universities (CUSO-VSO, 2009), and going overseas in order to obtain cross-cultural understanding gained momentum as Canadian politics became synonymous with the term “international peacekeeper”.

The Government of Canada established CIDA in 1968 in conjunction with Canada’s increasing role in geopolitics. One of their tasks was to administer Canada’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) program. Today, CIDA also has a focus on Canadian youth to “be more active global citizens” and to “make a difference in Canada and abroad” (CIDA, 2009); CIDA currently funds two of the largest Canadian organizations that send youth abroad.

In the 1970s, as the diversity of the Canadian population grew from immigration, multiculturalism became a popular focus for the Canadian government. Pierre Elliott Trudeau established the multiculturalism policy in 1971, which became highly criticized by anti-racism activists for its originations in a bilingual framework that excluded pluralism (McCaskell, 2005). By the 1980s, Canadian activists were advocating for change in how students learned about multiculturalism. They wanted a shift from an educational approach that recognized diversity as a melting pot to an anti-racism approach that analyzed the institutional powers and their effects on race, class and gender. This pedagogy would later become influential in the Canadian debates that currently surround international youth volunteering and the political use of global citizenship.

Significantly, the 1971 policy also set the stage for an increase in funding to programs that encouraged citizen participation and cross-cultural exchange. Organizations that focused on youth volunteers originated in 1971 when Jacques Hebert, a close friend of Trudeau, founded Canada World Youth (CWY). Another youth-sending organization had its birth in the 1970s, when former Canadian and Australian participants, who had taken part in the initiated Royal British Canadian Operation Drake in 1978, founded Youth Challenge International (YCI). Today, there are more than 20 Canadian organizations sending youth abroad, such as Uniterra, Engineers Without Borders, Global Youth Action Network, Students for Development Program, YMCA and Free the

Children that promote volunteering abroad as a way to develop global citizenship.

A Method of Inquiry: Institutional Ethnography

Institutional Ethnography (IE) starts from the standpoint of everyday experiences. The institutional ethnographer “works from the social in people’s experience to discover its presence and organization in their lives and to explicate or map that organization beyond the local to the everyday” (Smith, 2005, p. 11). The analysis also begins with social experience and returns to it to explain how the experience came into being (Campbell, 2006). IE draws upon people’s experience as data to help anchor the research in the actualities of people’s lives and connect it more to the real world (Campbell, 2006). This paper will therefore start from the standpoint of the author’s story as an entry point into exploring issues of power and privilege in international volunteering.

Aspects of IE were used as a method of inquiry to understand how Canadian youth volunteers engage as active, global citizens and attempt to address issues of power and privilege in their international volunteering work. In the classical sense, IE has always been a radical sociology because it gets to the roots of matters (Carroll, 2006). It is a social justice based, activist-oriented research method. George Smith describes IE as a reflexive materialist approach that “provides a ground work for grassroots political action ... and begins from the standpoint of those outside ruling regimes ... [and] its analysis is directed at empirically determining how such [politico-administrative] regimes work” (Smith, 2006, p. 48). IE is inspired by Marx’s method of unmasking capitalism through action and reflection and the “fundamental assumption ... that reality is an internally related whole” (Carroll, 2006, p. 235); in order to change the world one must understand it first. IE specifically uses a social analysis that requires an ontological shift that the social is the ground for analysis (Smith, 2005).

IE is also shaped from positivism and feminist movements that give it the “potential for marriage of scholarly research and political motivation” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 14). IE takes the standpoint of those on the outside of the ruling regimes (Campbell & Gregor, 2002); in other words, the people it is doing research for, as it should “help to form a subject’s political consciousness related to equitable decision making” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 128). IE can be used as a method to uncover the ruling relations in international volunteering.

Author’s Standpoint

The author’s standpoint is that of a person of color, female, middle-class, able-bodied perspective. As Smith (2005) states, standpoint should be viewed “not [as] a given and finalized form of knowledge but as a ground in experience from which discoveries are to be made” (p. 8). Standpoint can locate the lens that guides someone in an institutional order (Smith, 2005). Overall, the author’s personal experience as a first generation Vietnamese-Canadian shapes her into a researcher politically committed to encouraging more equitable partnerships and interactions between volunteers and the locals in developing countries. The author’s ability to have a political stance on volunteerism is a way of grounding herself and ensuring her responsibility to her research (Smith, 2005). As a woman of color, the author recognizes the effects of power and privilege acutely because she is both implicated in the process of exercising it, and in the process where it is exercised upon her.

The Problematic: Establishing an Anchor

The problematic is served as a point of entry that leads to exploring how the lives and experiences of Canadian youth volunteers are put together and relate to each other through power relations (DeVault, 2008). The nature of this research followed IE’s open-ended process of discovery (Smith, 2005), and discovered the complexity of social

relations that interplay in a volunteer's experience, which include government funding, international relations, volunteer services and agencies, and South-North partnerships among others. The problematic began in the everyday experiences of young Canadian volunteers who go overseas on short and long-term development projects organized by secular not-for-profit organizations.

In 2007, a youth organization hosted a popular one-day youth-run conference that used the terms 'global' or 'active citizen' frequently to entice individuals or groups to contribute to their international projects. The youth organization promoted "international development" to thousands of Canadian students, and while it had celebrities and multi-million dollar corporations as their spokespeople and sponsors, it never actually engaged volunteers in a complex dialogue of what it meant to be a citizen of the world. This organization also had a program for young Canadians to fundraise and go on two-month-long trips to build schools in Africa. A former participant of the program, who had spent two months in Kenya building a school, shared that she spent most of her time with the large group of volunteers and left with unanswered questions as to how the school would be sustained or followed up once the volunteers left (Ngo, personal communication, 2007). International volunteering placements have the capacity to instill generosity and giving in the individual. However, if youth-sending organizations do not address issues of power and privilege such as classism, racism, and sexism, then volunteers who come with good intentions of charity are simply repeating cycles of imperialism and colonialism on local communities.

The Disjuncture: A Set of Larger Relations

Dorothy Smith brought up how people in the same situation can experience different realities, otherwise known as disjuncture, which can often be part of the problematic (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). An intern who went on a long-term, 6-month placement in Bangladesh shared that she no longer felt comfortable with international community development, as she believed effective community development depended on a sense of familiarity with the people, their language and their surroundings (Ngo, personal communication, 2007). She wondered how she would feel if foreigners came into her community without knowing the language or history, and began to implement recommendations and changes. Her reality on international development did not mimic the missionary complex. Her perspective on building local capacity for sustainable development was more critical than some of the youth who had participated in the short-term volunteering projects; her awareness around issues of power and privilege were more critical and developed.

Initially, it seemed that short and long-term volunteer placements developed different levels of critical analysis among youth volunteers. However, the analysis from the case studies shows a more complex explanation, as there is a larger set of relations that influence their experiences. Smith (2005) explained that disjuncture occurs between "the artificial realities of institutions and the actualities that people live" (p. 187). In other words, disjunctures serve as crucial points of entry to examine how institutional processes are at play in people's everyday experiences. Smith continues to write that disjuncture can be explored through regulatory frames, as they are imposed onto people's actualities. Regulatory frames can include theories, policies, laws, and plans that guide institutional power (Smith, 2005).

Regulatory Frames

The participants in this study were subject to regulatory frames, and the wide varieties of conceptualizations, theories, policies, laws, plans, and so on ... Indeed, "they control and are specified as the categories and concepts that come into play at the front line of

building institutional realities" (Smith, 2005, p. 191). The organizations' promotional materials are examples of regulatory frames, or coordinating texts that affected the participants. Most of the participants relied on researching their organization through word-of-mouth or the website.

Research Methodology

Seven individuals from the Canadian youth volunteering sector participated in semi-structured interviews conducted from March to June 2010. Using IE, I analyzed ruling relations between individuals and institutions on two levels: the first level of information provided local accounts of experiences, and the second set of data pertained to explaining these experiences in a broader setting (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The individuals were a point of investigation of the institutional process, rather than a sample of a population of Canadian youth volunteers sent abroad. The interviewees included a mix of individuals who had never volunteered or been overseas before, as well as individuals who had experience in development projects or working internationally as interns. The IE approach allowed an assessment of a participant's knowledge and the presence of power and privilege in their volunteer placement, while simultaneously examining where and how institutional processes influenced their outlook on the experience.

International Development or Cross-Cultural Exchange?

Volunteering has been seen as a form of international development work since the United Nations emerged as an organization post-World War II (Lewis, 2006). However, IVS in Europe can be located back to the changing role of church and state and the activities of charitable societies; notably, IVS was a part of missionary service during the colonial period (Lewis, 2006). The term "development" appeared only after World War II and since then has taken on several meanings that remain debated today (Lewis, 2006). Part of international development means building capacity for vulnerable populations. For Eade (2007), building capacity means enabling the marginalized to represent and defend themselves. Eade (2007) argues, however, that NGOs are about retaining their own power and that capacity building has become a buzzword in the development field, claiming that the words 'building capacity' are now used for a "neo-liberal ... kind of economic and political agenda" (2007, p. 632). While partnership refers to building opportunity between local organizations and communities, encouraging co-development is often more difficult because of the multiple actors in the international arena that include governments and funders. As a result, partnerships can sometimes be based on one-way transfers and have only one-way accountability (Eade, 2007), as NGOs struggle to stay afloat and become more knowledgeable about business-rights than human-rights.

Positively, international volunteering can promote international understanding, solidarity, and global responsibility and can promote "an arena of development activity ... because it potentially humanizes what is often left as a technical or managerial process" (Lewis, 2006, p. 3). Moreover, volunteers can potentially "bridge the gap between the professionalized world of development experts and organizations and the 'non-specialized publics' who engage with the ideas and practices of development" (Lewis, 2006, p. 3). However, in conjunction with the complexity and debate that surrounds the term development, international volunteering as a definition also varies and becomes privy to the same scrutiny as the term development.

As more stakeholders become involved in the international volunteering business, IVS veers away from its "good Samaritan" intentions, and becomes more politicized and imbued with expectations from the private and public sectors. The United States

currently uses the term international service or international development education, while the United Kingdom uses international voluntary services (IVS). Volunteering has changed drastically over the last few decades. Volunteers were once mostly fresh out of school; today volunteering also attracts highly professionalized, older volunteers (VSO, 2009) in short-term and long-term volunteer placements.

As volunteerism becomes a more recognized institution (Simpson, 2004), a new form of voluntourism programs (VTP) has emerged that combines volunteering with tourism (Lewis, 2006, Raymond & Hall, 2008; Simpson, 2004). Voluntourism is figuratively the fast-food version of more traditional long-term volunteering. The rise of voluntourism aimed at young volunteers means organizations engage in a selection process with lowered required criteria as they try to reach a higher number of volunteers; this can also imply the recruitment of more inexperienced and ignorant participants.

Experience as Data: The Social Analysis

This sub-section uses the interview data from five Canadian youth volunteers in their international volunteering experiences and highlights the tensions between volunteers and their projects.

The increase of youth volunteer-sending organizations and voluntourism means more competition for youth and volunteers who ineffectively contribute to development projects, as young people do not have the skills, knowledge or experience necessary to work internationally (Lewis, 2006). For example, Youth Challenge International's programs approach to development involves youth volunteering in the livelihood, leadership, health, and environment sectors. The age requirement for volunteers would be 18 years and older and they are not expected to have prior international or work experience. Youth volunteers have been arguably seen as individually gaining, as opposed to contributing to the collective. For example, one of the volunteers interviewed for this study explained how her former group members participated in a volunteer program for personal purposes:

I think it was the second group I went there with, there was less of people assuming they were on vacation ... People sign up and, oh it's a vacation and whatever project people want to do is secondary, to just being there and experiencing Ghana ... (Ngo, personal communication, 2010).

Even if youth had a positive experience, there are questions about whether the structure of a volunteer project allows effective results for the host community. One experienced volunteer shared her realizations about the design of her 'development' project being more like a volunteer experience than a work experience:

I was going to say that I think in terms of the organization, um granted the workshops were held very close to one another, they were sort of back-to-back and there wasn't enough time to go back to them and debrief, and figure them out ... I mean the biggest problem was that the program was ill conceived on a number of different levels that made it difficult ... I think the partner's engagement was predominantly for financial benefit ... there was no needs assessment at all ... (Ngo, Personal communication, 2010)

There were also challenges on executing a development project in a country where the volunteers had no prior knowledge or very little experience:

I think trying to teach students about their own ... elements of their own country

– when I had only been there for a week and a half. That was a huge challenge. Um, that challenge of, I don't know if this would be a philosophical challenge – sort of, acknowledging that the work we were doing was meaningful in the present sense. We're giving the students an experience they will benefit from – at least I hope they did – but concerns about the sustainability of the project. That made it a challenge to find meaning in what we were doing because why weren't we working with teachers or helping to build capacity ... I also think that coming to terms that being in Ghana for a month, you do what you can and it's just the way the project is. You have to come to terms with that and I think that was a challenge. (Ngo, Personal communication, 2010).

Moreover, even if the organization had the intention to prepare the volunteer for international development, budget and time constraints did not allow for the individual to gain adequate knowledge. This appears in the participants' responses on how they were prepared for their international placements:

I was sent a lot of friggin' material from the organization. To be honest a lot of the information I did not go through and I know that like, we were supposed to go through it but at least for me I was working a full time job ... But it was a lot of stuff to go through ... I mean we were sent this cross-cultural learning module thing that you completed and got stamped on this electronic passport ... I think there was sort of an online community that was set up that I didn't use because it was another thing that I had to go online and check. (Ngo, Personal communication, 2010)

In general, volunteers shared that benefits of the program revolved around individual growth, as well as cross-cultural exchange. Those who did mention their development projects were critical about the gains for local people. As youth volunteer-sending organizations increasingly move towards a development framework, while still working in a youth volunteering model, researchers and practitioners must assess which practices could be the most effective in contributing to the overseas and community partners, while being conscious of the growing competition for projects and funding for Canadian youth volunteer-sending organizations.

The pedagogical approach used by both organizations was influenced by a multicultural, rather than an anti-racism education. Multicultural education approaches represent racism issues in a way that are non-threatening to dominant Canadian groups (McCaskell, 2005), and focus on appreciating differences without critical analysis on institutional systems.

To Volunteer or Not to Volunteer

The origins of international volunteering in Canada highlight the peace spreading intentions of Canadians who wish to offer their services overseas to less privileged countries, or to promote cross-cultural exchange that strengthens understanding in a diverse multicultural Canadian society. However little is known about the actual impacts of volunteering on Canadians and the communities who host volunteers, as research struggles to catch up with the rapid expansion of diverse programs and organizations (Grusky, 2000; Lewis, 2006; Lough, McBride, & Sherraden, 2009; Raymond & Hall, 2008). This section will allow the reader to contextualize the youth volunteers and field staff's experiences with the institutional relations that pervade international volunteering.

Consistent with existing literature, Grusky (2000), Lewis (2006), Lewis and Niesenbaum

(2005), Lough et al. (2009), and Raymond and Hall (2008) have found the overall outcomes for volunteers have the potential to contain many teachable moments, and have benefits that include language enhancement, transformative learning, building contacts between individuals and communities, developing cross-cultural understanding and working across difference. Other pro arguments for volunteering overseas include travel opportunities, being able to reduce conflict and 'reconciliation tourism', which gives an opportunity to former colonizing country participants to rectify damage (Raymond & Hall, 2008). A survey conducted by Lough, et al. (2009) with 680 randomly selected alumni from two volunteer sending organizations with different IVS models found that, even though the organizations had different goals, the outcomes for volunteers were similar. Outcomes for volunteers included a positive effect on the volunteers' cross-cultural understanding and career direction, and the volunteers' belief that they had brought a good impact on the host organization and communities (Lough et al., 2009). Seventy-five percent of the study's respondents "claimed that their cross-cultural encounter was a transformational experience" (Lough et al., 2009, p. 33).

Although there is research that provides an optimistic view of voluntourism programs (VTPs), more specifically that these programs assist in developing cross-cultural understanding, VTPs can lead to misunderstandings and reinforcement of stereotypes. Research indicates that cross-cultural understanding is not always a natural consequence of VTPs, but needs to be a purposeful pedagogy (Raymond & Hall, 2008). For example, though some volunteers in Lough et al.'s (2009) research reported on language as a barrier, cultural misunderstandings and power differences between volunteers and local staff, most of the volunteers surveyed believed their services were desired and that their presence did not cause problems in the communities.

The goal of international service learning is an important component of programs (Grusky 2000; Raymond & Hall, 2008), as it sets the backdrop for the organizational pedagogy and the practices used to recruit volunteers. Without an appropriate goal to reduce power and privilege, inequities remain very pronounced (Lewis, 2006). International development education programs can easily "become small theatres that recreate historic cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes" (Grusky, 2000, p. 858), or "privilege the needs and desires of the server over the served, and act as a powerful and influential framing mechanism for the social construction of ideas about development, poverty and the 'third world'" (Lewis, 2006, p. 8), as well as exacerbate already existing North – South economic disparities. Simpson argues that gap year, a period taken by the student between high school and post-secondary education, produces one face of public development and reproduces notions of other and third world, as well as "perpetuates a simplistic ideal of development" (Simpson, 2004, p. 682). She continues to determine that the gap year reinforces the 'mythology' of development, and encourages travel that enhances individual and not collective advancement.

Within the context of volunteerism, colonialism can manifest itself in different ways. The partnership between North and South organizations can reproduce systems of dependence through funding and structural expertise, and this can trickle down to the work of the volunteers. For example, Canadian volunteers will assume that they will be able to contribute to a community without knowing the language or culture because the recruitment process has painted them as the experts going to "help". In addition, since volunteers have to fundraise to become a volunteer, there is a sense of entitlement that accompanies volunteers when they arrive to their host country. At times, in short-term projects, there is no needs assessment done by volunteers, as they only have a limited time to meet deliverables, or groups may duplicate each other's work if there is no

knowledge or proper orientation on the history of the organization in the area where volunteers work.

The incongruity around the positives and negatives around international volunteering leads to open questions around the impact on host communities and practices of organizations. There are currently less research findings available on outcomes for organizations and host communities, sustainable development and equitable partnerships (Grusky, 2000; Lough et al., 2009). According to Grusky (2004), the potential of IVS is precisely at this juncture “where experience meets study, critical analysis, and reflection” (p. 861). The transformational impacts on a young person due to these programs cannot be denied, and their desire to serve and change society should not be dismissed. If organizations could harness a volunteer’s discomfort and help “bring them to a clearer understanding of the fundamental necessity for profound social change” (Grusky, 2004, p. 866), then IVS could be a powerful tool for cross-cultural understanding and reduction in North-South disparities. Overall, organizations have been found to rely heavily on chance to produce citizens who can critically assess institutional structures (Grusky, 2000), and therefore organizations lack a commitment to integrating anti-racist methods into their development work.

Assessing Program Structure

Academia and media recognize that “certain types of VTPs may represent a form of neo-colonialism or imperialism, in which volunteer tourists inadvertently reinforce the power inequalities between developed and developing countries” (Raymond & Hall, 2008, p. 531). Since one of the issues for conflict in IVS includes multiple and conflicting goals of the actors involved (e.g., sponsors and community partners) (Grusky, 2000), research could focus more on the best practices that accommodate the competing factors involved in volunteer sending organizations, aid recipients and host communities. As agencies set roles for successful partnerships between host communities (Roberts, 2004), a social-justice pedagogy becomes important to consider for organizations since they play a role in facilitating preparation and analysis for volunteers prior, during and post program (Raymond & Hall, 2008).

Research conducted by Raymond and Hall (2008) sought to look at the roles organizations play in developing international understanding through VTPs. Volunteer-sending organizations should: be conscious of the skill sets of their volunteers and the type of work volunteers would be doing; include local people in developing programs; create opportunities for volunteers and community members to interact; and have volunteers work alongside locals. Organizations could also be more deliberate in the contact with “the Other,” as it should not be assumed that interaction means development of cross-cultural understanding; in some cases, interaction without proper analysis could reinforce volunteers’ stereotypes as they could mistake their experience as authority. Organizational pedagogy is not a simple task; criticisms include the organizations’ “proximity to wider political and policy processes” (Lewis, 2006, p. 7). Specifically, an organization seldom remains free from political influences because they receive funding from government donors. They have also been criticized for their reliance on the production of *Othering* to appeal to young volunteers (Simpson 2004).

Language as Coordinating

Kate Simpson (2004), a researcher on the impacts of international volunteering, believes that by avoiding the language of “development,” many organizations may be trying to avoid the questioning of such an agenda. However, whether the language of development is used or not, the agenda is there, thinly disguised in notions of “disadvantaged communities” (p. 684). Without using the term development,

organizations are able to attract a variety of young people to their programs. This also has negative effects on the host communities when volunteers perpetuate power and privilege dynamics or are ill prepared to engage in a project.

Simpson (2004) writes that the notion of the 'third world' is highly important. Indeed, the very legitimacy of such programs is rooted in a concept of a 'third world', where there is 'need', and where European young people have the ability, and right, to meet this need. (p. 682) Whereas there is no actual language pertaining to development, the discourse is there; organizations speak of *making a difference, doing something worthwhile or contributing to the future of others* (Simpson 2004). This use of (or absence of) language indicates the presence of complex ruling relations in the international volunteering field. Parallel to the equity issues of power and privilege that pervade international development, the concept of poverty becomes marketable and something adventurous for the volunteers to encounter. Poverty is 'out there' and there is emphasis on the differences instead of the commonalities between developed and developing countries (Simpson 2004). Change is seen as based outside of local communities (volunteers are the change). In other words, the volunteers are perceived as the only agents of development and the community becomes excluded as active participants. Organizations have the multi-purpose objectives of championing the needs of the communities as well as the usefulness of volunteers (Simpson 2004). The contributions of unskilled volunteers remains debatable when there are levels of skills required for the usefulness of international service. How organizations present their message portray their approach to development, which remains rooted in colonialism when only the volunteer benefits and gains status, authority and social/professional standing (Lewis 2006).

Proposing Theoretical Frameworks: Justice Oriented and Anti-Racist Citizens

Canadian institutions including schools, not-for-profit organizations, and government bodies have borrowed the idiom "active citizen" into their institutional languages. Active citizenship focuses on the "individual and collective capacity to influence change" (Schugurensky, 2003, p.78). Schugurensky proposes that citizenship education should move from passive to active citizenship in order to revitalize democratic, public life (2003, 2006). However, active citizenship and participation is susceptible to being influenced by a normative, predominantly white, middle-class stance, and active citizen is loosely used without definition. Active citizens are still defined by the hegemonic majority, and participation continues to be controlled by the middle class. As new social movements in Canada that include women's movements, gay rights movements, and Indigenous movements diverge from the normalized version of citizen (Pashby, 2008), there is an increasing need to critically analyze programs which promote "active, global citizenship".

Westheimer and Kahne's framework on citizenship has the potential to address the complex interplay of power relations that puts into question what kind of citizen is being promoted in organizations that send Canadian youth volunteers abroad. Westheimer and Kahne (2003) believe that citizenship produced by education can fall into three (though not mutually exclusive) categories: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. The personally responsible citizen focuses on good, moral character and works to improve social problems and society. The participatory citizen encompasses the personally responsible citizen, but also actively participates in leadership positions within established systems and community structures. The justice-oriented citizen critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes. The ideal citizen for promoting effective democracies and active citizenship according to Schugurensky's definition would be the justice-oriented citizen,

as they can “critically assess social, political, and economic structures and consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and, when possible, address root causes of problems” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003, p. 54).

Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) active citizenship framework describes three types of citizens, with a focus on the kind of citizen who advances democratic societies and analyzes social injustices. Dei’s (1996) anti-racism practice and theory complements the justice-oriented citizens by providing a lens that active citizens can use to critically assess institutional injustices. The antiracist framework reveals embedded racism, classism, homophobia, and sexism (Dei, 2009). If justice-oriented citizens believe that patterns of injustice occur in a society, and healthy democracies entail the full participation of active citizens to question and change established structures, anti-racism praxis is a tool that can be used by justice-oriented citizens to deconstruct institutional systems and ensure action against the patterns of injustice that reoccur in society.

Theory around racism and education exploded in the 1980s as a response to multicultural education (McCaskell, 2005). Multicultural education skips over racism issues in a way that could be digested in a non-threatening way to dominant Canadian groups (McCaskell, 2005), whereas anti-racist education, conceptualizes the issue of racism not as a human failing, a misunderstanding, or a lack of awareness, but as a problem of ideology, of a worldview that categorizes people on the basis of ‘race’ and justifies and reinforces power imbalances between groups. (McCaskell, 2005, p. 74) Anti-racist education emerged as a new critical lens for viewing and questioning traditional methods of academia (Dei, 2009). In conjunction with IE, an antiracist framework sees institutional structures as vehicles for dominating values, principles, and traditions localized in everyday experience, and treats texts as a “complex narrative that relates how researcher and subject are socially and politically located, situated and positioned” (Dei, 2009, p. 249) as opposed to mirroring what is real.

Dei (2009) defines anti-racism as an action-oriented strategy to implement institutional change. It treats differences as socially constructed; this is compatible with IE since the method of inquiry and its way to perceive and deconstruct institutional relations. Moreover, if active citizenship theory is the framework for citizen action, then antiracism is the framework to design strategic action. Anti-racist framework is “an interrogation of both structural barriers to, and social practices for, systemic change” (Dei, 2009, p.254); it acknowledges the reality of racism, questions the marginalization of groups and challenges “valid knowledge”, as well as societal institutions. According to Dei (2009), anti-racism also has an academic and political agenda “to problematize and deal with how schools function to reproduce white (patriarchal) dominance” (p. 250). This aspect is particularly useful because it could be used to analyze organizations that send Canadian youth abroad, we all as how power and privilege might be reproduced in community development through their organizational structure. This paper’s commitment to equitable community partnerships also aligns with anti-racism’s political agenda of social transformation and challenge of the status quo through political activism (Dei, 2009).

Re-imagining the Global Citizen: A Process Towards Transformation

Lewis (2006) asked the question: “Can international volunteering produce ‘win-win’ outcomes in which both the sender and the receiver can benefit, and if so, in what measure?” (p. 9). Because stopping overseas volunteering is not a realistic solution, it may be more useful to ask how to work and improve organizational practices. The traditional volunteering model has become imbued with complications that pervade international development, as volunteer organizations are under greater pressure to

produce development results in their programs. Organizational practices, therefore, are crucial to the ability of IVS to carry out effective partnership and community-based results that benefit the people. The term 'global citizen' has also become a buzzword and privileged objective within citizenship education discourses (Robins et al., 2008). The inclusion within citizenship becomes complicated when those excluded of its definition begin to struggle against traditional norms. The win-win situation can only occur when transformation takes into account the needs of the individual, and ultimately the needs of the local community those volunteers serve.

Old ways of educating people on power and privilege can dangerously reinforce "the Other" as a victim. If programs adopt an understanding of anti-oppression into their educational approach, there needs to be sensitivity around the delivery and divulgence of how people are educated on power and privilege. One recommendation for practitioners would be to examine power as non-linear, multi-faceted, and involving multiple actors. At present, the onus is placed directly on the individual to recognize their own privilege, while systems of colonization and oppression are left out.

Canadian youth volunteers have a lot to offer and can strengthen their own education to ensure they are engaging in ethical volunteering before embarking on their adventures. Young people can help to promote equitable partnerships. While we learn to live with others in a cross-cultural context, there remains a need to build cross-cultural peace within Canada. As researchers, practitioners, organizations, and young volunteers embark on the process to improve international voluntary services, we remember there is no set formula, and "the only big answer is that there is no Big Answer" (Easterly, 2006, p. 382). The goal for ethical volunteering can only be reached if we maintain our vision for equitable partnerships, so that the local people hold the baton to their own emancipation.

Mai Ngo is from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Email: mai.n.ngo@gmail.com.

References

- Campbell, M. (2006). Institutional ethnography and experience as data. In D. Smith (Ed.), *Institutional ethnography as practice* (pp. 91–107). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Campbell, M., & Gregor, F. (2002). *Mapping social relations: A primer in doing institutional ethnography*. Aurora, Ontario, Canada: Garamond Press.
- Canadian Development Agency of Canada. (2009). About CIDA. *Canadian Development Agency of Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/NIC-5313423-N2A>
- CUSO-VSO (Canadian University Services Overseas-Voluntary Services Overseas). (2009). About CUSO-VSO. *CUSO-VSO*. Retrieved from <http://www.cuso.org/about-cuso-vso/>
- Carroll, W. (2006). Marx's method and the contributions of institutional ethnography. In C. Frampton, G. Kinsman, A.K. Thompson, & K. Tiliczek (Eds.), *Sociology for changing the world: Social movements/social research* (pp. 232–245). Halifax, NS: Fernwood.
- Dei, G. (1996). *Theory and practice: Anti-racism education*. Halifax, Ontario, Canada: Fernwood.
- Dei, G. (2009). Critical perspectives in antiracism: An introduction. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 33(3), 247–267.
- Desforges, L. (2004). The formation of global citizenship: international and non-governmental organisations in Britain. *Political Geography*,

- 23, 549–569.
- Devault, M. (2008). *People at work: Life, power, and social inclusion in the new economy*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Eade, D. (2007). Capacity building capacity: Who builds whose capacity? *Development in Practice*, 17(4–5), 630–639.
- Easterly, W. (2006). *The white man's burden*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Frampton, C., Kinsman, G., Thomson A. K., & Tilleczek, K. (2006). New directions for activist research. In C. Frampton, G. Kinsman, A. K. Thompson, & K. Tilleczek (Eds.), *Sociology for changing the world: Social movements/social Research* (pp. 246–271). Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada: Fernwood.
- Grusky, S. (2000). International service learning. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(5), 858–867.
- Lewis, D. (2006). Globalization and international service: A development perspective. *Voluntary Action*, 7(2), 13–26.
- Lewis, T., & Niesenbaum, R. (2005). Extending the stay: Using community-based research and service learning to enhance short-term study abroad. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 9, 251–264.
- Lough, B., McBride A., & Sherraden, M. (2009). *Perceived effects of international volunteering: Reports from alumni*. Retrieved from <http://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Documents/RP0910.pdf>
- McCaskell, T. (2005). *Race to equity: Disrupting educational inequality*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Between the Lines.
- McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack*. Retrieved from www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf
- Pashby, K. (2008). Demands on and of citizenship and schooling: Belonging and diversity in the global imperative. *Brock Education*, 17, 1–21.
- Raymond, E., & Hall, C. (2008). The development of cross-cultural (mis)understanding through volunteer tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16(5), 530–543.
- Robins, S., Cornwall, A., & Von Lieres, B. (2008). Rethinking citizenship in the postcolony. *Third World Quarterly*, 29(6), 1069–1086.
- Schugurensky, D. (2006). Adult citizenship education in a Canadian society. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of adult education: Canadian perspectives* (pp. 68–80). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Thompson Educational.
- Simpson, K. (2004). Doing development: The gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development. *Journal of International Development*, 16, 681–692.
- Simpson, K. (2007). *Ethical volunteering*. Retrieved from <http://www.ethicalvolunteering.org/>
- Smith, D. (2005). *Institutional ethnography: A sociology for people*. Oxford, UK: Altamira Press.
- Smith, G. (2006). Political activist as ethnographer. In C. Frampton, G. Kinsman, A. K. Thompson, & K. Tilleczek (Eds.), *Sociology for changing the world: Social movements/social research* (pp. 45–70). Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.
- Tiessen, R. (2008). *Youth ambassadors abroad: Canadian foreign policy, global citizenship, and youth internship experiences*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, Bridging Multiple Divides, San Francisco, CA. Retrieved from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p252814_index.html
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation. (2001). *Engagement in youth and education programming*. Battle Creek, MI: Author.
- Westheimer, J. (2008). What kind of citizen? Democratic dialogues in education. *Education Canada*, 48(3), 6–10.
- Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2003). What kind of citizen? Political choices and educational goals. *Encounters on Education*, 4, 47–64.