THE COLONIAL ELEPHANT: NORTH-SOUTH ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

THE COLONIAL ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: AN EXAMINATION
OF NORTH-SOUTH ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

By

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Abstract:

International collaborations have been steadily increasing in frequency as academic institutions in the global north and south continue to make connections with each other. However, the rate of our increasing interaction is outpacing the emergence of a structural analysis aimed at minimizing the power imbalances inherent in the colonial relationship between the global north and south. As actors within international social work continue to participate in collaborations tainted by professional imperialism and epistemological hegemony, we continue to disadvantage those in the south through the formation and implementation of these partnerships. The exploration of this topic is primarily informed through the use of the author's critical reflection of an academic seminar she participated in during the summer of 2004 in Malawi Africa. It is hoped that the subsequent analysis can be used as tool to inform the development of truly equitable international partnerships.

Acknowledgements:

I would first like to thank the Malawian students and my counterpart Fydess for being such gracious and patient hosts. I will never forget my amazing experience in your country and the wisdom you have taught me. To my fellow conspirators who encouraged me through my MSW studies, keep stirring. I would like to thank my ultimate encourager and source of guidance for these words, my understanding supervisor; you made it fun along the way. I would also like to thank my second reader who inspired the depth of my self-introspection. Thank-you to my family you are my comfort and love. Finally thank-you to the One who walks with me deepening the shades of gray and allowing windows of insight into my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Personal Reflection

I found myself sitting in the Malawi, Africa airport eavesdropping on a conversation among a group of travelers from the southern United States, who were concluding a development trip. A woman was describing a hand-made wooden dollhouse she had purchased from a young Malawi boy. Fascinated that the dollhouse came complete with a miniature telephone, she said to the boy, "Now young, man how do you know what a telephone is?" At that moment it suddenly dawned on me why the white local residents of Malawi acted with such reservation and even suspicion towards the group of Canadian students I was traveling with. They had witnessed first hand the increasing flurry of westerners visiting Malawi and along with fellow Malawians understood the direct demeaning impact of colonial relationships being reinforced with such interactions. As a social work student supposedly armed with the tools of critical analysis, I now felt consumed by the evaluation of an academic seminar I had just participated in. Even though I was in a country completely alienated from the concept of western 'social work', I felt an extreme closeness to the academia I was returning to. I longed to return to my studies where I could finally identify and deconstruct what I have come to call the 'colonial elephant'. This concept refers to the existence of historical colonialism in present day relationships, often invisible to those traveling from countries of privilege but felt and recognized by those populations in the global south. I sensed this

elephant was present through out the course of my international exchange. I wrestled with the ensuing scrutiny within myself as I questioned the ideological underpinning of the career I felt drawn to, International Social Work.

1.2 Introduction of Context

Within recent years, there has been increasing focus on the growing interconnectedness of the world, the process of globalization. Social science literature concentrates on two main areas of this trend. Firstly, this research has been oriented towards exposing the detrimental effects of economic globalization on the social well being of populations in the global south (Polack 2004; Torezyner 2000). Secondly, a new focus has been emerging, one that documents and examines the international collaborations and relationships made possible through the opportunity for increased global interaction (Razack, 2000).

The discipline of International Social Work, which has carved out a distinct space within the larger International development arena (Whitmore & Wilson, 1997; Fishlock & Lee, 2004), is attempting to respond to the implications of globalization. Midgley (2001) explains how social work maintains inherent values of pursuing human well being on a global scale, and is now experiencing increased opportunities to carry out this mandate. Universities in both Canada and the United States in collaboration with non-governmental agencies are providing new prospects for academic internships, placements and work experiences within developing countries (Rai, 2004). Schools of Social Work across Canada including York University, the University of Calgary and the University of Toronto are encouraging overseas field placements and research opportunities within the

global south (Razack, 2002). The University of Toronto in particular has been involved in efforts to bring post-graduate social work education to developing countries. However, there is a surprisingly limited literature regarding the inherent power imbalances involved in the academic relationships between developing and developed countries. Razack (2002) illustrates this lack of critical analysis in reference to academic exchanges, "We continue to study and learn about the other with little attention to how these structural power relations sustain cultural and economic privilege" (pg. 256).

1.3 Objective

It is the intent of this paper to address these inherent power imbalances embedded in the context encompassing academic partnerships between the global south and north. I will attempt to analyze the guiding forces behind the formation and implementation of these partnerships, on the part of actors in the global north. I will argue that factors such as professional imperialism and epistemological hegemony taint the creation of equal power relationships, showing how the benefits and resources gleamed from these exchanges flow primarily from the South to the North. I utilize my personal experiences in the World University Services Canada summer academic seminar in Malawi Africa as a primary source for reflection and analysis. This partnership while created in the spirit of equality served to reinforce patterns of colonialism, benefiting the Canadian participants and disadvantaging the Malawian participants. Through the reflection on and analysis of my own experience in Malawi I hope to illuminate the power imbalances, which occurred during the seminar and their effects, providing recommendations for future academic partnerships in the hopes of pursuing truly equitable partnerships. How do we share our

resources in the global north without imposing colonial implications on those populations in the global south?

1.4 Methods

This thesis project was primarily informed through the use of secondary research data and critical personal reflection on my involvement in the 2004 World University Services Canada seminar in Malawi Africa. The analysis is built upon themes drawn from critical literature within social sciences, more specifically International Social Work. I have utilized my own personal experience of participating in an academic partnership in Malawi Africa as the primary source of reflection, informing the analysis, along with other relevant examples of academic partnerships found within the literature. Through the use of a travel journal and academic notes taken during my stay in Malawi, I will engage in a critical reflection of the seminar, linking my thoughts with those articulated in anti-oppressive and feminist literature.

Once completed, I intend on sending this thesis to World University Services Canada for the purpose of creating awareness of one student's experience of the summer seminar program. It is my intent that these words can be used as a tool to inform future seminars, encouraging the creation of a critical space where issues of power and equality can be deconstructed and recognized.

1.5 Critical Reflection

World University Services Canada (WUSC) is a non-governmental organization funded primarily through Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that

facilitates post-secondary international exchanges. Each year WUSC sends a group of approximately 15-20 Canadian University students to a developing country for the purpose of participating in an academic seminar. The seminar is carried out in partnership with an equivalent number of University students from the host country and is meant to be an equitable exchange of ideas, knowledge and cultural learning. In late June of 2004, 19 University students from across Canada traveled to Malawi Africa to engage in academic learning and research regarding the topics of HIV/AIDS and agriculture. Each one of us was paired with a Malawi student with whom we would share accommodations and engage in our class work and research with.

Immediately before the seminar the Canadian students participated in cultural sensitivity training over a three-day period, in order to alleviate some of the cultural misunderstandings that may occur between the two groups of students. As the seminar progressed, the Malawi students began expressing feelings of hurt, vulnerability and anger. They felt as though they were not being treated fairly within the partnership and at one point threatened to dissolve the seminar if the issues were not immediately resolved.

During the activities carried out in the seminar, I often felt, as though there was a theoretical 'colonial elephant in the room' no one wanted to acknowledge. I felt the macro power dynamics inherent in the colonial relationship between developed and developing countries was being re-created at a micro level within our 6-week seminar. Malawi, a British colony gained independence in 1964 (Else, 2001) and is still struggling with the effects of colonization and the ravages of structural adjustment programs meant to improve their economy.

Issues expressed by the Malawi students were never fully explored or resolved and I left the trip questioning the validity of the claim that academic partnerships between the global south and north are indeed equitable. Instead I am left with a hope in the potential of these partnerships to create positive change in the lives of impoverished populations and the crucial need to reorient the context these partnerships are situated in.

Chapter 2 – Main Concepts

2.1 Colonization

The process of colonization has occurred all over the world, including Canada however I will refer to colonization as 'the ways in which European countries expanded their rule to other areas like India, Africa and the Caribbean' (Razack, 2002). Colonization is a complex process of economic, political and cultural domination aimed at enriching the lives of those is power by economically exploiting populations in the global south, as they are forced to alter their material and cultural framework in favour of the colonizer. Polack (2004) explains that beginning in the late 1400s European countries such as England, Portugal, France and the Netherlands began extending their rule to conquer people and resources in the global south. Polack (2004) states, "Much of the current geopolitical map is actually the product of this history of European colonialism" (pg. 282). The continent of Africa was carved up into countries and regions defined by the colonizers regardless of indigenous territory and tribal boundaries already in place.

According to Else (2001), the first Europeans to arrive in Malawi were Portuguese explorers. They carried on activities in Malawi from the 16th to 19th century until the British explorers arrived. "Probably more than any country in Africa, the history of Malawi has been shaped and influenced by missionaries" (Else, pg. 19). David Livingstone is the famous missionary/explorer from Scotland who molded the progress of missionary activities in Malawi. Under his direction and leadership the British established

a strong presence in Malawi, with Germany and Portugal both extending limited
governance.

Part of British rule involved the imposition of a 'hut tax' on local residents with
limitations put on traditional methods of agriculture. Many Malawians were forced out of
their communities to work on white settler plantations. Through out this period in history
British culture was imposed on and adopted by the Malawian population influencing
clothing, language, religious beliefs and customs such as taking tea three times a day, a
practice still maintained in Malawi.

By the 1950's Malawians began fighting for increased rights and were allowed to
enter the government and run for office. Dr. Hastings Banda lead a popular revolt through
the Nyasaland Africa Congress (NAC). Previously a British colony, Malawi only recently
gained independence in July of 1964 (Else, 2001). Dr. Hastings Banda while helping to
bring freedom to Malawi from British rule imposed a strict dictatorship on the people of
Malawi.

Malawi recently implemented a democratic system of government and now
struggles to redefine their country, dismantling British control, while navigating the
terrain of a relatively new political structure. While Malawi is no longer a colony of
England, traces of colonialism still exist as this country is continually exploited by the
relationships with Europe. In today's context, colonization refers to the way in which the
global north continues to exploit the resources and the populations of the developing
south, creating a tumultuous relationship.

2.2 International Social Work (ISW)

The field of International Social Work, has grown in tandem with International Development, but as Midgley (1995) specifies, has focused more on aspects of social development to accompany the economic restructuring normally associated with International development. Midgley (1995) further illustrates the focus of ISW, "Social development focuses on the community or society and on wider societal processes and structures" (pg. 22). Dominelli (1997) defines the role of social development as "… have(ing) been counter poised with economic development to signify a focus on civil society and its diverse organizations at the level of community" (pg. 75).

The foundation of International Social Work has been built upon the partnerships nurtured between individuals, organizations, academic institutions and countries in the global north and south. For only through these relationships can information, resources and ideas be shared and fostered. It is important to note that although I will be touching upon relevant examples of academic partnerships from other disciplines within the social sciences, I will be mainly focusing on those collaborations facilitated by International social work academia. ISW guides and governs a diverse range of international interactions, projects and partnerships.

The realm of International social work has existed as a quiet, under-acknowledged but increasingly active branch within social work academia and the profession (Whitmore & Wilson, 1997). Midgley (1995) specifies that there is simply no standardized definition of the term 'International social work'. He specifies that the field of ISW has traditionally focused on a comparative analysis of social work practice and approaches within different countries (Midgley, 2001). The bulk of ISW literature mainly

concentrates on the growth of social work in developing socially democratic countries. However the emphasis of this research has been shifting to focus on the expansion of social work in developing countries.

There are several institutions governing this realm of ISW on a global scale: International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) which hosts representatives from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America (Haug, 2005). An MSW program at the University of Calgary, the International Social Work degree (ISW) currently represents the dominant discourse of ISW within Canada.

The International Federation of Social Work Association assembled in a Biennial Conference in Montreal on July 31, 2000 for the purpose of developing a new universal, definition of ISW (Haug, 2005). During the conference tensions developed regarding two approaches to carrying out ISW: remedial and activist social work. Representative of a division within the field of social work itself, some believe that ISW should not "embrace causes but focus on professional functions", however social activists argue for a focus on the importance of community development and macro-level change (Midgley, 1997).

The first approach to conducting international social work, which Midgley (1995) refers to as 'remedial', is the overall collaborative effort aimed at helping to support the growth of social work professionalism within developing countries. This approach has been heavily criticized for its colonial implications (Whitmore and Wilson, 1997). As Midgley (1995) states, "Professional schools of social work in developing countries were

often created on the initiation of external agents, and in many cases this involved the

replication of Western curricular approaches. In addition, the development of

professional practice was also extensively influenced by the Western model" (pg. 178).

Midgley also points to Bose (1992) who writes about the irrelevance of current forms of

social work within India and how a western framework guiding social work takes away

from the importance of social activism within his country. The second approach known

as activism seeks to deconstruct oppressive structures within society, primarily through

community organizing efforts and grassroots organizations (Lee, 1999; Campferns 1996).

Activism focuses on changing the macro-level processes to allow those disadvantaged

populations access to an increase of resources including health care, education and the

political involvement. Regardless of the contradictions found between 'remedial' and

activism international social work, it was agreed at the ISFW conference that both

activities should be equally represented under the larger ISW umbrella. The debate rages

on between those social worker's who believe engaging in activism against economic

globalization is the only way to escape the colonial implications of imposing a western

framework of social work on developing countries.

Many of these academic partnerships are formed annually under the premise of

carrying out both activities of International social work. Although the nature of these

approaches is fundamentally different the forces inherent in globalization influence the

implementation of both. Each approach to carrying out ISW possesses unique factors that

need to be taken into consideration in the analysis of power relations between countries in

the global north and south. The debate in the 1970's and early 80's focused on the

implementation of remedial social work, the progress of western social work in developing countries (Midgley, 2001). However, the focus of the subsequent analysis within this thesis regards the concepts of research and education within academic partnerships. Malawi Africa has so far not been concerned with the development of the institution of social work, however Malawians are extremely familiar with and actively involved in research and educational endeavors addressing social problems in their country. The increasing focus of ISW endeavors; academic institutions have been interested in pursuing the specific interests of research and education within this sub-Saharan African country.

2.3 Globalization: Growing Poverty

Globalization is a multi-faceted concept quickly attracting the attention of the social work community in general and specifically that of ISW. Dominelli & Hoogvelt (1996) define globalization as "a new stage in the development of world capitalism. It signals a new phase in the process of accumulation on a world scale, articulating at once new relationships between capital, labour and the state. It has three key features: 1) the emergence of a global market system, emphasizing the adoption of capitalism and free-market principles, 2) the decline of social protection for citizens; and 3) the internationalization of the state, impacting on the ability of the state to regulate and influence it's own economy, 4) a meshing of cultural, economic and political components of the world, across state borders" (pg. 46). It is important to note that while economic globalization has been heavily criticized for creating greater inequalities, Razack (2002) refers to the accompanying process of 'internationalism' as allowing for increased

human interaction leading to greater opportunity for the improvement of social well being

in developing countries. Globalization is allowing increased opportunity for academic

partnerships as a result of evolving technology, physical mobility and increased

knowledge of the world. For instance, the growing interconnectedness of schools of

social work has allowed for collaborative projects to take place between those in the

global north and those in the global south. The University of Toronto has engaged in

several of these academic partnerships with the National Autonomous University of

Mexico (UNAM) and the China College of Civil Affairs (CCCA) in People's Republic of

China (Traub-Werner, Shera, Villa & Peon, 2000; Tsang, Chung & Shera, 2000).

Utilizing the emerging trend of 'internationalism' to allow for these collaborations, both

remedial and activism International social work activities are carried out to address the

macro and micro effects of economic globalization. The ISW approach of social activism

has gained recognition and importance, as the global effects of economic re-structuring

have impacted upon populations within the global south and the need to redistribute

resources becomes evident. Academic partnerships concentrating on research and

education have increased in this pursuit of this endeavor.

Economic Globalization

As the restructuring process has been taking place within the social service sector

in North America, there have been similar processes taking place negatively affecting the

social well being of citizens within the global south (Baines, 2004).

The three main attributes of neo-liberal restructuring within the developing world, inherent within economic globalization that I will address are: debt, structural adjustment programs and labor issues.

i) Debt

Polack (2004) writes, "overall, there has been a steady rise in the debt from the Global South, which totaled well over 2 trillion dollars at the end of 1999, with 47 of the poorest countries of the world owing 422 billion of that sum" (pg. 284). The massive debts these countries have accumulated occurred in the late 1970's early '80's when global institutions began funneling money into the global south in the pursuit of infrastructure development and industrialization. This process was implemented within a Western capitalist framework and therefore generally irrelevant to the benefit of these countries economies. Polack (2004) explains, "Debt has functioned as a mechanism by which money, commodities, and resources have tended to flow in one direction – toward the wealthy countries, corporations and people's of the Northern Hemisphere" (pg. 284). Banks, wealthy individuals, northern multinational corporations and financing organizations are receiving the profit of the unmanageable interest rates charged on the debts. Countries like Malawi spend a large percentage of their GDP to pay interest rates on debts, severely crippling the government's ability to provide social and education programs along with aid for Malawi citizens.

ii) Structural Readjustment programs

Structural Readjustment programs meant to create positive economic reform in

developing countries particularly sub-Saharan Africa, have had the opposite effect and

wreaked havoc with the economic systems of these countries (Polack, 2004). US Aid has

implemented wide-reaching structural readjustment programs in Malawi. The

government in Malawi was encouraged to produce substantial revenue from tobacco

farming. With aid packages from US Aid, Malawi developed a mono-cropping system of

farming, meaning farmers stopped growing other crops to cultivate one primary crop;

tobacco. Over the past decade, tobacco sales have plunged, partly due to decreased

demand and partly due to the race to the bottom, competition between other tobacco

producing countries. During my visit to Malawi I was able to visit numerous NGO's

working feverishly to begin re-diversifying the cropping system, these organizations were

operating on extremely limited resources, but focused on grass roots alternatives to

tobacco crops. I documented in my journal some of the specific issues related to mono-

cropping while on a field visit in Malawi:

> *Thursday, July 8th, 9:00am*
> "We visited a tobacco auction floor today and then returned to the college to hear a
> presentation from a Malawian development worker. We learned that Malawi's
> GDP is made up of 76.5% tobacco earnings; it's the highest in the world. Malawi is
> bound by the chains of cash cropping, lacking the resources to diversify the crops.
> They had signs inside the tobacco auction floor that read, "thank-you for smoking".
> Lately, the demand for Tobacco has been decreasing, partly due to the non-smoking
> campaigns in the west, and partly due to other countries in the global south
> developing tobacco crops increasing competition and lowering prices. This means
> that Malawi is in economic trouble and so they attempt to promote smoking to
> increase sales of tobacco. We have seen bumper stickers that read 'smoking is life',
> we now understand the true meaning behind this statement."

iii) Labor Issues

The third trend inherent within the growth of economic globalization impacting

negatively on populations in the global south involves labour issues. Countries within the

global south have established Free Trade Zones where transnational corporations can

void the local regulations such as minimum wage, safe, working conditions and can

implement child labor (Torezyner, 2000). Malawi has been less affected by sweatshops

due to the land-locked geographic location of the country. It is simply too difficult to

transport goods to and from the country. While in Malawi however, I was told that due

to the mono-cropping system recently implemented, Malawians have been forced to farm

export-oriented products, mainly tobacco. Malawians are forced into the deskilled

workforce, to support a primarily export-oriented crop, taking away from the opportunity

to develop alternate farming systems and the skills necessary to nurture replacement

crops.

2.4 The Evolution of Colonialism

While the history of colonialism is still quite relevant in the daily lives of those in

developing countries it can be argued that the effect of 'traditional' colonialism has

declined, as nation states in the global south have regained independence and attempt to

recover from this period in history. New forms of colonialism have been emerging

through trade agreements; structural adjustment programs and as this thesis argues

academic partnerships meant to facilitate capacity building and the promotion of well

being. "Colonial domination was often justified through a belief in the superiority of

Europeans over the indigenous populations" (Polack, 2004, pg. 282). The very beliefs

Polack speaks of that motivated early colonizers still continue today but have been

modified to include more acceptable and less barbaric forms of imperialism including: control through the use of knowledge and research.

This pattern of dominance occurs through the inherent power imbalances existing between global organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and governments within many countries of the global south, especially on the continent of Africa. Similar relationships also exist between academic institutions in the global North and South. "As is expected, traces of colonialism and imperialism linger because the flow of information around practice and teaching is one-dimensional, moving from industrial to 'developing' nations" (Razack, 2000, pg. 255).

According to the McMaster Social Work Anti-Oppressive Glossary of Terms 'colonialism' refers to "a form of imperialism that is based on maintaining a sharp distinction between the ruling power and the colonial (exploited) populations. Unequal rights are a fundamental feature of colonialism, as is the imposition of a dominant culture's values and practices." (Lee, Sammon & Dumbrill, 2005). A pertinent example of how colonialism has impacted Malawi regarding the imposition of a western health framework was illustrated during the seminar.

An important aspect of our seminar while in Malawi was learning from guest speakers who would travel to the college where we staying to teach us about their area of expertise. One such guest speaker included a natural healer Dr. Theu, presently conducting advocacy work in the larger health community for the official recognition of the validity of natural healing. Dr. Theu explained how natural healing practices have been demonized by religious communities in Malawi following in the footsteps of the

first colonial missionaries. On July 8th at 10:45 am I wrote in my journal, "This morning we had a speaker on 'traditional healing' by the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation. It was interesting to learn about how the colonizers immediately began to demonize ethnic healing/traditions/medicine. So now all of the conservative Christian churches have stigmatized the traditional healers and they practice in secret".

The guest speaker believed that the demonization of ethnic healers was exacerbating the HIV/AIDS pandemic in two ways. Firstly natural healers do not have access to relevant medical resources or new knowledge they might incorporate into their practices and secondly many Malawians have become distrustful of both the natural healers and the western medical establishments. Malawians were also extremely cautious regarding the developing medical establishments who are in effect implemented and run by foreign organizations, often inaccessible to most of the population. Myths regarding HIV/AIDS become perpetuated through the existence of the dichotomy between these two areas of health care in Malawi.

Similar to the example above the colonial elephant I will refer to represents the hidden existence of "superior" colonialist attitudes and beliefs that continue to guide the orientation of these seminars and manifest in micro-level ways during our personal relationships and activities between the global north and south.

2.5 Academic Partnerships

The need for academic partnerships is growing. As those involved in the task of promoting social well being either through activism or remedial international social work are aware of the continual depletion of resources and growing poverty within the global

south. The potential to create social change through partnerships is filled with immense opportunity to work together, creating a space where change is possible. "International networking among popular sector organizations and NGOs can also help in the search for alternatives to globalization, trade liberalization and structural adjustment programs (SAPs)" (Campferns, 1996, pg. 202).

As we grow closer together through new forms of communication and transportation, we have come to understand the importance of a concept, that is key to the heart of social work, an equal distribution of resources. Narayan (2000) indicates that 'social responsibility is the basic assumption on which social work rests' (pg. 196). This social responsibility extends beyond the borders of our own countries. For ISW, the effects of economic globalization and the increased awareness of these processes are extending the scope of social responsibility not only beyond the borders of Western countries but also beyond the conventional 'remedial' forms of social work (Midgley, 2000).

Academic Institutions have been forerunners, in the development of partnerships between developed and developing countries. These institutions often have resources they can share with developing countries, including knowledge, material supplies and the time of professors and students to engage in this work.

Academic partnerships are formed between developing and developed countries within International social work and related fields for many reasons, but are mainly developed for the purpose of 'capacity building'. Traub-Werner, Shera, Villa, & Peon (2000) recognize that capacity building can refer to many things but in terms of academic

partnerships refers to the exchange of education, research endeavors along with the sharing of resources.

The WUSC seminar in Malawi is an excellent example of a contemporary academic partnership. It was designed so that an equal number of Canadian and Malawian students conducted research together, providing an atmosphere to learn from each other. Although it was hoped that our research would prove to be somewhat useful, all students emphasized the importance of the opportunity to learn through interaction with each other. A seminar such as this one has enormous potential to create awareness within both populations of students. Although this trip was facilitated through CIDA, which is an international development agency, I participated in the seminar in the role of a social work student. Many social work students engage in international exchanges through international development agencies or through their academic institutions.

For instance, Sachdev (1997) chronicles the experience of four Canadian social work undergraduate students who traveled to New Delhi for an eight-week period to engage in a cultural sensitivity training seminar with a local university.

There have also been projects designed within ISW aimed at bringing social work education to development countries. The University of Toronto has been extremely active in the promotion of social work education around the world. Tsang et al. (2000) chronicle their experiences of a China-Canada Collaborative education Project between the University of Toronto and the China College of Civil Affairs in the People's Republic of China (CCCA). The purpose of this partnership was to promote the development of social work in China and included the following elements: 1) design of curriculum for

social work education, 2) training of those professionals involved in development of

social policy 3) training for Chinese professionals currently practicing social work.

Traub-Werner et al. (2000) describe a similar project between the University of

Toronto and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). This

collaboration between the two schools of social work mainly involved social work

education. Professors from the University of Toronto traveled to the UNAM to teach the

social work professors a Master's level program of social work. Once the professors in

Mexico received the MSW degrees they could then begin teaching this degree to students

and social work professionals. It must be noted that all of the international collaborations

reviewed were conducted in developing countries. Razack (2002) indicates that it is the

exception rather than the norm for students from developing countries to come to a

developed country in the spirit of one of these partnerships. As academic partnerships

between those in the global south and north, a critical analysis must develop in tandem to

serve as a guide in deconstructing the power imbalances inherent within these

relationships. Whitmore and Wilson (1997) expand of the nature of these partnerships,

"In recent years, international development approaches have ranged from ones in which

'experts identify, define and propose solutions to someone else's problems to the

emphasis on 'partnership' now advocated by many development agencies. The term

partnership implies a relationship of equals, but where north and south in practice, this is

rarely the case" (Whitmore and Wilson, pg. 57).

Chapter 3 – Analysis of My Methodology Journey

When I started to plan for this thesis project I became immediately aware of the potential to recreate the very non-equitable power relationships; I was exploring as the topic through my research process. Due to my global social location, and existing relationship with the seminar participants, I felt the need to proceed with extreme caution, and evaluate the possible research methods through an anti-oppressive framework. I did not want to engage in research activities with the Malawian participants that only served to mirror the oppressive locations felt by the Malawians during the seminar.

During the process of choosing research methods, I contemplated the option of conducting primary research with the Malawi and Canadian participants of the WUSC seminar, through the use of Internet chat programs. I believed that I could successfully facilitate one-on-one interviews with the Malawians, without having to travel back to Malawi. I developed a plan to circumvent the practical realities of the formidable communication and geographic barriers inherent in such an endeavor, while also examining the ethical issues surrounding the use of the Internet as a research tool (Nagy & Falk, 2000). However, the most difficult component of this proposal was struggling with the implications of my role as the researcher and the Malawians as those being researched. I understand that it is imperative that every social worker conducting research should attempt to minimize the power imbalances existing between the researcher and the participants however I was aware of several added layers of complexity within this

research endeavor. (Moffatt, George, Lee & McGrath, 2005). Firstly, I am a white researcher within a developed country conducting research on those individuals within developing countries. I exist within a global social location, which allows for the potential of an oppressive relationship (Razack, 2002). The status of my location is one of privilege, as I have access to resources and the dominant knowledge systems within which to construct my research. As this global social location, was the impetus for this research project, it was now clearly shaping the implications of my research process.

Secondly, I myself was a participant in the seminar, taking part in the activities that ignored and exacerbated the effects of unacknowledged colonial implications. I existed on the side of privilege, the Canadian grouping, which was clearly favored in the planning and implementation of the seminar. I felt as though it would continue the paternalistic nature of the colonial relationship if I were to take sole ownership of a research project, based on the Malawian's feelings of hurt and vulnerability that I was partly responsible for. Moffatt et al.(2005) further illustrate my caution, "Risks of the subjective approach to research include the appropriation of voice, of the persons being interviewed and the re-traumatizing of persons who have experienced a breach of trust due to social relations that have been marked by prejudice in the past" (pg. 2).

Even though these issues were prominent in my thinking I still felt what Heron (2002) expresses as 'exclusivity' within the development of my research. Heron, a western feminist conducted development work in Uganda Africa for seven years. Working from a feminist analysis she felt a strong connection with the African women she was working with on the basis of gender and believed her feminist analysis could

create the opportunity to form equal partnerships. She felt as though she had exclusivity

with these women, in comparison to other detached development workers. I also felt as

though I retained 'exclusivity' within a critical examination of the seminar, for two main

reasons. Firstly, I had developed friendships with the Malawi participants and I felt this

could aid in the research process. Secondly I was confident that because I was coming

from an anti-oppressive social work background, I could engage in a strong critical

analysis, that could allow me to side step an oppressive research interaction. I assumed

that I could somehow avoid what Heron refers to as 'blind spots' other western

researchers have fallen into (Heron, 2002). I define these blind spots as those crucial

elements of culture, which give meaning to the way we construct our realities that are

missed within a typical western research framework. A blind spot can occur when those

conducting the research do not fully understanding the cultural, social or economic

context framing the research project giving way to colonial and oppressive situations.

This was an important lesson for me to learn, for quite some time later, when thinking

about the resistance strategies the Malawian Universities students employed, I realized

how intrusive a primary research study over the Internet might have been. During the

seminar whenever the Malawians wanted to discuss a problem or issue with the seminar

they discussed it as a group, choosing two delegates to speak on behalf of everyone. Our

roommates who were extremely friendly with us regardless of the problems they were

having in the seminar did not feel comfortable talking to us about them on a one-to-one

level. In the end, it very well may have been appropriate to conduct the on-line interviews

but it had the potential to reinforce the forced adaptation of Western research methods

onto a population within a developing country. "Although research methods can be universal, the types of questions asked for research purposes and the reasons how and why they are asked in any particular way, is not" (Traub-Werner et al., 2005, pg. 194). Traub-Werner et al. make an excellent point about the diverse nature of carrying out research, however is it true that research methods are universal?

Ultimately, it was important for me to understand that it is not up to me to decide whether or not these research methods are intrusive, reinforcing the importance of participant interaction within the development of the research process. I realized that I simply could not account for all of the blind spots within my thesis project without enough consultation and co-planning with the Malawian students; a process that within the short time frame I was allotted, the Internet simply could not accommodate.

This left me wondering; what kind of research was I going to do? I attempted to redefine the 'exclusivity' I felt, in order to guide the planning of my research. Even though I left Malawi feeling disillusioned, I still valued my experience extremely and wanted to use my 'exclusivity' so that others may know what I had learned. I had heard the Malawian students express concern over the de-legitimization of their voices, knowledge and research endeavors within the International arena. I struggled with the question of how to create a space for awareness without appropriating the experiences and knowledge of the Malawians within this research process.

I was aware of literature disseminating the experiences of students, and other professionals involved in international social work. I decided to use this literature,

analyzing structural forces along with my 'exclusivity' to speak out about the privileged relationship I was a part of. I want to use my experience as a learning tool to ensure that as academic partnerships continue to be formed that they do so, in a more equitable manner.

It is my intention to speak to my personal experiences of a particular academic seminar, and where possible provide my sense of knowledge regarding the feelings of the Malawian students as directly expressed within the seminar. A drawback of this research method is the subjectivity I may portray in regards to the subject matter. However, I have attempted to link my personal experiences of the WUSC seminar with themes explored in the literature and compare my experiences with other relevant examples of academic partnerships.

Critical Self-awareness

Subjectivity is an important concept in the analysis of our participation in international academic seminars. Swan (2005) explains, "To be a catalyst for effective social change, we must understand, to the best of our ability, our most important tool, ourselves" (pg. 37). I engaged in a process of introspection throughout the development and writing of my thesis, creating an interesting dynamic that I will now identify. By analyzing my role in the experience of the WUSC seminar through critical self-introspection, I was also deepening my understanding of the larger context of the experience. I used the literature to then further cement my analysis of my experience within a larger examination of global structural inequality. I would like to note that my journal is mainly used to reference facts and events during the Malawi seminar, for it was

only through distancing myself from my experience that I could begin developing a deeper analysis of what occurred during my trip.

Kondrat (1999) refers to the importance of gaining an understanding of critical self-awareness. She refers to practical knowledge as "internalized rules and beliefs that guide social interactions without conscious attention to those rules and beliefs" (Kondrat, 1999, pg. 462). Through a process of critical self-awareness we can become aware of how the influence of this practical knowledge sustains structural systems within our society. During the activities of the seminar I became keenly aware of how often I needed to question the practical knowledge I was imparting on others and using to interpret situations and events. It is important that we can identify those "internalized practical and structural assumptions" and how these internal processes guide our world-view and the way in which we interact with other people (Swan, pg. 40). For it is through this process that we can begin to work to minimize power imbalances. "Additionally, by engaging in critical reflection, we can also begin to see how, through our professional activities, we can be unwittingly contributing to the maintenance of inequitable structures of society and to the perpetuation of oppression" (Swan, 2005, pg. 40). This is extremely important for those western social workers and students traveling to developing countries for as we become immersed in a foreign culture, we instinctively and reflexively hold our knowledge system close to us as we are surrounded with the unfamiliar (Razack, 2002).

As Swan (2005) indicates, there is much less consideration for the examination of the relationship between professional and community member, in comparison to the discussions of anti-oppressive theory aimed at disseminating structural forces which

maintain hegemony within our society.   For the WUSC participants, there was a great

deal of emphasis on navigating personal relationships but this focus was not situated

within the larger context of a global system of oppression.

If we are to continue to engage in International Social Work through the

implementation of partnerships between the global north and south, we must do so

through what Narayan (1994) refers to as a 'methodological humility' by which we

combine a structural analysis with a constantly deepening process of self-reflexivity.

"Recognizing the influence of our own social location combined with a desire to

understand the world-view of the other (goodwill does have a place), helps us to enter

into a relationship with both inquisitiveness and humility" (Swan, 2005, pg. 40). While

feeling odd at times, injecting much of my personal experience within the dissemination

of this thesis, I believe this process is extremely valuable in illuminating the struggles

happening within the implementation of these academic seminars. For if, individual

actors within International Social Work engage in this work within themselves, we can

then begin influencing the direction and nature of our academic institutions involving

themselves in international collaborations.

Chapter 4 - Professional Imperialism

The McMaster University School of Social Work Glossary of Terms for Anti-Oppressive Policy and Practice defines imperialism in part as 'a process by which a state extends its power' (Lee, et al. 2005). Following this line of thinking professional imperialism is the way in which the profession of social work exerts power and control over vulnerable populations. In the context of this thesis, social work's professional imperialism reaches beyond the borders of affluent G8 countries, to impact upon developing countries.

Professional imperialism exists at a structural level but creates micro-level processes within daily interactions and human relationships. This link is often hard to identify as this imperialism is ingrained in the way we see and interact with the world. Looking back, I can see that it was hard for me to recognize the presence of professional imperialism during my WUSC seminar. However in analyzing it now, I realize this reality was present during the birth, creation, and was at the very heart, of my seminar and other similar projects. This leads us to momentarily examine the existence of international social work, and the right we have to impose our physical presence, knowledge systems and research initiatives on those in the global south. It is important to examine the larger context governing academic connections between those in the north and south, and how those in the north have the power to dominate the purpose and nature of the partnership.

Stephen Webb (2003) a social work professor at the University of Sussex delivers a scathing critique of the existence of International social work within the article 'Local orders and global Chaos in Social Work'. Webb accuses the social work profession of jumping on the 'globalization bandwagon' as an attempt to legitimize an ailing profession in an era of social service reform and decline. He views the links made between globalization and the decreasing social well being of people to be over-exaggerated, arguing that international relations are constantly shifting in many directions. This includes those previously impoverished countries that have benefited from adopting a capitalist, free-market economy. Torezyner (2000) suggests otherwise, "Fuelled by policies of the International Monetary Fund, developing countries in particular have been forced to cut social spending, privatize, lower taxes, provide less protection to labor, fewer supports to other population groups and eliminate the subsides for basic food items" (pg. 124).

Webb further articulates his beliefs that partnerships between those from the global north and developing countries formed in coalition to offset the growing poverty and inequality are fundamentally imperialist in nature. This sentiment is important to further incorporate in the analysis of this thesis.

One of Webb's (2003) primary critiques of ISW is the self-serving motivation behind work being conducted on the International scene. Webb believes social work is attempting to carve out a new professional realm, focusing on the social component of International development, where it simply doesn't belong. However, Hare (2004) views the increased extension of social work from a more positive and functional perspective.

"Certainly, social workers are practicing in an extremely complex world. They need to understand the forces of globalization – economic, ecological, social – to connect with their international colleagues and to represent themselves in an informed fashion in international circles" (pg. 409).

Webb raises some important questions regarding the motivation behind International Social work endeavors. One of the primary undercurrents motivating Western politics, economics and the social organization of our society today is neo-liberal ideology. Within North America and Europe, neo-liberal ideology has been heavily impacting the nature of social services. According to Baines (2004) social services have been under increasing pressure to operate within the economy as efficient businesses. Has neo-liberal ideology been influencing the expansion of ISW? There is increasing pressure placed upon corporations and governments to extend beyond their own borders in order to increase productivity and achieve success. Faced with a decline in the priority of maintaining social services in Canada and a pressure to serve an increasingly diverse population base, what are the motivations behind the growth of ISW?

Has the expansion of neo-liberal ideology been over exaggerated? Is it fair to make a comparison between multinational corporations and International Social Work? Perhaps not, the motivation behind these international projects and endeavors stem from the principles guiding the profession. Through out the ISW literature a strong emphasis can be found on fundamental principles based on the realization of the inherent worth of every human being. These principles stand in direct contradiction to the neo-liberal

agenda fueling modern multinational corporations, which focus on profits within little concern for human well being. However, neo-liberal principles may be affecting the orientation of social work's increased expansion into the global south. It can be argued that this happens through the epistemological hegemony of social work knowledge (Haug 2005, Larbi 2000) and the enforcement of a belief system traditionally associated with ISW, that legitimizes the accumulation of benefits within these partnerships to exclusively flow from the south to the north.

Webb indicates that one of the ways in which ISW contributes to the expansion of the neo-liberal agenda is through the forced adoption of a Western conception of rights within the global south. The contradiction between individual and community based-rights sits at the heart of the ISW debate in the battle against economic globalization. Web (2003) describes how the battle of ideas unfolds:

> The key tactic by which social work attempts to extend its territorial claim is by shifting from grounding itself in a topic or object of study to identifying itself with new global ways of understanding ethical and social problems. In effect they are wishing to substitute one form of (negative) imperialism, pursued by brutish institutions like the IMF, World Bank and G7, with another type of (positive) imperialism (pg. 200).

Web believes that by operating through a global ideology of social justice we are undermining the relevance and existence of culturally unique localities and conceptions of 'rights'. Tsang et al (2000) also illuminates the danger of western assumptions within International Social Work, "One of these assumptions is that the value-base of the profession has a universal quality that is applicable to all humanity" (pg. 150).

As a social work student constantly engaged in critical literature and discussion, I have been in the process of developing a feminist analysis (Narayan, 2000; hooks, 2000a). During my stay in Malawi, I was immediately confronted with what I considered the subordinated status of women documenting my feelings in a daily journal entry.

Thursday, June 15th[rd], 9:00 am

"A friend and classmate of Fydess invited us (four girls) over for lunch. Tonya and I were the Canadian students, Fydess and Jean the Malawi students. He escorted us into his home, where he lived by himself. It was by far the nicest house I have seen while in Malawi. He was joking about how this was his 'bachelor' pad and he had to do all of the cooking for himself. He showed us around and we ended up in the kitchen. He asked us if we wanted, rice or French-fries for lunch. I was really impressed at this point, since I had been in Malawi I had only seen women cook. Immediately after we replied 'French fries', our host Bonafice says 'okay, well the potatoes are in here, and the knives are in this drawer, just ask me if you don't know where something is' and he left the kitchen. The Malawian girls, Jean and Fydess immediately began to prepare the potatoes while Tonya and I looked at each other completely dumfounded. I could feel my mouth straining to open in protest. In the end I was able to keep myself quiet as the four of us prepared lunch in Bonafice's home. I sat there peeling the damn potatoes grinding my teeth and grumbling and contemplating the whole concept of cultural sensitivity. However this did lead to a really interesting conversation about gender equality from both a Canadian and Malawian perspective among the girls that eventually included Bonafice when he came in to eat."

Through my travels and interactions with Malawians, I continued to analyze the people I met, the situations women were in and the larger political structures through a critical feminist lens. Needless to say, I often felt appalled by the status of women. I was asserting my acquired feminist framework on a country where factors guiding my perceptions of women back in Canada, like the unequal division of labor in the home, were tied to many other cultural factors and daily realities than the structural forces I was taught to dissect. During the seminar I experienced many similar 'gut reactions' to

events, or things that I was seeing. The critical framework I have been developing was directly guiding my feelings. At one point, I remember telling my roommate about feminism in Canada and how proud I was that the division of labor in my home would be equal between my future partner and myself. I knew that I was telling her this because I hoped the status of women could and would eventually change for women in Malawi. I still feel proud of the progress Canada has made in realizing women's rights, however I will continue to struggle with how to fit these possibly imperialist beliefs in an analysis of how to respect Malawian culture.

Heron (2002) also experienced similar feelings while working with women in Uganda. Utilizing a feminist framework, Heron realized how unknowingly she injected the proceedings of the community meetings with a white, western version of feminism, stifling relevant cultural aspects of these women's lives that perhaps did not fit within the dominant feminist framework used in Canada. We must continue to struggle by containing our critiques without ascribing and dismissing our structural analysis to cultural relativism.

Webb raises an extremely important criticism regarding the danger of ISW imposing western values in the developing south, however he pays little attention to the ways in which communities in the global south define their own conception of rights and take political collective action to achieve these rights. Thousands of local communities are engaged in resistance strategies and are attempting to gain international resources and support employing political strategies to improve their access to an increased standard of life. Veltmeyer (2000) describes, the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas Mexico as an

example of an organization formed by the indigenous communities of Mexico as a resistance strategy to advocate against such harmful foreign policies as the North American Free Trade Agreement. The Zapatistas have created an internal system of human rights, developing a unique constitution through the guidance and participation of all community members.

Domenilli (1997) responds to Webb's concerns of creating a 'positivist imperialism' stating, 'In becoming more social development-oriented and international in outlook, social work needs to ensure that it does not become another means of reproducing neocolonial relations and neglect the needs of the individual within the social context' (pg. 81). At the same time Ife (2001) speaks to the importance of viewing social injustice as a global problem, "We need to be wary of both the sterile relativism of a narrow postmodernism denying the importance of universal themes of humanity, human rights and social justice, (pg. 9).

Proponents of ISW certainly do not claim to have the ability to resolve such dilemmas but are proposing to work within grassroots organizations. These community activist groups are in the process of defining their own conception of rights and delineate the actions they will take to pursue the fulfillment of these rights. As they make global connections in the pursuit of social change, they are engaging in a larger discourse of global social justice linking to ISW.

Currently there are few 'global' social work organizations other than the IFSW, through which social workers can conduct international work. Instead those social workers operate through the realms of international development, health care, and

political advocacy bodies within the global south, many of which are strongly rooted in local contexts. There has been an increasing number of social work students expressing interest in and organizing overseas field placements, but remains the exception and not the norm (Razack, 2002). However, it is this hodge-podge collection of activities undertaken by international social workers, which negates the development of a dominant discourse regarding colonial relationships and power imbalances involved in this work.

This thesis is based on the premise that International Social Work is committed to the promotion of global human well-being and is facilitating the sharing of much needed resources through the creation of partnerships. However, I also take the position that we are not being sufficiently critical of our role in maintaining exploitative relationships within International social work. An important question when analyzing the existence of professional imperialism, is who is governing the ISW discourse? Haug (2005) addresses this sentiment, "The ISW remains an exclusive conversation, largely stuck in the dominant consciousness from which it was created" (pg. 131). Haug goes on to indicate that those ISW professionals of European decent continue to set the tone and agenda for ISW, developing theory and mandating International projects. Professionals from the south are continually disregarded in the expert arena as the expansion of social work continues to carry on. As social workers engaged in international collaborations we are required to begin asking the critical questions regarding the existence of a professional imperialism we promote through partnerships built upon Western conceptions of rights, knowledge base and credentials inherent within neo-liberal discourse.

We have seen an increasing amount of international exchanges for the purpose of training workers to become more culturally competent in their work within Canada. Sachdev (1997) writes about one such project, where social work students travel to India to engage in a cultural exchange. Their attitudes and feelings regarding cultures different from their own were recorded before and after the trip. It was noted that one student who recorded a negative attitude before the seminar, returned with intensified feelings of dislike for the culture she would have been immersed in. Are we as a profession using populations in the global south as a means of increasing our productivity and cultural sensitivity; even going as far to send untrained students with negative attitudes into these communities within the global south?

In the WUSC seminar the majority of the Canadian students were studying international development, preparing themselves for a career in this field. The Malawian students were studying agriculture and economics, aimed at improving the state of their country. However it was apparent from the very beginning that our Malawian partners were portrayed as our 'guides' to their country, instead of students with extensive knowledge of the research topics we had traveled to explore. At one point, I wrote in my journal, "My knowledge suddenly feels more valuable to me, even though we need to rely on those within the countries we are traveling with, to guide us. That is often the only role the Malawians seem to play within the context of this trip."

The seminar was designed to facilitate the travel of Canadian students to a developing country, where the Malawian students would help the Canadian's conduct research. All too often, those who are extremely knowledgeable in the host country end

up serving solely as 'guides' helping westerners to navigate the practical realities of the host country.

Tsang et al. (2000) indicates how we also promote professional imperialism with the imposition of institutional agendas. They worked on the case of the China-Canada social work education project and indicated that it was clear that the institutional mandates of the two educational facilities were quite different. The University of Toronto heavily emphasizes the importance of research and publications within social work education; the CCCA focuses more so on practical training. Tsang indicates how this caused some tension with the implementation of the seminar but that the U of T professors were able to adjust the material of the education project accordingly.

The concept of professional imperialism is at the crux of the debate as to whether International Social work should be focused on social activism, for example against the detrimental effects of economic globalization or 'remedial' social work, aiding countries in the global south to develop the profession of social work. Many authors argue that 'remedial' international social work carries grave colonial implications, which then play out in the formation of partnerships. Midgley writes extensively on the expansion of social work in developing countries and gives a warning that "the tendency toward standardization can inhibit the profession's ability to respond effectively to local needs and impede the goals of professional development" (1992, pg. 24). The question as to whether remedial International Social Work should continue is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this debate begs us to ask crucial questions about the purpose of our partnerships and role in sustaining a dominant western ideological bent.

Chapter 5 -Epistemological Hegemony

Knowledge is an extremely valuable commodity in our society today. Those who own and contribute to the dominant knowledge discourse are those who are most privileged in our world (Freire, 1999). The motto for World University Services Canada reads 'knowledge for an equitable world'. The quest to learn and gain new information about the world is a clear motivation in our international endeavors and collaborations. Knowledge is an extremely crucial concept within social work academia, governing the success of students, the granting of degrees and the promotion of academics. Once we graduate with a degree in social work or another discipline we claim to have a certain amount of knowledge that the rest of the population does not have (Narayan, 2000; Illich, 1971). Experts working in the field of International Social Work also claim to have access to a particular knowledge base (Whitmore and Wilson, 1997).

Haug (2005) criticizes the IFSW meeting held in Montreal in the year 2000. Representatives from around the world were there, discussing social work. However she points to the illusion that all countries were equally represented. She indicates that the majority of the main guests and speakers were form white, western delegate circles. North Americans and Europeans were mainly recognized as the primary experts on the social work issues being presented. Through the dialogue surrounding the meeting, the Western framework of social work dominated the discourse, representing western knowledge and thus leading to professional imperialism.

In the process of reading International Social Work literature, I came to notice subtle suggestions of a 'superior' colonialist standpoint in the discourse. For instance, while explaining an extremely valid point, Hare (2004) says, "As Indigenous People from around the world keep reminding us, spirituality, story telling, magic, mystery and connectedness to the land are critical parts of our essential humanity and are necessary for our 'truly' knowing the world, each other and ourselves" (pg. 410). In this comment, Hare is assuming that the purpose of ISW is to 'truly' know the world, alluding to the presence of a positivist value base. She also includes the word 'mystery' and 'magic' in reference to Indigenous knowledge, undercutting the validity of this knowledge in the ISW discourse. However, Hare also includes the important reality that indigenous populations have to 'remind' those dominant institutions to include their lived realities.

The overarching message in Hare's point is an extremely important one and reflects the lack of Indigenous perspective within the discourse. Another comment from Hare (2004) serves to illustrate my next point, "One of the criteria, for professional status is the possession and utilization of a specialized knowledge base organized into a body of theory" (pg. 414). Haug and Razack both pose questions regarding who is constructing this knowledge base and who owns the knowledge within a global discourse? Haug (2005) refers to her experience within the International Social Work program at the University of Calgary, "More than lack of a clear definition of the term, or the limited quantity of written ISW materials, it was the lack of critical analysis and attention to power relations, within this discourse body that disturbed me the most" (pg. 127).

Lastly, while pointing out these criticisms, it is sometimes hard to understand in a concrete way, how these ideas can be set out in actual actions and activities. The major critique I have of international social work is the appropriation of knowledge through research and educational endeavors in the global south, to which Haug (2004) and Razack (2000) have both alluded. I was able to experience this happening during my WUSC trip to Malawi.

Research

Research is one of the primary motivations for developing academic partnerships between the global north and south. However the fundamental nature of the premise guiding this research has the potential to reflect epistemological hegemony (Midgley, 2000). By researching populations in the global south, we assume there is hidden knowledge among these communities for us to discover. Through the collection and dissemination of this data through a primarily western framework, we effectively alienate this knowledge from the communities with which we are working. Western researchers then continue to benefit as our academic work circulates in the global north, with the documents chronicling the lived realities of communities sitting in our libraries and on the shelves of our academic institutions (Reitsma-Street & Brown, 2002).

For instance, the Canadian students were interested in studying the effects of mono cropping, a concept within agricultural studies the Malawian students had previously been studying in great detail. At one point, a Malawian student said, as indicated in my journal, 'we have been speaking out about this for years, now you as Canadians gain this knowledge from us and people will listen to you, not us'. When our

research topics were presented to us at the beginning of the seminar, it was assumed that we were all starting from the same knowledge base. The Malawians, all in their senior levels of education, obviously possessed a great deal more knowledge regarding these research topics. However, they also indicated that they were not consulted in the process of developing the topics as the World University Service Canada set the research agenda. This was a powerful experience for me, as I slowly came to the realization that I cannot simply claim ownership over knowledge I have researched. Through the encouragement of self critical reflexivity (Kondrat, 1999) and engaging in collaborative research endeavors where the agenda is developed and guided by communities in the global south, research endeavors aimed at improving well-being in the south are credited to those communities.

Through the process of examining educational partnerships between countries in the North with those in the South, several themes emerged. These issues included: the flow of education was unidirectional, those in the North imparting social work knowledge to those in the South and a reluctance or oversights in the 'indigenization' of the material being taught.

Education

Education sits at the heart of the debate regarding academic partnerships. Organizations, individuals and governments all over the world connect with each other in the pursuit of knowledge. As noted earlier, the World University Services Canada's defining statement is 'knowledge for an equitable world.' When these partnerships and connections are formed between developing and developed countries, the purpose usually

entails transferring education from the north to the south. The institutions governing these partnerships are embedded with the social framework of these countries and the economic ordering of the world.

Academic institutions in the north are often commissioned by organizations in the global south who ask for the creation of these seminars as a means of increasing their knowledge base. Tsang (2000) writes about one such project between schools of social work in China and Canada. However, he makes it clear that the professionals within China immediately had a strong presence in the relationship, guiding the direction and implementation of the endeavor. In this example the existence of a strong framework guiding the education project allowed the Chinese professionals to implement the necessary modifications needed so that the knowledge taught would be relevant to their population. However, in many other cases countries in the global south are in such need of resources that they lack the positioning to provide a strong presence in the guidance of the project.

Paulo Freire (1999) writes extensively on the subject of education and provides useful insights for the critical analysis of these educational projects. During the international exchange between the University of Toronto and the National Autonomous University of Mexico, Traub-Werner et al. (2000) discuss one of the limitations of their program was that the material the professors from U of T was teaching was not culturally appropriate for social work in Mexico. "The perception that modifications might result in a reduction of an overall quality of what was delivered prevented us from achieving greater indigenization of the material" (Traub-Werner et al., 2000, pg.193). It is obvious

through this example that a North American school can define what 'quality' of knowledge is and what consists of valid knowledge within social work academia. Would it not be safe to assume that quality refers to how applicable, useful and accurate the information is? Through projects such as this one, social work academia continues to claim ownership over knowledge, and impart this belief through our collaborative projects. The Mexico-Canada social work education project resembles what Freire refers to as the banking system of education whereby education is simply deposited into the minds of the 'students', further entrenching the power imbalance between those who own the knowledge and those who are receiving it. The newly educated professionals then carry on this hegemonic system of knowledge and education and adopt the ideological undercurrents along with it, slowly beginning to resemble those who imparted the knowledge. The education project was not participatory and consisted of the U of T professors transferring knowledge to those UNAM professors. The professors at U of T were categorized as the experts with all of the valued knowledge, however how can they be more knowledgeable about social work in Mexico, than the UNAM professors when they live and work in Canada? Are we re-colonizing these countries through the imposition of our educational system?

Tsang also points to the efforts of North American academic to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of the local populations in order to avoid the problems associated with the simple transfer of knowledge. "This modification-based approach, however, still regards Western systems and content is potentially universal, and gives them a privileged position in international collaboration" (Tsang, 151).

The Malawi summer seminar was set up in a more proactive way, where it was hoped that knowledge would be co-constructed between the Canadian and Malawi students. Many social work field placements are also set up in this manner. These types of interactional exchanges have the potential to avoid the banking system of education (Freire, 1999) if the power imbalances guiding the direction and nature of the knowledge can be successfully disseminated.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Creating A Critical Space

After returning from my trip to Malawi, I felt as though a gaping hole existed in the implementation of the seminar. As I pictured us sitting in the classroom together, a mixture of Malawian and Canadian students, I sensed there was a larger presence of what I have come to refer to as a 'colonial elephant'. One of the strongest themes emerging from the literature was the lack of critical spaces within which this colonial elephant can be recognized and deconstructed within the boundaries of academic partnerships between the global north and south. Razack (2002) illustrates the importance of filling this void, "We need to organize a space before, during, and after exchanges for students to critically analyze and engage in a process of understanding world issues and realities in terms of the structural analysis of the exchange society" (pg. 263).

Whitmore and Wilson (1997) indicate that structural analysis "involves examination of the wider economic, social and political structures, which oppress people in both rich and poor countries, which are pervasive in the relationship between 'partners'" (pg. 57). There are many factors playing into the design of academic partnerships and seminars. One factor that seemed to inhibit the emergence of a critical space is the large amount of preparation time needed to coordinate these international endeavors. The planning process for these trips can be a consuming activity. Schools of social work often attempt to facilitate international academic partnerships such as field

placements within the global south with extremely limited resources (Razack, 2002). The amount of administrative and impromptu work needed to coordinate trips, or exchanges may overtake the need to ask critical questions regarding the nature of the trip and intentions of all parties involved. I spent hours before my trip to Malawi signing and reading insurance documents, updating my vaccines, reading about local diseases and only moments thinking about why I was going and how I could be culturally sensitive in my visit.

Part of the problem of this lack of space for analyzing the potential colonial implications of these partnerships is the absence of a coordinating body, ensuring these components are implemented as part of international seminars. There are no procedures governed by the ISW discourse as to how spaces for dialogue should occur before, during and after these placements. Razack reinforces the importance of this missing process, "We need to facilitate the required awareness and critical knowledge to know how dominance is produced and organized" (Razack, 2002, pg. 255).

Throughout the literature it was apparent that all actors involved in the development of academic partnerships believe that adequate preparation is important (Traub-Werner et al. 2000; Tsang et al., 2000; Sachdev, 1997). Not only did participants express the need for more preparation time they advocated for specific cultural and anti-oppressive training that would help better facilitate some of the misunderstandings which occurred during their projects. Often the cultural sensitivity training prepared by organizations and academic institutions before engaging in international endeavors is

insufficient in encouraging participants to dig deep, exposing the implications of structural power imbalances.

In our case, the Canadian students gathered pre-departure in Ottawa to receive a three-day preparation course. The course focused on issues of safety, health and cultural awareness. The preparation was effective in alleviating many of our personal worries, and gave us a solid introduction to the culture shock we were likely to experience, while in Malawi. We received lengthy explanations regarding what foods we shouldn't eat, symptoms of diseases to be watchful for, and how to behave in a culturally appropriate manner.

The Canadian students played role-playing games simulating the experience of being immersed in a foreign culture. For example, we played a card game where the rules constantly changed but no one was allowed to talk, so we learned to communicate with each other through body language. This process allowed the Canadian students to feel more prepared, however we gave little thought to how the Malawian students might feel about our presence. How would Canadian students traveling to conduct research in their country be perceived by the Malawians? A theme emerging from the examination of academic partnerships points to the lack of consideration or discussion regarding, structural factors impacting the experience of our trip. This lack of structural analysis was echoed in the literature through the discussion of other academic partnerships.

A great deal of frustration occurred on behalf of the Mexican social work professionals receiving an MSW degree from the visiting University of Toronto social work professors. When given a chance to debrief about the program, participants at

National Autonomous University of Mexico expressed the need for a greater understanding of the process, through which the program was delivered. Traub-Werner et al acknowledge these feelings, "Much of the frustration experienced both by the participants and the teaching faculty stemmed from the fact that the teaching and learning process had been undertaken without first exploring culturally based assumptions about this very process" (2000, p.194). Traub-Werner et al. further indicate, "In the teaching and in the learning process, we were not speaking the same 'language' even through we were conversing in Spanish" (Traub-Werner et al., 2000, pg. 194). The participants of the Canada-Mexico social work project all expressed the need for a lengthy introduction to the MSW program where the nature, direction, implementation; the process of the seminar could be negotiated so that everyone could begin with a shared understanding of the cultural, political and economic implications of such a project.

World University Services Canada reserved a day in November 2004 at the annual conference for the Canadian students to debrief about the events of the seminar. The Canadians were able to openly discuss their frustration, worries and concerns with the summer seminar of 2004. However, the Malawi students were missing from the dialogue and had not been given a similar opportunity in Malawi as indicated in e-mails we received from our counterparts after the conclusion of the seminar. During the debriefing session, for the Malawi seminar, it was quite clear that the Canadian students felt it was crucial to participate in a longer preparation period before traveling to Malawi.

The last week of the seminar in Malawi consisted of discussions, headed by the Malawian participants regarding their feelings and issues concerning the seminar. The

facilitators of the seminar were extremely defensive in relation to the students concerns and ultimately the issues went unresolved. It would have been interesting to see if we had engaged early on with some of these difficult topics, such as the issue of power and how this power was being used to facilitate the seminar, whether some of the frustrations felt by the Malawians could have been avoided. At least the exasperation of not being heard could have been alleviated if there was a space where the Malawian's could safely discuss their concerns, as indicated by discussions with my counterpart Fydess, after the seminar.

The first order of priority is the issue of power. Who controls power? Who decides to share power? Who wields power" (Larbi, 2000, pg. 9)? If the students had come to a common analysis of who was wielding the power shaping the seminar perhaps modifications could have been made to the seminar agenda that would have benefited both parties more equally. A critical space facilitating creation of these avenues for modifications was a crucial missing link in the implementation of the WUSC seminar.

6.2 Challenging our Misconceptions

There is a need to recognize our dominant thought patterns and the validity of our pre-existing ideas regarding the countries we are in partnership with. While on my trip to Malawi I was dumbfounded by the misconceptions we maintain in Canada regarding the nature of developing nations, particularly countries within sub-Saharan Africa. Of course these misconceptions are not exclusive to western countries, but do suggest the work we need to do internally to question many of our assumptions.

I refer back to my thoughts about Malawi before traveling there. I pictured a country with immense human suffering. I envisioned helplessness. These thoughts inhibited my ability to prepare for interaction with a vibrant, intelligent and strong population.

I also pictured the 'noble friendly person' (Chambers, 1991). In preparation for the trip, everyone was telling us (the Canadian students) how friendly everyone in Malawi was. This was reported over and over again. As it turned out, the people in Malawi were very much like most people I had met some were extremely friendly, and some weren't. Although this was a learning process for me, I cringe at the thought that I needed to understand that the Malawians I was encountering were similar to Canadians. At first I was extremely disappointed when I arrived, after frowning at people who were not overjoyed to greet me. At that point I knew that I needed to quickly readjust my attitude and question my obvious preconceived misconceptions. A note from my journal further illustrates this point.

June 17th, 9:00 am

> "It's crazy how similar things are here to Canada. I mean it's constantly surprising me. The campus we are staying at is very similar to mine. Everyone drinks beer, they go out dancing, they get rowdy, they study, and they laugh, although they do sing more. My room mate and I interact just like my room mates at home, eating junk food before bed and talking about politics and dating."

6.3 Equality?

As the focus of the trip quickly evolved into creating opportunities of learning for the Canadian students who had traveled very far to visit Malawi, it became apparent that the Malawians were not benefiting equally from the seminar.

From the very beginning the Canadian students were clearly distinguished as the economically advantaged group. The facilitators were trying to treat both groups of students equally by providing the same amount of stipends to be used for personal spending money to all participants. This instead caused more tension because the facilitators did not seem to take into account the economic situations of many of the Malawians who agreed to participate in the seminar. While both the Canadians and Malawians had to forgo summer jobs to engage in the project, this decision has the potential of larger ramifications on the Malawians. Many of the Malawians did not have access to government loans and help from family to pay for school; many were the sole source of economic support for their families. Through out the course of the seminar the Malawians expressed disappointment that they could not participate in some of the activities that the Canadians were, such as going out to the bar or dinner and paying for extra perks such as special safari trips. This caused a great deal of discontentment on the side of the Malawians and they voiced their feelings on this issue several times. They felt an obligation and a desire to participate in the same activities of the Canadian students, but could not afford to do so. While of course this is a generalization and there were exceptions for both sides, some Malawian students had to drop out of the seminar because they simply couldn't afford to continue participating. WUSC had spent at least $10,000 to send each Canadian to Malawi but couldn't afford to pay the Malawian students for their time and knowledge? Too often we attempt to create situations of equality through surface-level technicalities that are expected to create an isolated atmosphere of sameness within the boundaries of our projects. What is more important

than ensuring both students receive the same amount of stipends, is developing a

structural economic analysis aimed at ensuring both parties benefit equally from the

interaction. In the case of the WUSC summer seminar I believe this would have involved

increasing the stipends of the Malawians.

6.4 Incorporating a Holistic Analysis

Whitmore and Wilson (1997) believe that a structural analysis must be combined

with a 'conjunctural' analysis, which focuses on incorporating intimate relations and

immediate situations. I will refer to the combination of both a structural and conjunctural

analysis as a holistic means of exploring the activities and events of the WUSC seminar.

A conjunctural analysis points to the importance of recognizing that all generalizations

can be dangerous and must be scrutinized. To classify the Malawian students as the 'less

well off' group and the Canadian students as the wealthy population is also problematic.

For there were several Malawi student's participating in the seminar that were from

wealthier families and could afford the same luxuries as the Canadian students. There

were also Canadian students, who struggled financially to engage in the seminar and

found it difficult to participate in all of the activities. At one point during the seminar,

there was a misunderstanding that the Canadians were being paid to take clips of media

such as video and sound recording to bring back home. Some hurtful comments were

made by the Malawians about the motivations of the Canadian students as being selfish

and using the Malawian students to make money. These misunderstandings greatly upset

their Canadians counterparts.

This incident could have been a good opportunity to discuss in an open way the origin of these misconceptions. Through recognizing the true purpose of the media recording on behalf of the Canadian students and the unfolding of events in response to this misconception, a structural analysis may have emerged identifying the economic situations of both sets of students. A conjunctural analysis could aid in the realization that there were exceptions to both generalizations. The conjunctural analysis is not meant to negate the larger structural examination, indicating the Malawians should receive larger stipends but rather create a sense of awareness of the existence of individual student's economic locations within the boundaries of the seminar.

A theme within the literature indicates that the analysis of International academic partnerships exists on at the conjunctural level only, and too often the structural component inherent with a holistic analysis is not acknowledged or given proper attention. Whitmore and Wilson (1997) stress the importance of utilizing both components of an examination, to 'accompany the process' of international social work endeavors.

Feminist research has contributed much in the way of linking the personal and the political. The Canadian students were operating on a personal level through out the seminar, however the Malawians after feeling frustrated decided to forgo utilizing personal relationships as a means of changes and acted in a political manner. The Malawians were associating the personal as political, refusing to continue with the seminar until the WUSC representatives in Malawi held a meeting with them to hear their concerns. This was a frustrating process for the Canadian students because we hadn't

had an opportunity to come to an understanding of the need for engagement at the political level on which they were working. I suggest that this is because the economic, political and cultural space we inhabited during the seminar was benefiting us and we could focus on the activities of the seminar and personal relationships we were developing. If we had gone through the process of facilitating conversations were the Malawian frustration and concerns linked with the economic, political and cultural forces guiding the seminar perhaps we could have deconstructed the colonial elephant piece by piece. This analysis suggests that it is important to recognize that the colonial elephant may only exist unseen for the Canadians students. On the other hand, it is as a lived reality of imbalance for the Malawians, manifesting in the daily proceedings of the seminar. It is important to create a space where all of those involved in collaborations such as this one understand the unseen colonial forces which impact upon the daily activities and implementation of the seminar, from the point of view of those who are experiencing these implications.

6.5 Goodwill

A theme threaded through out the literature concerns the analysis of goodwill within the field of International development and International social work. The concept of goodwill is extremely familiar to all of those dedicated to improving human lives. We guard the validity of these deep feelings, which drive us to be well-intentioned and caring individuals. Through the encouragement of friends, family, and academic institutions we are reassured that engaging in these partnerships to help those in the global south is the

right thing to do. However, it is important to note that the presence of goodwill can mask the larger implications of global power relations. "Added to this is the fact that individual goodwill to understand learn about the other rarely allows for understandings of historical imperial legacies of the profession and our role in sustaining dominant ideological forms" (Razack, 2002, pg. 267).

The existence of goodwill drives the development and implementation of seminars such as the yearly exchange facilitated by World University Services Canada. During my experience in Malawi, there were many instances in which we Canadians believed our good intentions could override the deeper ramifications of our words and actions.

During the race to the front of the lunch line one exhausting day, a Canadian student grew annoyed with the Malawians ability to secure positions at the front. Without thinking she said to the Malawi student in front of her, 'fine if you are that desperate for food then go ahead'. This one innocent statement on the part of the Canadian student carried grave implications for the Malawians. This remark uttered in frustration existed on an interpersonal level for the Canadian but for the Malawians, it echoed within a larger context of historical and present disadvantage that of structural oppression. Through school and the experience of every-day life the Malawi students are constantly confronted with how trading agreements made between Malawi and other western countries regarding the main export tobacco, severely debilitates their economy. As citizens of one of the most exploited countries in the world, the Malawians felt as though the Canadian student was mocking the poverty explicit within their country. This

incident led to feelings of vulnerability and inferiority on behalf of the Malawian students as expressed at the end of the seminar.

The well-intentioned American mentioned at the beginning of this thesis certainly did not mean any harm by her comment to the young Malawian boy who sold her the dollhouse. Nor did we as Canadians in specific situations in Malawi but the suggested presence of goodwill inhibits the emergence of a structural analysis. Heron also speaks to her experiences with this concept when working with women in Uganda, "My good intentions seemed to me, however to set my work apart from criticisms of Northern interventions and research agendas, to sanction my intrusion" (Heron, pg. 120).

The Canadian student apologized for her comment, but the deeper context causing the hurt feelings for the Malawians was never revealed. She as an individual had not meant to be demeaning, so the larger implications of this comment were never recognized or discussed until the end of the seminar when grievances were finally aired.

The existence of goodwill is not problematic in terms of encouraging individuals and organizations to make connections with each other. However, this concept needs to be contextualized within the larger system of power relations governing all areas of helping but it is particularly relevant for international relations.

6.6 Common Ground

Another concept linked with goodwill driving the development of academic partnerships is the existence of a linking theme between the parties involved. A characteristic or an issue that both parties within the global north and south can relate to is capitalized upon in order to form the basis for the partnership. "What cemented this

story of equality for me was the certainty on my part of a shared common ground: that of gender" (Heron, 2002).

Within the WUSC summer seminar, the Canadian and Malawian students were seen to have the pursuit of knowledge in common within the academic partnership. This link was portrayed to be equally relevant for both parties of students and created the illusion of equality in this endeavor. This common link was the interest in the advancement of knowledge for the betterment of society, however in reality this knowledge was for the betterment of developing countries. Due to access to resources, it was apparent that the Canadian students were thought to be more knowledgeable than the Malawi students are. While this common ground appears to be the same by those organizing the seminar in the north, the results of the seminar speak much differently to how this common ground was experienced by the Malawian students.

For instance, the transfer of knowledge was the common ground in the exchange between U of T and the UNAM. The development of this project focused on the elaboration of the common ground both academic institutions shared, with little opportunity or room to expose the structural, cultural or political differences between both parties. This limited the possibility of true reciprocity within this interaction.

It is somehow believed that common ground can outweigh the differences at the structural level, and perhaps it can in the best possible world, but perhaps a common ground that is equally understood by both parties and articulated is the most important component. In order to be equally understood it must be acknowledged that these international collaborations are shaped by structural inequality. Authors such Freire

(1999) and bell hooks (2000b) point to the importance of recognizing the effects of structural inequality on an individual's experiences and expectations of these experiences. A shared understanding of the structural context guiding these projects, developed through the examination of larger forces is imperative in the creation of an atmosphere of validation and thus learning.

We in the north are still traveling to developing countries in the spirit of 'exploration' and discovery, the idea of equitable sharing seems to exist as a nice by-product of wanting to share our knowledge. How are we still surprised when we return and realize that we gained much more from our experiences than we have imparted on others?

6.7 To Go or not To Go?

A critical piece that was missing within the orientation of our trip was the analysis of our motivations and personal agendas for participating in the seminar. Are we simply redefining the mentality of professional imperialism by traveling to developing countries to help? Through the fundraising process we were asked many times why we wanted to go and I gave what I felt was a rehearsed answer to this question; 'to travel, to do research, to learn about another culture and myself.' Indeed these were valid reasons as to why I wanted to go but seem to gloss over the hidden implications of a deeper personal agenda. I still do not have what I would consider an in-depth explanation as to why I wanted to go. Perhaps I should have had a better understanding of my motivations before traveling to a country in the global south, where I was part of a seminar that left citizens of that country feeling hurt and angry. As International social workers it is our

responsibility not to engage in an academic seminar, it we do not feel as though the colonial implications we carry with us do not have space to be resolved.

The implications of imposing our agendas can occur on an individual level but also at the organizational and governmental levels in the pursuit of these partnerships between the global north and south. Academic institutions must also deeply examine their intentions before facilitating international seminars. Tsang et al. (2000) indicates how social work academia has the potential of fostering organizational agendas that may compromise the possibility of equity, "Schools within Internationally known universities often wish to establish an international profile by demonstrating the impact of their scholarship and teaching beyond their immediate locality" (pg. 149). Larbi also acknowledges this danger within international development endeavors, "As you well know, for decades in the field of international cooperation, development has been mainly financed by donors outside of the continent who often push their agenda on governments or non-governmental organizations with little or no regard for the real needs of people in the level within the boundaries of academic partnerships. Academic institutions have specific interests South" (2000, pg. 6).

If the decision is made to participate in international academic partnerships whether we travel to a country in the global south or interact with those in the global south from Canada, we need to be cautious of what Heron (2002) refers to as 'blind spots'. These oversights in the implementation of academic exchanges can still occur even when we aspire to work through the frameworks of popular education and participatory processes. It is impossible to alleviate all of the potential of 'blind spots' in

these academic exchanges, however it is possible to create mechanisms that can identity

potentially oppressive situations, and deconstruct them when they occur.

Chapter 7: Recommendations and Conclusion

During the seminar my roommate Fydess and I would take many long walks together. On one of these walks, when questioning the ethical implications of my very presence in Malawi, I asked her what our role, as Canadian students should be in helping Malawi. She was quiet for a while and then she told me that she did enjoy having us visiting but that there was very little we could do to help in a practical way through an academic seminar as this one. She told me that her generation of Malawians had the will and the knowledge to change their country but lacked adequate resources. Fydess and I were engaging in the struggle of defining an appropriate or useful partnership at both the personal and political level. Right then and there Fydess and I decided to start a non-governmental organization together. My role would be mobilizing resources in Canada and she would develop and run the NGO in Malawi. Thinking back, I question if I was being naive to think that by negotiating proper roles with each other, that the power imbalances implicit in the relationship between myself, a western student of privilege and Fydess a student in an economically disadvantaged country could be avoided within our relationship? I realize now that all of the blind spots can never be accounted for before an endeavor such as this one, but does it mean we should stop trying to create equitable partnerships (Heron, 2002)?

After returning home, I was extremely disillusioned with the prospects of the partnerships and the NGOs facilitating them. However I do believe that genuine

partnerships can be formed in the pursuit of human rights. I believe that social work has a responsibility to address the human rights violations occurring as economic globalization extends its reach. We have a mandate to assist people to acquire the basic necessities of life within and beyond our own borders and I would argue social work has a crucial advantage to create equitable partnerships to engage in this work through the use of anti-oppressive practice. As social work continues to encourage the advancement of research and education through relationships with others, we provide a unique lens in analyzing these partnerships. Anti-oppressive theory being developed within social work, aimed at recognizing and attempting to minimize the power imbalances existing within society can be directly applied in an analysis of academic partnerships between the north and south. One of the primary tenets of anti-oppressive theory is ensuring that those vulnerable groups within the context of an international academic seminar, guide and direct the creation and implementation of the project (Razack, 2002).

Within the China-Canada social work education project, Tsang (2000) indicates how the Chinese social work professionals clearly led the creation and direction for the seminar. Throughout the process the Chinese colleagues also were able to firmly direct that course of the education project, "In a very fundamental way, Chinese colleagues set the agenda for training objectives and content, whereas UTFSW faculty have to work around them and their contribution relevant and appropriate. This arrangement respects the Chinese 'corpus' but does not deny the possibility of Western partners to contribute critical questions and alternative perspectives" (Tsang, 2000, pg. 155).

The China-Canada project is an encouraging example an academic partnership that ended up meeting both the needs of those professionals from the University of Toronto and China College of Civil Affairs in the People's Republic of China. "In other words, social workers from the West are no longer expected to perform the role of revered experts while their counterparts in the developing countries take the role of humble learners" (Tsang et al., 2000, pg. 157).

Larbi (2000) expresses a genuine excitement for the potential of international partnerships between those in the global north and the south. Larbi is the executive director or a program entitled MATCH International Centre developed in 1976, an organization that 'matches the needs of women in the south with the resources of women in the north' (2000, pg. 2). Larbi (2000) expands on the essence of the organization, "This is done in the spirit of equal partnership and on the premise that women in the regions of the South are best able to identify their needs, to plan strategies in response to these needs and to implement initiatives in order to achieve their goals" (pg. 1).

MATCH focuses on two broad themes, women and sustainable development by primarily supporting women in the global south attempting to create structural change within their communities and societies. Larbi indicates how they attempt to support organizations with many innovative ideas that need assistance getting off the ground, but quickly become self-sufficient. A group of women from Burkina Faso, Cameron, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zambia, all parts of Africa gathered together and wrote a 'blueprint of strategies' entitled, 'Renaissance for Africa' (Larbi, 2000). One of the focuses outlined in the blueprint, was that of 'structural 'adjustment'.

Women wanted to reclaim access to the economic system and governments of their countries in the hopes of economic and social restructuring.

Larbi indicates that this blueprint was already in the hearts and minds of the women before this meeting and reflected in their own activism work. But with the added resources they were able to travel to one location and gather formally to cement an implementation plan.

One of the organizations supported by MATCH is Women's Voice in Malawi. Founded by Dr. Vera Chirwa, who was imprisoned under the dictatorship of Kamuzu Banda. This organization now encourages women to run for political office in Malawi. Larbi speaks extremely positively regarding partnerships, "In true and equal partnership we can cut across class and race and power struggles to bring about much needed change in the landscape of development: change that is lasting" (Larbi, pg. 9).

Co-planning

Co-planning is a word that appears through out the literature on academic partnerships. What does this concept really mean? Speaking from my experience of the 2004 WUSC seminar, I believe that if the Malawi students were able to co-plan the seminar it may have resulted in a more positive experience for the Malawians. This is not to say that all of the issues could have been anticipated but rather there would have been open lines of communication through which problems could have been resolved. In this way the Malawi students would have been able to incorporate activities that would have been beneficial for them. The Malawians should have been given an active role in the design of the research agenda. The Canadian students could have even assisted the

Malawian students with projects they were already working on in school. That way, our presence there would have a positive, impact on the academia in Malawi and the Malawian's student's own studies.

The seminar was designed primarily through the Canadian branch of WUSC with minimal interact with the WUSC office in Malawi. Our contact with the WUSC in Malawi was an American woman who had lived in Malawi for three years. If the Malawian had been involved in planning the activities then they may not have scheduled any activities on Sunday mornings. The majority of the Malawian students were born-again Christians who attended church every Sunday morning. The facilitator of the seminar refused to provide them with any transportation in order to accommodate their plans to attend their church. We normally had plans and activities occurring on the Sunday morning, which the Malawians would choose to skip. However, she did manage to organize transportation for the Canadian students when we wanted to go into town to check e-mail, buy groceries and do a bit of sightseeing. This oversight is indicative of the colonial relationship occurring during the design of the seminar. The Malawian's needs simply took a back seat to the activities planned for the Canadians. Perhaps, these realities could have been successfully integrated into the program with Malawian participation in the planning process.

Are there times when the co-planning process can be inauthentic? At one point during my struggle on deciding the appropriate methodology for conducting my thesis research, I decided that in order to take part in first hand research I should incorporate a co-author. I considered asking my Malawian counterpart to be the co-author of the thesis

project. I believed that if I could incorporate her knowledge as a Malawian participant that I could then adequately represent the experiences of the Malawians. I was immediately confronted however, with the reality that I was co-authoring the piece with her, that she could conduct all of the interviews with the Malawians. As my plan grew however, I realized that this would no longer be my research project and that it should not be. It is important to realize that co-planning by itself, will not fix the realities of structural power imbalances and does not minimize the responsibility of those in the North, institutions and individuals to engage in the process of critical self introspection in order to develop an analysis of global social locations and the colonial implications of these locations.

Tsang et al. (2000) further articulates my struggle with the decision not to incorporate the Chinese professionals within the writing of the article on the China-Canada social work education project. "We have resisted the temptation of nominal inclusion-by inviting one or more of them to be co-authors. Instead we believe it is better for them to articulate their experience and tell their stories in their own terms'' (Tsang et al. 2000, pg. 158). I did not want to further appropriate the Malawian's experiences and knowledge on analyzing my role as a student from an affluent country traveling to a country in the global south for the purpose of education and research. How do we share our resources, without imposing our agendas?

Co-planning should not exist as an exercise of 'inclusion' but as a space of contention where agendas are revealed and the essence of the partnership is hammered out. Tsang et al. articulates this effort, "A more productive approach to intellectual

exchange would probably involve critical examination both of Western and local articulations in order to establish a common ground for conceptual engagement" (2000, 151). For if this process does not occur then when are left including voices along the way that should have been the guiding force behind the very development of the partnership. The reason I use the word contention in reference to this endeavor is because these voices are bound to conflict due to the operation of larger power imbalances, cultural differences and varied expectations of the collaboration. For instance, one thing that was mentioned immediately through the China-Canada collaboration was the discrepancy as to how each viewed the purpose of education. Those from U of T strongly emphasized the importance and necessity of research while those in China wanted to focus on learning direct practice. This difference was articulated early on, and the Chinese professionals were able to guide the seminar in the direction of what they needed to learn.   I believe that if the space had been provided during WUSC summer seminar regarding the colonial implications of this partnership than some of the negative experiences the Malawians and Canadians endured could have been avoided. However, this would not have been an easy process as this is an extremely vulnerable conversation for both groups to engage in. We needed a formal, carefully planned meeting with a trained facilitator skilled in anti-oppressive practice, in order to discuss some of our initial feelings and concerns and most importantly misconceptions regarding the seminar, our new counterparts and the two countries represented in the room. It would have been extremely helpful, to have check in points along the way, the seminar to be modified to meet the needs of both populations.

Conclusion

As international exchanges become, as Razack (2002) describes, 'more fashionable', a recognized critical discourse needs to be established. Ensuring that as social work academia strives for the betterment of social well being for all people, we pursue equitable relationships in our search for knowledge in a globalizing world. I do believe in the possibility of genuine partnerships. As poverty increases on a global scale, we must seek new ways to redistribute our resources without imposing our agendas on those countries in the global south.

We need to choose our partnerships and what we will support wisely, seeking out partnerships like MATCH (Larbi 2000), organizations committed to the creation of equitable relations. We need to become educated and aware of the NGOs we support and travel with. This is a process that involves reading in between the lines and engaging in an in-depth critical introspection to determine our own motivations and personal agendas for engaging in International social work. .

In some sections of this thesis I was extremely aware of the fact that I was questioning many of the concepts I had always considered as being fundamentally good, such as good-will, common-ground and even the sharing of education. At times, this was an extremely disheartening process for me. It was not my intention to attack the guiding principles of people's personal lives and their decisions too engage in international development, however I instead wanting to recognize the importance of questioning our engagement in these endeavors and how we may unknowingly be reinforcing colonial

relationships. I was witness to and part of a group of Canadians tripping clumsily through a society leaving superior colonial impressions and hurt feelings along with anger behind. These infallible concepts of goodwill cannot render us immune to acting from our own contexts and subtly imposing our worldviews.

By being aware of the presence of blind spots (Heron, 2002) and accompanying the process with a holistic analysis perhaps (Whitmore and Wilson, 1997) we can still engage in these academic partnerships providing a critical space to ensure our partners in the global south feel equally valued, appreciated and knowledgeable in the partnership.

The colonial implications will continue to exist in our academic partnerships between the global north and south, however they do not have to exist as the elephant in the room no one wants to acknowledge. The Canadian students were not aware of this elephant, and thus were not affected by it, but the Malawians were well aware of the colonial implications affecting their experiences of the seminar. We need to acknowledge and validate their experiences providing a formal space for the articulation of misconceptions and possible misunderstandings. Through disseminating factors such as professional imperialism and epistemological hegemony inherent in the formation of these partnerships, can those actors in the north step back to allow the guidance and knowledge from those in the south to take precedence in the formation and implementation of academic partnerships between the global north and south.

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