
BOOK REVIEWS: Globetrotting or Global Citizenship? and Rethinking Canadian Aid

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Author: Bernadette Johnson and Sarah Farina

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Globetrotting or Global Citizenship? Perils and Potential of International Experiential Learning

Edited by Rebecca Tiessen and Robert Huish

University of Toronto Press

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Reviewed by: Bernadette Johnson

A common way for Canadians to first experience countries of the global South is through organized programs that can loosely be grouped under the term “experiential learning.” The scale and diversity of international experiential learning programs has significantly expanded over the last two decades and currently ranges from internships to work and study placements, the primary focus often being on youth participants. Experiential learning can be described as a process of learning through direct engagement, which frequently also entails an element of growth or transformation for the individual taking part in the program.

As evidenced by the ambition and range of considerations highlighted in *Globetrotting or Global Citizenship? Perils and Potential of International Experiential Learning*, these programs pose significant ethical questions and concerns that are linked to political and socio-economic realities in host communities. Notwithstanding its wide scope, the text focuses less on broad international development issues and instead concentrates on factors influencing the growth of program participants as global citizens.

Among the concerns raised by the authors are programs that nurture paternalistic attitudes, experiences that reinforce stereotyping, and projects that merely view host communities as extensions of classroom space. The intention of the book is to direct program participants toward maximizing the goals of cross-cultural understanding, the realization of global citizenship, and ethical engagement founded on an acknowledgement of global dynamics as rooted in historical relationships and economic structures.

These goals are best met, it is argued, via structured or guided processes of reflexivity, whereby students are encouraged to consider the origins of their knowledge and to deconstruct their motivations for participation. Such reflexivity also leads to better understanding of how participants' privilege informs their interpretation of host realities, and raises awareness of the limitations of their ability to comprehend local contexts. Emphasis is placed on those in leadership positions continually prompting the asking of questions in these new environments, while dissuading the finding of convenient solutions.

Editors Rebecca Tiessen and Robert Huish do not advocate a standardization of reflexive programming; rather, this volume offers frameworks, strategies, and broad guidelines for its facilitation – an approach that allows for adaptability to diverse contexts. Chapters 6 and 8 are intended for, respectively, secondary students and medical students, while the other chapters are suitable to readers from a range of fields and academic disciplines. It should be noted, however, that much of the literature cited in the volume originates from the realms of political science or development studies, raising concern about whether the level of critical analysis and type of discourse may prove less accessible to students from applied academic backgrounds.

Most of the contributors are academics. The nature of the material varies across chapters, at times focusing on the scholarly literature, elsewhere on presentation of empirical research, in other places on analysis of case studies, and sometimes blending one or more of these elements.

A few of the chapters build on preceding analysis in the text, though for the most part the individual authors' contributions stand on their own. Some material focuses on the philosophical underpinnings of global citizenship and citizens' moral responsibilities to one another, regardless of place of origin. Elsewhere there is discussion of the tenet of "do no harm" and strategies for its realization, and the promotion of solidarity in pursuit of global justice. Other parts of the text are instructive in outlining the ways in which host communities are often stereotyped by race; another section provides strategies for moving toward an educational framework that aims to dismantle perceptions and beliefs that are rooted in colonial ideologies.

Different authors raise conflicting arguments in some areas, most interestingly with respect to assessments of the appropriate degree of reflexivity. In Chapter 3, Jonathan Langdon and Coleman Agyeyomah impress upon readers that an engaged *hyper-reflexivity* is required to "tackle disorienting dilemmas as they happen" (44), as opposed to a reflexivity that is centered on thoughtful reflection. These differences have the effect of enhancing the discussion rather than weakening the overall objectives of the editors.

In several parts of the book, the description of the training element of preparation for overseas placement provides the reader with the best insight into inspired and innovative methods of participant instruction. Chapter 6 convincingly argues for the need for training of teachers in post-secondary level experiential learning programs. In Chapter 7, which deals with an analysis

of experiential learning opportunities and challenges in post-genocide Rwanda, Susan Thompson and Marie-Eve Desrosiers describe attempts at student preparation for learning in authoritarian regimes. In the approach suggested by these authors, there is some risk of leading students toward certain subjective conclusions about life in Rwanda. However, the emphasis placed on the importance of guiding students through seemingly impenetrable and abstracted political environments is worthwhile.

Since the book is premised on the argument that international experiential learning must work toward the aim of reflexive transformation, the authors' instructive purpose would have benefited from concrete examples of how this type of experience will offer more than what a classroom might provide. Examples with a mixture of content and process would be useful for teachers and students alike, particularly those new to international travel.

As well, the volume would have benefitted from a more developed focus on the importance and methods of receiving input from the host community. There is a sustained emphasis on means of promoting or achieving reflexivity – journaling and discussing experiences with teachers and peers – and a focus on preparation and reintegration, with little discussion of the means through which to privilege the knowledge of those who originate from the local context. While Langdon and Agyeyomah effectively press in Chapter 3 for the need to make space for indigenous voices, and Stacie Travers' Chapter 10 highlights reciprocity as a necessary element in cross-cultural understanding, the reader is left to wonder what form this might take.

Specifics of how students can be more accountable to the communities that are hosting them, beyond internal examinations of motivations, privilege, or examinations of global injustice as applied to local contexts, are not provided. Participants of these programs may also elect to consider how critical strategies to realize the “do no harm” logic as stressed in Chapter 6 and 7 might be locally informed. The sustained emphasis on introspection by the contributors leaves little room to thoughtfully consider the need for reciprocity. Is it not necessary that both processes take place, and if so, how can students ensure that they are both realized?

In a similar vein, the authors present a dichotomy in the approaches that learners from the global North could take toward their host community: either “to be with” in solidarity, or the more paternalistic “to do for.” In addition to this, approaches that are centered on solution-seeking or “quick move[s] to action” (217) are firmly discouraged.

Julie Drolet's analysis in Chapter 9 asserts that "a relational ethics approach considers who we are, rather than a simplistic focus on the mechanics and actions of the [volunteer] work" (192). There is perhaps a risk that these arguments beg for what amounts to a re-centering of the Western student's identity and experience through the exploration of motivation and privilege, while the host community provides occasion for this journey. How long must one meditate on their individual position and prejudice before joining in collective, action-oriented challenges of global structures of oppression? If the student is embarking on this trip to learn how best to contribute skills, resources, or acquired knowledge, for better or worse this book may prove to be a discouraging read.

Of course, there is little need for Canadians to venture beyond their borders to explore the complexities of class, gender, or racial privilege, nor to examine the micro-level ramifications of complex capitalist post-colonial structures. Without sufficient emphasis on means to work with communities to address challenges, this volume detracts from some necessary elements of

effective experiential learning. Nonetheless, this text introduces a promising discussion on global citizenship as responsibility toward individuals and communities. The contributors clearly articulate the need for student reflexivity in experiential forms of learning overseas, and offer ample means through which this might be facilitated. In doing so, the authors have provided a useful springboard for future work on how acknowledgements of privilege and global dynamics can lead to the potential for truly transformational experiences, and meaning for everyone involved.

Rethinking Canadian Aid

Edited by Stephen Brown, Molly den Heyer, and David R. Black

Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press

ISBN: 978-0-7766-2211-8

Reviewed by Sarah Farina

As a young development worker back when the Canadian International Development Agency funded basic human needs, I was invariably invited to a remote village in each country I visited to see the water source built with support from Canada. As a Canadian, I was met with respect and seen as a representative of a caring country with good intentions, whatever the backstory may have been. This landscape of goodwill has now shifted. Those of us who spent our careers working to build good governance and support locally informed and relevant development find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. *Rethinking Canadian Aid* points to the new landmarks.

Rethinking Canadian Aid makes Canada seem both influential and small, focused yet slightly out of sync with global trends and priorities. The book rings true because the reader recognizes the idealism, the inadequacy, and the bureaucracy, and the arguments found here are in a language common to those playing various roles in the field of Canadian development. The 16 articles move back and forth from technical project language and the programmatic distinctions – for instance, between women and children in development as recipients of charitable assistance versus as agents of development – to the role of aid in broader policy debates defined by a global context. Considerable attention is given to the topic of aid effectiveness; Molly den Heyer discusses ideals and principles of aid effectiveness that have never truly been implemented, while Ian Smillie points out that diverting aid away from the stated purpose makes effectiveness meaningless.

David R. Black and Adam Chapnick provide a broad perspective from which to understand the rest of the articles in the book. They point out that aid, as a component of development, is best understood with a grasp of the relationship between ethics and interests, related to Canada's view of itself and its place in the world using a concept from Cranford Pratt called "humane internationalism." Black notes that the way that Canada has conceptualized aid has perhaps led to missing a recognition of important global trends in areas such as migration, remittances, investment, and ecology.

I related to the notion, expressed in many of the articles, that the government's technical approaches to aid can influence the nature of aid in a way that goes beyond what might be intended by policy. Ian Smillie goes into great detail concerning the technical use of administrative processes oriented to planning for results, which may actually hinder the impact of development initiatives. This felt familiar to me as a practitioner using logic models and other tools of results-based management to rationalize actions or investments where serving "accountability" demands better technical reporting skills than results. Gabriel C. Goyette

describes this as an overly technical conception of practice, and Smillie argues that, in a purely results-based system, there is no room for failure, and therefore for learning, and that risk aversion related to a fear of not achieving or being able to measure results means directing aid away from the poorest and most fragile – who most need aid.

A troubling element of the book was what started to feel like a thematic mention of the Canadian public in many of the articles, lamenting the high value Canadians place on aid combined with their relatively low levels of engagement and support for aid spending. Given that there is a fairly small circle of influence over aid in Canada, focused within the Federal government (and now within the department responsible for foreign affairs and international trade), and among academics and practitioners who do not have a clear place for critical conversations, I wonder who is meant to address the very real concerns about our approach to aid and our role in development internationally. Where is this debate to take place? Ethics and the moral imperative to provide aid are also consistent themes in the book, and if this is true, then what is the mechanism for the discussion? Den Heyer advocates for a new approach to development that includes public dialogue and engagement with global partners, while Dominic H. Silvio shows how public opinion may be important to legitimizing government expenditures, but that the public is not well-equipped to understand the complexity of issues or make meaningful contributions to the discourse around aid.

Criticism of the current Harper government centres for the most part on their ideology-based programming and their lack of aid effectiveness and transparency. Audet and Navarro-Flores point to recent changes resulting from the partisan and ideological motivations of the Federal government in their analysis of the current government's decisions and management of development assistance. Rebecca Tiessen analyzes the Harper government's retreat from gender equality and Goyette discusses increasing funding for religious, and particularly proselytizing organizations. Stephen Brown discusses the current use of Canadian aid funds to support the corporate social responsibility work of Canada's international extractive sector, and Goyette suggests that aid funds in this context are used to manage externalities related to the extractive industry.

Understanding and articulating the values behind aid in Canada become more important as the reader moves through the issues raised in the book. Our approaches to other states, gender equality, the role of children, Canadian commercial interests and security, all hinge on how these values are interpreted and the choices that are made at the policy and programmatic level as well as in the administration of programs and projects. Justin Massie and Stéphane Roussel explore the relationship between aid and military policies, looking at the role aid may play in conflict prevention and various strategies for development assistance based on different ideologies and strategic culture. As Goyette points out, if our actions are dictated by administrative practices without foundation in policy developed with debate and consideration by those who care about aid and who understand the nuances of our choices, we will be hard-pressed to have any accountability for the investments being made on behalf of Canadians for what is claimed to be the goal of poverty reduction.

John D. Cameron brings up even more challenging issues like the non-aid components of development, including where our Canadian Pension Plan funds are invested, our trade relationships, our approach to the environment, and how we link aid and security. Cameron's article had me focused and thinking throughout. His discussion of a cosmopolitan approach of applying ethical and civic commitments to all of humanity blew open the tight definitions of

bilateral aid and development that are perhaps a less effective but easier way for us to conceptualize, analyze and operationalize our ideas, and his cosmopolitan perspective resonated with me. I couldn't help but think with every word I read that his approach would both fit perfectly and confuse absolutely our ability as a nation to come to a coherent approach to the policy and practice of aid.

One thing that becomes clear is that Canadians consistently care about development issues and our role in the world, but at the moment, we are not playing to our strengths. I would suggest reading Cameron's article last, to be reminded that we can be mired in technical and administrative approaches to navigating aid, but there is a bigger picture, and that if we were to see ourselves as part of the world again, this might be a good start to rethinking Canadian aid.