Towards critical global education worker subjectivity: An exploration of narratives of American women engaged in education-related international volunteerism

Lucy Mule
Smith College, USA

Abstract

International volunteerism is increasingly associated with shaping global subjectivities of participants. Significant numbers of Global North volunteers – whether working through established volunteer organizations, corporations, non-profits, academia, or personal networks and connections – engage in education-related activities while in the Global South. I emphasize in this paper that education-related international volunteering presents a rich context in which to explore global subjectivities due to the high likelihood of participants' engagement with mobility, difference, poverty, inequality, and development. In this paper, I explore six women's accounts of their transnational experiences and resulting understandings of their education-related work. Four related thematic categories derived from these accounts convey meanings of education-related work in terms of self-fulfilment, social responsibility, active engagement with host communities, and cross-cultural competence. I explore two overlapping subjectivities – participatory and critical – that emerge from an exploration of these themes, examine how they intersect with common discourses of international volunteering and development, and discuss the implications for the relationship between global citizenship and education-related international volunteering.

Keywords: subjectivity, education, global citizenship, development, international experiences, international volunteerism

Introduction

Individuals from the Global North, including the United States of America, are increasingly embracing international mobility and an ethos of volunteerism

as a response to what Rizvi (2009: 253) calls the 'contemporary conditions of globalization'. This paper contributes to an expanding body of literature on international volunteering beyond the academic by examining connections with 'global' subjectivity. In this paper, the commonly accepted definition of international volunteering – as the voluntary mobility of individuals who move across national borders to engage in actions that benefit others while motivated by humanitarian concerns rather than financial gain (Sherraden, 2001) – is expanded to include individuals who, also driven by concern for others, choose to take up employment abroad and do not 'receive market rates of pay relative to their qualification and experience' (Devereux, 2008: 359). The literature on international volunteering features different models – based on duration (short-term or long-term) or type and mission of facilitating entity (public or private; tourism or development) – that reflect varied volunteering goals and produce a wide range of outcomes for volunteers and host communities (Lough and Xiang, 2014; Lough *et al.*, 2014; Lough *et al.*, 2009; Paige *et al.*, 2009). Across these models, international volunteering is often, though not always, perceived as an avenue for shaping 'global' subjectivities – a term used here to refer to attitudes and identities that are aligned with the notion of global citizenship (Lough and McBride, 2014; Baillie Smith *et al.*, 2013; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011). While acknowledging the contested nature of the term 'global citizenship', this paper presents an exploration of two co-existing and overlapping global subjectivities – participatory and critical – that emerged from an analysis of the narratives of six white American women involved with long-term education-related international volunteering. By emphasizing a lack of mutual exclusivity of the two global subjectivities, while urging for enhanced criticality among education-related international volunteers, this paper further complicates the global citizenship debate in the field of international volunteering.

An important area of this debate is the extent to which involvement with development concerns shapes, if at all, the global subjectivities of international volunteers. One assumption informing this paper's exploration of participants' global subjectivities is that long-term education-related international volunteering presents a rich context in which to examine global subjectivities, because of the high likelihood of participants' engagement with development concerns such as mobility, difference, poverty, and inequality. In the narratives examined in this study, the participants connected their education-related activities to development – a term understood here simply as being associated with 'global responsibility' (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011), as well as the processes and outcomes of empowerment that bring about positive changes in individuals and societies (Devereux, 2008). As discussed later in the paper, they conveyed a strong desire to impact the world beyond their national borders through education-related work, as development workers. I use the term 'global education worker' in this paper to acknowledge this emphasis, and

to highlight the contrast with short-term 'voluntourist' (Bailey and Russell, 2012) experiences widely represented in the international volunteering literature.

The intersecting of international volunteering and the practices of North–South development has attracted the attention of researchers, most of them from Europe, Canada, and Australia (McCloskey, 2014; Andreotti and de Souza, 2012; Cook, 2012; Diprose, 2012; Tiessen and Heron, 2012; Devereux, 2008; Cook, 2007; Lewis, 2006). As mentioned above, an area that deserves attention in this literature is the exploration of the ways in which development and subjectivities co-produced in spaces, such as the Global South, shape the attitudes and identities of Global North volunteers as global citizens. Scholars in the fields of development and development education who recognize international volunteers as development actors are increasingly urging an elucidation of the ways whereby volunteers' global subjectivities relate to common discourses of development and international volunteering. This paper supports this call and affirms the view that such an exploration of subjectification allows for a nuanced understanding of the volunteering experience in an increasingly changing and complex global context (Baillie Smith *et al.*, 2013; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011).

While scholarship on the relationship between subjectivity, global citizenship, international volunteerism, and development has increased significantly in recent years in fields such as geography, social work, faith, tourism, and development education, the focus (with some exceptions) has been on international volunteerism that is organized through specific international volunteer co-operation organizations, educational institutions (as in study abroad and international service learning), corporations, faith-based programmes, or government and development agencies. Significantly underrepresented are insights from volunteers who organize their international experiences through personal connections and networks and are unaffiliated with a specific sending agency. Such individuals, as is the case with the study participants discussed in this paper, have usually had a major transition later in their lives; this can include empty nesting, career changes, and retirement. Compelling questions can arise regarding such individuals; for example, where, why, and how do they engage in education-related volunteering? How does this experience shape their global subjectivities? How do such subjectivities relate to common discourses of international volunteerism and development?

Responses to questions such as these can make an important contribution to the broader discussion about the relationship between international volunteering and global citizenship. This paper contributes to this discussion by examining the long-term international experiences of six American women in order to explore the ways in which their global subjectivities as education workers (henceforth referred to as 'global education worker subjectivities') intersect – or not – with common discourses

of international volunteering and development. The examination underlines the uniqueness and promise of the long-term education-related international experiences exhibited by participants towards supporting 'critical' and sustainable development. However, it also reveals the resilience of 'participatory' discourse that sometimes reproduces problematic notions of agency and development when embraced unreflectively.

In the pages that follow, a framework that suggests the value of examining global subjectivities in the context of common discourses of international volunteering and development is presented. A description of the study, including an explanation of choice of participants and data collection and analysis, follows. In the findings section, an analysis of the varied education-related activities reported by participants is presented, as well as a discussion of the volunteering goals and the development approaches they reflect. Also discussed are two related global education worker subjectivities (participatory and critical) gleaned from an exploration of four thematic categories – self-fulfilment, social responsibility, active engagement with host communities, and cross-cultural competence – that emerged from an analysis of participants' narratives. The discussion of the findings emphasizes a relational understanding of global education worker subjectivities as they shape and are shaped by varying discourses of global citizenship, international volunteering, and development. Understanding global subjectivity in this way has significant implications for how individuals from the Global North might engage in nuanced reflections about their identities as volunteers and on the possible impacts of their international volunteering.

Global subjectivity and discourses of international volunteering and development

Explorations of global subjectivity in international volunteering are, more often than not, expressed in a bifurcated way in the literature; each depiction is aligned with a specific notion of 'global citizenship', a highly contested term (Diprose, 2012; Schattle, 2008; Schattle, 2005; Roman, 2003). The 'personal', 'individual', or 'autonomous' global subjectivity is commonly associated with forms of international volunteering that are informed by the dominant or neoliberal (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011) view of global citizenship. Volunteer tourism (Bailey and Russell, 2012), gap year and career gap experiences (Lyons *et al.*, 2012), and other forms of short-term volunteering (Tiessen and Heron, 2012) are examples of international mobility that are seen as privileging individual choice, autonomy, and marketability. They also reproduce certain conceptions in which, as Baillie Smith (2013) notes:

> *development concerns have become subservient to a focus on the Global Northern volunteer and their personal development (Baillie Smith and Laurie 2011).*

> *Connecting with colonial histories of exploration and adventure, the Global South is conceived as a playground or training centre which volunteers can buy access in order to enhance or perform existing subjectivities (Baillie Smith et al. 2013) or to improve a CV (Jones 2008).*

<div align="right">Baillie Smith (2013: 404)</div>

On the other hand, more socially conscious, collective, and counter-hegemonic global subjectivities can be shaped through forms of international volunteering that 'humanize globalization' (Lewis, 2006) and are attentive to power relations within which mobility and development are enacted. Examples include long-term volunteering experiences that are informed by notions of sustainable development (Devereux, 2008).

Increasingly, scholars have criticized the bifurcated approach to understanding global subjectivity in the context of international volunteering. Baillie Smith and Laurie (2011: 545) note that 'international volunteerism seems to both exemplify neoliberal ideas of individual autonomy, improvement and responsibility and at the same time allies itself to notions of collective global citizenship, solidarity, development and activism'. Their 'genealogies of international volunteering and development' framework (ibid.) presents a useful tool for exploring volunteers' global subjectivities in ways that are less rigid while revealing their relationship to common discourses of development and international volunteering. The framework identifies various volunteering goals ranging from benevolence/service to knowledge transfer, mutual learning, and social justice. It also sheds light on varied development discourses and shifts over time from modernization and basic needs towards participation, professionalization, and rights-based development. The authors emphasize the fluidity in these categories, noting that development discourses are not linear and that 'a single development approach does not automatically determine a specific international volunteering practice' (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011: 549). This framework assumes that understandings of global subjectivities are both informing and honed through processes of international volunteering and development.

Mobilizing this framework allows for a nuanced exploration of six women's accounts of their international experiences as well as the resulting understandings of the nature of their education-related work, and the global subjectivities this work may engender. Meanings within the two areas are presented as shifting and intersecting with varied and overlapping discourses of international volunteering and development. In a later section, data obtained from participants' narratives are used to highlight the significance of capturing the co-existence of multiple, and sometimes contradictory, global subjectivities in international volunteering.

Description of the study

Study participants

Each of the six women whose data were analysed for this paper had been, by the time of the interviews, involved for at least five years in education-related volunteering and development work in the Global South – Africa, Asia, or the Middle East. The participants were female, white, and possessed high levels of education – they had graduated from a leading private undergraduate women's liberal arts college in the USA – and all had pursued graduate studies. While they were in different age brackets (ranging from 30s to 70s), they were all trained professionals, some of them in more than one area; the careers represented included law, architecture, K–12 teaching, and higher education administration and teaching. Five of the six participants had, after venturing into international volunteering, co-founded and/or worked through small non-profit organizations in which they had held leadership positions. At the time of this study, some of the participants enjoyed high visibility for their work abroad and had earned national and international recognition, while others were not so widely known and came to this researcher's attention only when other participants provided their names.

The six participants met the purposeful sampling criteria (Patton, 2002), as American alumnae of a specific college who had engaged in an international experience with an emphasis on education. The case study approach (Stake, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1988) was used, as it allows for a focus on 'individuals or groups of actors and attempts to understand their perception of events' (Larsen, 2014: 2). Merriam (1998: xiii) describes a case study as 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit'. The participants of the current study were bound together as graduates of the same college in the US who were involved in long-term education-related international volunteering.

Pseudonyms used for the six participants are: Jane, Kate, Lois, Pat, Phyllis, and Tammy. They were among eight alumnae who responded to an invitation sent to those on a list generated from the college's alumnae directory. They were asked to participate in a broader research project that sought to interview alumnae who have engaged in education work abroad, in order to understand the nature of their international engagement and to glean lessons about identity formation that could inform international engagement of current students of private liberal arts colleges. Two alumnae who agreed to participate in this broader study were not included in the analysis for this paper because they did not identify as Americans and had grown up and received their early education in their native countries.

Data collection and analysis

The insights discussed in this paper relate to some of the themes that emerged from a careful examination of interview transcripts of the six participants. Although they were provided with some semi-structured interview questions (Patton, 2002) to guide their narratives, the women were encouraged to share their stories freely in individually audiotaped interview sessions that lasted approximately two hours each. Examples of questions that were posed to participants and are relevant to the current study included: What do you do on a daily basis in your international work? What makes you successful in your work abroad? How has being an American affected your work abroad? The terms 'development', 'volunteering', and 'global citizenship' were deliberately left out of the questions guiding the interviews; as noted in the introduction section, these terms are often ambiguous and contested. To complement the interviews, where available, websites and published work in the college's alumnae magazine describing the international education-related work of the participants were reviewed.

The analysis of data involved three steps. The first step was a simple coding of the data collected about the participants to capture their histories as international volunteers and the range and nature of their education-related volunteer activities. This resulted in the development of broad categories that were used to construct a two-page profile (or portrait) of each participant. The individual profiles were then emailed to participants with an invitation to make changes where necessary. A second level of coding of the data generated more specific categories about education-related activities across the cases, as seen in Table 1. In order to understand the meanings of the education-related work, the data were coded again following the inductive method associated with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1998); the emerging themes, first within each case and then across the cases, were then combined into major thematic categories. Four major categories were constructed around participants' understandings of education-related work: self-fulfilment, social responsibility, active engagement with host communities, and cross-cultural competence. These themes and the way in which they manifest two global worker subjectivities (participatory and critical) are discussed following the description of the education-related activities below.

Study findings and discussion

Examples of education-related activities and relationship to discourses of international volunteering and development

The global education worker subjectivities that are described later in this paper both shape and are shaped by the participants' motivations for, as well as the practice of, international volunteering. Prior to engaging in that discussion, in this section I

borrow from Baillie Smith and Laurie's (2011) previously mentioned genealogies of international volunteering and development framework to describe the participants' education-related volunteer activities in terms of the common discourses of volunteering and development they may engender. Table 1 shows examples of the education-related activities gathered from participants' narratives, along with the volunteering goals and development approaches they suggest. Participants' education-related activities abroad reflected volunteering goals ranging from service (e.g. tutoring and providing food, shelter, and school fees to schoolchildren), to addressing technical and knowledge transfer needs (e.g. training local teachers and establishing structures for good governance in educational institutions), to advocacy for the marginalized (e.g. raising funds and co-founding programmes/ NGOs/foundations). These volunteer goals overlapped in individuals and across cases.

Table 1: Examples of reported education-related activities, volunteering goals, and development approaches

Examples of international education-related activities	Volunteering goals	Development approach
Tutoring school students; volunteer teaching; paying school fees for students; providing food and shelter to orphans; building schools	Service/benevolence	Basic needs
		Modernization
Enhancing administrative capacity of an independent higher education institution; providing professional development to local teachers; co-founding a teacher exchange programme	Knowledge and skill transfer	Technical skills
	Mutual learning	
Co-founding NGOs to promote education of girls; co-founding a foundation to support girls' education; co-founding an independent higher education institution for girls	Advocacy towards empowerment of marginalized populations	Technical skills
		Rights-based

Similarly, participants expressed overlapping development approaches – such as those focused on meeting basic needs, transmitting technical skills, and enhancing individual rights – in their descriptions of volunteer activities. Phyllis's story illustrates the way an individual can espouse multiple volunteering goals and varied development approaches. Phyllis has a long history of living in and volunteering in local schools in her host community. Fleeing an empty nest, she first went as a volunteer at the invitation of her friend who was at the time engaged in long-term volunteering and development work and who lived in the community. This need for self-fulfilment was overshadowed by an increasing sense of social responsibility for individuals in her host community. Recognizing the prevalence of poverty and cultural barriers that limit girls' access to education in this community, she raised money and started a foundation that sponsored girls in residential secondary schools. She also ran a centre where sponsored girls stayed during school vacations

and participated in wellness programmes and academic tutoring that helped prepare them for their national examinations. Her organization gave grants to local schools and established a model farm, which provided hot lunch programmes for students in local primary schools. Phyllis also chaired a fund that helped raise money to build a shelter for orphans and provided free healthcare for the host community. Phyllis's work was situated in several development discourses, including basic needs-based and rights-based, and her volunteering goals ranged from benevolence and service to advocacy for girls' access to education.

Phyllis's case here serves two illustrative purposes. First, it communicates service as a major pathway into volunteering, with fleeing an empty nest and the search for self-fulfilment as motivations. Pat, Kate, and Jane expressed career change and dissatisfaction with their present careers as major motivations, while Tammy and Lois saw international volunteering as an opportunity to extend their professional work after retirement. While they took multiple pathways into international volunteering, all of the participants expressed a sense of personal fulfilment and, as discussed below, social responsibility in their work abroad. This duality is not uncommon in individuals who engage in volunteerism and other forms of social action (Mannino *et al.*, 2010; Omoto *et al.*, 2010).

Second, Phyllis's case illustrates how volunteering goals and development approaches can overlap in individuals. In descriptions of their international education-related work, all participants of the current study showed these overlaps, which seemed to interact in a fluid manner in individuals. This fluidity was also reflected in the two related global subjectivities – participatory and critical – that were gleaned from participants' broader meanings of their education-related work, as captured by the four thematic categories of self-fulfilment, social responsibility, active engagement with host communities, and cross-cultural competence. The terms 'participatory' and 'critical' are borrowed from notions of citizenship described by various authors, including Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Andreotti (2006).

Participatory global education worker subjectivity
In describing three characteristics of the participatory global education worker subjectivity below, I draw on the notions of 'participatory' citizenship and 'soft' global citizenship expressed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Andreotti (2006), respectively. The former authors present three distinct articulations of citizenship: 'personally responsible', 'participatory', and 'justice-oriented' citizenship. Personally responsible citizenship involves adopting the character and actions in one's daily life that indicate global citizenship. Participatory citizenship is aligned with John Dewey's notion of participatory democracy (Visnovsky, 2007), and involves civic engagement in one's community and a collective commitment to solving social problems. Justice-

oriented citizenship, which is informed by perspectives of critical theorists such as Paulo Freire (Giroux, 2010; Freire, 1970) and Ira Shor (1999), emphasizes a critical analysis of established social structures, systems, and power relations that have reproduced patterns of oppression and injustice over time. Andreotti (2006) presents a similar framework in her presentation of the distinction between 'soft' and 'critical' global citizenship education. The 'softer' approach seems to combine characteristics that Westheimer and Kahne (2004) associate with both personally responsible and participatory notions of citizenship. Andreotti's notion of critical citizenship is similar in many ways to Westheimer and Kahne's justice-oriented citizenship. It is important to note here that in using the term 'participatory' to discuss participants' subjectivity in this section, I am aware that it may be considered counter-intuitive when compared to terms such as 'participatory development' (Mohan and Stokke, 2000; Chambers, 1994) and 'participatory research' (Minkler and Wallerstein, 2008), in which notions of local sites of empowerment, mutuality and reciprocity, and interrogation of power are emphasized.

While Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Andreotti (2006) each outline many assumptions undergirding the notion of participatory citizenship, there are clear intersections that inform the following three characteristics.

Social responsibility towards addressing global social problems

The first characteristic of the participatory global subjectivity of participants in the current study relates to their heightened sense of social responsibility towards addressing global social problems. Both Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Andreotti (2006) emphasize that citizenship is informed by a sense of responsibility for common humanity, and that social change occurs when individuals, structures, and institutions that present barriers to development are addressed. The global social problems participants spoke of included poverty, devastation caused by war, patriarchy, ethnocentrism, and underdevelopment. They talked about the way in which their involvement in international education-related activities served as an avenue and catalyst for their growing sense of social responsibility, which, as noted earlier, was prompted mainly by major transitions in their personal lives, including career change, retirement, and empty nesting. For example, Pat's evolution into an 'earth citizen' (Tarrant, 2010), as conveyed below, illustrates a changing consciousness that motivated and resulted from her involvement in international volunteering:

> *I was doing exclusively very high-end residential architecture and I really enjoyed it ... Late 90s and early 2000 was a time [when the US] obviously had a lot of economic prosperity that we don't have now and so those budgets were literally insane sums of money. And so from a creative perspective it was really interesting*

and dynamic process, but that kind of wore off and I began to understand the kind of impacts that the work was having on the environment … I started to develop, I guess, a consciousness about it.

<div align="right">Pat, research participant</div>

Active engagement with host communities

Kate's 'shovel in my hand' comment below illustrates the second characteristic of the participatory global education worker subjectivity: active engagement with host communities towards addressing pressing social problems. She observes:

You know, many other people who do development from the United States, they come out for a day or two. They really don't get to see what's going on. Well, I've taken language classes, I go to their homes, I go shop in the bazaar, I wear local clothes, and I live in the community. I really try to make myself a part of the community and I do whatever needs to be done. I mean, if somebody puts a shovel in my hand, I shovel, you know, I do what I need to do.

<div align="right">Kate, research participant</div>

Taken together, the participants expressed varied ways in which they engaged with development in their host communities through the activities listed in Table 1. These included providing food, building schools, transferring skills, capacity building, and fundraising as ways to advocate for girls' education. Jane's comment below suggests the broad scope of development concerns that intersected with participants' education-related work in their host communities:

There is this whole question of development, which we are concerned about and I don't think it just has to do with women's empowerment and participation, but it also extends to things like environmental sustainability and things like international peace and co-operation and health and welfare of the society.

<div align="right">Jane, research participant</div>

In their development work through education, participants described at length their 'nestling' (Schattle, 2005) in host communities. This form of community engagement went beyond benevolence and the superiority that volunteerism typically engenders – what Tammy in jest referred to as the 'spirit of the Harrison Ford female, go out and conquer'. Rather, it became a deep investment in host communities and in wrestling with challenges that confront those communities.

Cross-cultural competence

A third characteristic relates to cross-cultural competence and a preoccupation with interacting with host communities in the 'right' way. For all of the participants, cross-cultural competence involved effective communication, nurturing personal

relationships, respect for cultural differences, self-awareness, and, for some, as Lois suggests below, a sense of mutual learning:

> *I just think that for people to understand one another … we are not going in as the experts. We are going over as colleagues to share some of the things we've learned. It is important to see the attitude of the teachers that are going, that there isn't a 'better than you' kind of attitude. Because really there is so much we can learn from one another and that helps to develop friendships and I think it's important for our countries to understand one another and have friendships with one another.*
>
> Lois, research participant

Cross-cultural competence complemented other competencies that participants possessed, including the ability to identify and involve themselves in social issues of global significance; build networks and co-found organizations that bring attention to these issues; share their technical and professional expertise; leverage their networks for fundraising to support organizations and individuals; and sustain long-term commitment to a cause.

In sum, a participatory global subjectivity – as expressed through participants' notions of social responsibility, active engagement with host communities, and cross-cultural competence – emphasizes a concern for 'the Other' and a strong conviction that, through education-related involvement in the Global South, participants were helping to solve pressing social problems and were contributing to sustainable development and localized social change. It also values diversity and encourages volunteers' leadership in initiatives around development concerns.

Limitations of the participatory discourse

The participatory global education worker subjectivity discussed above allows for significant engagement with host communities and deepens levels of social responsibility and cross-cultural competence. However, it can have a number of limitations related to the volunteering and development discourses it implies. In this subsection, I mention three limitations and highlight moments when participants seemed to transgress them.

First, the participatory discourse seems to perpetuate a binary of 'them versus us', where host communities in the Global South are constructed in terms of continued need, and participants (all white Americans) seek to evoke 'materiality, construction and buildings as ways of addressing what is absent from the South' (Baillie Smith *et al.*, 2013: 131). Second, the discourse suggests that global social responsibility is mainly propelled by a conviction that individuals and host communities are not enjoying basic human rights (e.g. food, decent buildings, and quality and equitable education within educational institutions that are free from gender bias, corruption,

and ethnocentrism). The implication here is that contributions like those made by volunteers, such as the participants in this study, can help bring about the restoration of these rights. Identifying and addressing the root causes of the social problems is not a priority; nor is an examination of the Global North's complicity in these problems. For example, in their participatory discourse, while participants attributed poverty, patriarchy, weak institutions, isolationism, and poor governance to the Global South, historical and asymmetrical power relations between North and South were rarely seen as substantially contributing to the root causes of the same problems. Even in the few exceptions where participants seemed to acknowledge the role of the Global North in exacerbating problems worldwide, the Global North's role was often depicted as merely annoying and complicating the work of individuals dedicated to the solving of development problems, as Kate's observation below suggests with regard to the 'war on terror':

> *And I think also one of the challenges is that the people, where they have this good faith in the United States, where they really wanted us to be there and help and they saw us as good people ... it's being challenged. You have a drone that comes in and it wipes out a community and then it wrecks again all the good will that's been generated.*

<div align="right">Kate, research participant</div>

The third limitation of the participatory discourse relates to the assumption that the way to solve social problems in the Global South is to bring in more skilled individuals and resources, mainly from the Global North. Fundraising, a common expression of participatory engagement among the participants, is a good example of the North-to-South flow assumption that remained unquestioned and accepted as unproblematic by the participants. Also, even where partnerships with local individuals were embraced – such as in the faculty exchange programme formed by Lois and a local partner, or the higher education institution championed by Jane and colleagues from the US and the host country – it was assumed that the ideas about and direction of the interventions would naturally originate in, and be monitored from, the Global North. This thinking may reinforce the view of the American as the expert, and the West as the main source of knowledge. For the most part, Indigenous interventions were often underemphasized or ignored. Also underrepresented in participants' accounts was a significant political engagement in host countries, or in the US, to influence local and international policies that might target root causes of the social problems that participants sought to address through volunteering.

Although there were moments when participants seemed to transgress it, their dominant participatory discourse generally exhibited awareness, but few concrete examples, of resulting practices that are informed by a nuanced examination of North–South power relations; a key aspect that Andreotti (2006), Andreotti and de

Souza (2012), Cook (2007; 2012), and others have emphasized is central to a critical notion of global citizenship.

Towards critical global education worker subjectivity

Here, I discuss some characteristics of critical global education worker subjectivity, glimpses of which emerged when participants seemed to transgress the participatory discourse previously mentioned. This subjectivity relates to the notion of critical global citizenship, which, located in postcolonial perspectives, has at its core a concern for examining power relations and a commitment to changing established systems and structures that reproduce injustice (Andreotti and de Souza, 2012; Cook, 2012; Shukla, 2009; Andreotti, 2006; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). In highlighting the characteristics of this subjectivity, I apply a critical lens to the four themes discussed previously. In doing this, I point out the ways whereby the participants of the current study, and other volunteers like them, can move beyond the participatory in their work abroad as a way to support enduring social change.

In international volunteering, a critical global subjectivity should reflect an understanding of self-fulfilment and one's role and sense of social responsibility in a way that is attentive to power relations. Volunteers who possess a critical sensibility understand their mobility and role as existing within unequal global power patterns, where Global North actors move to and assume responsibility for the Other in the Global South. They do not take the privileged position of a volunteer for granted; instead, they see themselves as beneficiaries of, and as having control over, systems and structures, both of which make their mobility possible. While all the participants in the current study acknowledged that their gender was a 'strike' against them when operating in largely patriarchal host communities, they all expressed an awareness of the benefits accrued by virtue of their race, education, and nationality. For example, as Phyllis noted, 'When I go into a [waiting] room for a meeting, there may be 25 people ahead of me, but I'm white so I get to be at the top of the line.' In this example of transgressing the participatory discourse, self-awareness made participants extra careful and deliberate in their engagement or 'nestling' with host communities.

Self-awareness is crucial in engagement with the Other, and it helps clarify the basis of the caring that motivates volunteers operating within a critical discourse. A critical subjectivity in international volunteering embraces a common humanity with the Global South, but the basis for this concern is framed around the notions of 'horizontalism' (Shukla, 2009: 141) and 'political obligation for doing justice', rather than on 'benevolence or paternalism' (Andreotti, 2006: 42). In her articulation of horizontal global citizenship, Shukla (2009: 145) invokes the Freirean notion of participatory democracy and calls for a 'politicized and empowered interaction between collective actors in the North and South'. The emphasis is on mutuality and

collaboration, which means, for example, that cross-national partnerships formed by volunteer activists and their local partners would need to be sustainable to avoid over-reliance on fundraising in the West that may reinforce paternalism and Western hegemony. Although some participants of the current study did work collaboratively with individuals in host communities in the non-profit organizations they co-founded, or in educational institutions formed through partnerships, they did not as readily envision alternative or Indigenous options to development that did not include fundraising in the Global North at the core. Furthermore, the beneficiaries were glaringly missing from these fundraising efforts as active actors.

International volunteering driven by a sense of political obligation also acknowledges causal responsibility in transnational harm (Andreotti, 2006), which means that volunteers recognize effects of the asymmetrical exercise of power in processes such as colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. Andreotti (2006: 42) emphasizes that such a consciousness results from self-reflexivity and not just from self-awareness or self-reflection. In international volunteering, self-reflexivity suggests a consciousness about ways in which individual actions are nested within 'collective contexts and histories'. Cook (2012: 125) describes a critical 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'. In a moment of transgressing the participatory discourse, Tammy, for example, exhibited this kind of self-reflexivity when she resisted attempts by US forces to co-opt her work in constructing an 'image of the military as a harbinger of humanitarian development' (Ali, 2010: 555); instead, as Tammy explains, she 'broke through all that and did some courses together [with local colleagues] where we were critical of the war experience and the US foreign policy'.

Indeed, both Tammy and Kate described several instances when they questioned the mainstream narrative of the US as a global citizen (Schattle, 2008: 138) and emphasized the Global North's complicity in the problems experienced in the Global South at a level that was absent in the other four participants, prompting me to wonder if their self-reflexivity was enhanced, in part, by the exigency of their context. These moments of transgression, however, were easily overwhelmed by the participatory discourse, which remained dominant in the participants' narratives.

A skill that participants can exhibit, if they embrace the notion of volunteering as political obligation, relates to the ability to influence how people in the Global North understand challenges and assets in the Global South. For instance, Kate's 'bridging' role, described below, has the potential to move beyond the focus on raising funds to an emphasis on influencing international treaties, policies, or state actions

that address the root causes of the problems experienced in the Global South, the symptoms of which volunteers seek to address:

> *And so I'm the bridge … the things I've been doing in the United States is participating as an advocate with a grassroots lobbying organization … a citizen-activist group, mostly made up of folks just like you and me, and instead of having just regular lobbyists in Washington, DC, what they do is empower folks like us to go meet with members of Congress, the state department, the White House, the World Bank … So for instance, this fall, with help from people like me, the United States just made a pledge for 20 million dollars into a fund for global education that impacts girls.*

<div align="right">Kate, research participant</div>

Although Kate is doing this 'bridging' after retiring from volunteering abroad, all participants in the current study have the capability to function as a bridge between Global North and Global South, both *during* and *after* their experiences. The bridging role should not be underrated, as it is crucial in development work (Devereux, 2008). A critical subjectivity, however, would embrace this bridging role as a means of disrupting the reproduction of unequal North–South power relations, and to be co-participants in the struggle to address the roots of social problems and move towards social justice.

In sum, the narratives examined for this study did convey moments of participants' criticality or consciousness about power, as related to their role as volunteers who are privileged by virtue of their location in the Global North. However, as I point out here, a more nuanced and sustained consciousness of the workings of power as it relates to North–South relations is desirable if participants are to overcome the limitations of the participatory discourse outlined previously. A critical global subjectivity would also enable participants, as development workers, to: (1) express their agency and social responsibility as a 'political obligation for doing justice' within historical defined spaces (Andreotti, 2006: 42); (2) embrace a community engagement that is horizontal and consistently challenges and undermines unequal North–South power relations; and (3) exhibit cross-cultural competence, the ability to be self-reflexive, and to function as a bridge towards social justice in solidarity with actors in the Global South. To enhance criticality, as I have advocated in this paper, suggests a serious examination by the volunteers of their motivation for, role in, and practice of education-related international volunteering. Adopting a postcolonial framework and embracing strategies suggested by some of the authors referenced in this section can be useful towards this end.

Conclusion

This paper involved an exploration of six white American women's accounts of their transnational education-related work and resulting understandings. It affirmed that international education-related volunteering provides a rich context in which to explore participants' global subjectivities. It assumed that there is a relationship between education-related volunteer practices and ideas about global subjectivity, and that the relationship can be ascertained from participants' narratives about their work. Participants' meanings of education-related work in the context of self-fulfilment, social responsibility, active engagement with host communities, and cross-cultural competence were explored against the backdrop of ideas about global citizenship and international volunteering and development, which are available in the literature.

A possible conclusion from this exploration relates to the general assumption in the literature that mature, experienced, and willing international volunteers are more likely than younger ones to exemplify more collective – as opposed to individual and autonomous – notions of global citizenship (Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Devereux, 2008; Schattle, 2008). This study suggests that this is the case, as negligible evidence of the preoccupation with self-promotion and career advancement often associated with the neoliberal discourses of international volunteering and development was evident in participants' expressions of the four themes analysed in this paper. While participants expressed motivations related to personal fulfilment, their main focus was on addressing social problems and the common good. Yet, even with volunteers who express collective and common good themes in their global engagement through education-related work, criticality can be elusive, as the participatory discourse tends to dominate. However, as I have argued in this paper, the participatory and critical discourses ought to be seen as co-existing, rather than being mutually exclusive.

I have noted in this paper that understanding the potential and limits of the participatory discourse is essential if, as Baillie Smith and Laurie (2011) suggest, international volunteering is to be viewed as a changing phenomenon that reflects evolving notions of North–South interaction in the context of globalization. It becomes important to understand how volunteers from the Global North embody this change through their activities abroad, as these experiences shape and are shaped by their global subjectivities. I have shown in this paper that the participatory global education worker discourse, with its emphasis on development as solving social problems, can easily neglect a sustained critical examination of power in North–South relations, which may obscure and reproduce unequal patterns of interdependence. I have argued that the participatory discourse can sometimes deplete and inhibit nuanced advocacy and activism and their potential to bring about sustainable social change.

I emphasize that if international volunteers expect to engage in development and work towards sustainable change in the Global South, an enhanced criticality in their understanding of education-related work – in terms of self-fulfilment, social responsibility, active engagement, and cross-cultural competence – is crucial. This may mean that, as individuals, volunteers need to seek structured opportunities that engage the criticality of their experiences before, during, and after their international volunteering in the Global South. Research that examines how participants do this would make an important contribution to the ongoing debate on international volunteering and global citizenship.

References

Ali, N. (2010) 'Books vs bombs? Humanitarian development and the narrative of terror in Northern Pakistan'. *Third World Quarterly*, 31 (4), 541–59.

Andreotti, V. (2006) 'Soft versus critical global citizenship education'. *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, 3 (Autumn), 40–51.

Andreotti, V. and de Souza, L.M. (2012) *Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education*. London: Routledge.

Bailey, A.W. and Russell, K.C. (2012) 'Volunteer tourism: Powerful programs or predisposed participants?' *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 19 (1), 123–32.

Baillie Smith, M. (2013) 'Public imaginaries of development and complex subjectivities: The challenge for development studies'. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 34 (3), 400–15.

Baillie Smith, M. and Laurie, N. (2011) 'International volunteering and development: Global citizenship and neoliberal professionalisation today'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36 (4), 545–59.

Baillie Smith, M., Laurie, N., Hopkins, P., and Olson, E. (2013) 'International volunteering, faith and subjectivity: Negotiating cosmopolitanism, citizenship and development'. *Geoforum*, 45, 126–35.

Chambers, R. (1994) 'The origins and practice of participatory rural appraisal'. *World Development*, 22 (7), 953–69.

Charmaz, C. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.

Cook, N. (2007) *Gender, Identity and Imperialism: Women development workers in Pakistan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

—— (2012) '"I'm here to help": Development workers, the politics of benevolence and critical literacy'. In Andreotti, V. and de Souza, L. (eds) *Postcolonial Readings of Global Citizenship Education*. London: Routledge, 124–39.

Devereux, P. (2008) 'International volunteering for development and sustainability: Outdated paternalism or a radical response to globalization?' *Development in Practice*, 18 (3), 357–70.

Diprose, K. (2012) 'Critical distance: Doing development education through international volunteering'. *Area*, 44 (2), 186–92.

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Giroux, H. (2010) 'Rethinking education as the practice of freedom: Paulo Freire and the promise of critical pedagogy'. *Policy Futures in Education*, 3 (6), 715–21.

Larsen, M. (2014) 'Critical global citizenship and international service learning: A case study of the intensification effect'. *Journal of Global Citizenship and Equity Education*, 4 (1), 23–65.

Lewis, D. (2006) 'Globalization and international service: A development perspective'. *Voluntary Action*, 7 (2), 13–26.

Lough, B.J. and McBride, A.M. (2014) 'Navigating the boundaries of active global citizenship'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 39 (3), 457–69.

Lough, B.J., McBride, A.M., and Sherraden, M.S. (2009) *Perceived Effects of International Volunteering: Reports from alumni* (CSD Working Paper 09–10). St. Louis, MO: Center for Social Development, Washington University.

Lough, B.J., Sherraden, M.S., McBride, A.M., and Xiang, X. (2014) 'The impact of international service on the development of volunteers' intercultural relations'. *Social Science Research*, 46, 48–58.

Lough, B.J. and Xiang, X. (2014) 'Skills-based international volunteering among older adults from the United States'. *Administration & Society*. doi: 10.1177/0095399714528179.

Lyons, K., Hanley, J., Wearing, S., and Neil, J. (2012) 'Gap year volunteer tourism: Myths of global citizenship?' *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39 (1), 361–78.

Mannino, C.A., Snyder, M., and Omoto, A.M. (2010) 'Why do people get involved? Motivations for volunteerism and other forms of social action'. In Dunning, D. (ed.) *Social Motivation*. New York: Taylor, 127–46.

McCloskey, S. (ed.) (2014) *Development Education in Policy and Practice.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Merriam, S.B. (1998) *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Minkler, M. and Wallerstein, N. (eds) (2008) *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: From process to outcomes*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mohan, G. and Stokke, K. (2000) 'Participatory development and empowerment: The dangers of Localism'. *Third World Quarterly*, 21 (2), 247–68.

Omoto, A.M., Snyder, M., and Hackett, J.D. (2010) 'Personality and motivational antecedents of activism and civic engagement'. *Journal of Personality*, 78 (6), 1703–34.

Paige, R.M., Fry, G., Stallman, E., Josic, J., and Jon, J.E. (2009) 'Study abroad for global engagement: The long-term impact of mobility experiences'. *Intercultural Education*, 20 (1), 29–44.

Patton, M. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Rizvi, F. (2009) 'Towards cosmopolitan learning'. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 30 (3), 253–68.

Roman, L.G. (2003) 'Education and the contested meanings of "global citizenship"'. *Journal of Educational Change*, 4 (3), 269–93.

Schattle, H. (2005) 'Communicating global citizenship: Multiple discourses beyond the academy'. *Citizenship Studies*, 9 (2), 119–33.

—— (2008) *The Practices of Global Citizenship*. Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield.

Sherraden, M.S. (2001) 'Developing transnational social policy: A North American community service program'. *Social Development Issues*, 23 (3), 50–9.

Shor, I. (1999) 'What is critical literacy?' *Journal for Pedagogy, Pluralism & Practice*, 1 (4). Online. http://www.lesley.edu/journal-pedagogy-pluralism-practice/ira-shor/critical-literacy/ (accessed 23 May 2016).

Shukla, N. (2009) 'Power, discourse, and learning global citizenship: A case study of international NGOs and a grassroots movement in the Narmada Valley, India'. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 4 (2), 133–47.

Stake, R.E. (1988) 'Case study methods in educational research: Seeking sweet water'. In Jaeger, R.M. (ed.) *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 253–300.

—— (2005) 'Qualitative case studies'. In Denzin N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 443–66.

Strauss, A.L. and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Tarrant, M.A. (2010) 'A conceptual framework for exploring the role of studies abroad in nurturing global citizenship'. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14 (5), 433–51.

Tiessen, R. and Heron, B (2012) 'Volunteering in the developing world: The perceived impacts of Canadian youth'. *Development in Practice*, 22 (1), 44–56.

Visnovsky, E. (2007) 'The Deweyan conception of participatory democracy'. *Americana: E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary*, 3 (2). Online. http://americanaejournal.hu/vol3no2/visnovsky (accessed 23 May 2016).

Westheimer, J. and Kahne, J. (2004) 'What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy'. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41 (2), 237–69.