



THE COLLEGE OF
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GOING ON A [POWER] TRIP: A POSTCOLONIAL EXAMINATION OF SELECT
VOLUNTOURISM ORGANIZATIONS' RHETORICAL STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of voluntourism – a combination of travel and volunteering, most often in a country other than one’s own – is steadily becoming a more and more common trend. As such, it was timely to conduct an analysis on the messages that the organizations that operate these programs use to attract participants, and the underlying ideology conveyed within these. The purpose of this study was to examine the websites of three such organizations (Cross-Cultural Solutions, Global Citizens Network, and Global Volunteers) in order to identify and analyze the ideological characteristics that they present. By examining these from a postcolonial perspective, I critiqued the ways in which these sites rely on a framework of division between volunteer and host, as well as the propagation of unequal power relationships within this division, in order to encourage potential volunteers’ participation. I further compared these prevailing rhetorical strategies with the organizations’ mission and vision statements, revealing a lack of fidelity to the values that they profess therein.

Keywords: voluntourism, postcolonial, websites

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*“When eating bamboo sprouts, remember the man who planted them.”
– Chinese Proverb*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose Statement.....	3
Rationales.....	4
Definitions.....	5
Method.....	6
Conclusion	7
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism	8
Ideology and Power	9
Hegemony	10
Discourse and the Power of Language.....	12
Representation.....	14
Gaze	16
Postcolonial Criticism and Colonial Discourse	17
<i>Orientalism</i> and the Origins of Colonial Discourse Theory	18
Global Binaries	21
Race and Class	24
Development Discourse.....	26
Problematization of Poverty	26
Creation of Inscrutability	27
Development as Westernization	28
Nonprofits, NGOS, Social Marketing.....	30

Realities of Nonprofit NGO Marketing	31
Current Trends in Social Marketing	33
Voluntourism	34
Voluntourism as a Vehicle for Cultural Exchange	36
Voluntourism as a Tool for Development	38
Conclusion	39
CHAPTER III: METHOD.....	40
Justification	40
Artifacts.....	42
Methodological Steps.....	43
CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS.....	45
Roles	46
Volunteer/Host.....	47
West/Other	49
Individual/Community.....	52
Consumer/Product.....	54
Labels.....	57
Dynamic/Static.....	57
Developed/Developing	60
Normal/Exotic.....	63
Actions	65
Giving/Receiving.....	65
Fixing/Needing	68

Acting/Reacting	70
Conclusion	74
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	78
Major Conclusions.....	79
Implications.....	80
Limitations	82
Recommendations for Future Research.....	81
Final Thoughts	84
WORKS CITED	87
APPENDIX A.....	99

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“We all know something. We are all ignorant of something.”
– Paulo Freire

I was sixteen and starry-eyed, preparing for a summer adventure in a Latin American country as-of-yet unknown when I first read Ivan Illich’s “To Hell with Good Intentions.” Our trainers distributed the single-page address among small groups, and we sat in silence, reading the famously biting essay. I couldn’t have been the only idealistic teen who felt her shoulders and spirit droop as she read. Illich began by professing an “increasing opposition to the presence of any and all North American ‘dogooders’ in Latin America” (Illich, “To Hell”), and I realized uncomfortably that he was talking about me. I continued to fidget in my chair as I read further: despite a concession that he had “deep faith in the enormous good will of the U.S. volunteer,” Illich criticized the “U.S. idealist,” which he claimed to be “the third largest North American export” (Illich, “To Hell”). He assured his readers that “all you will do in a Mexican village is create disorder.” He argued that it is impossible for his audience – middle-class U.S. Americans with intent to volunteer abroad – to connect with those not similar in class to themselves because “there is no common ground whatsoever for you to meet on” (Illich, “To Hell”).

Paragraph after paragraph, the essay tore apart all of my counter-arguments. *I will be living with a host family! I’ll be truly immersed!* was met with an admonition that “the fact that you live in huts and eat tortillas for a few weeks renders your well-intentioned group only a bit more picturesque.” *I speak Spanish! I can communicate!* was countered by “you can only dialogue with those like you – Latin American imitations of the North American middle class” (Illich, “To Hell”). After we finished reading, we debriefed the article, but I remained quiet throughout the conversation, unable to formulate my feelings toward the sentiments that it

presented, much less articulate them. It was the first time that someone had suggested to me that my good intentions might not be enough when it came to volunteering abroad.

Despite the questions that the essay raised, I stuck with the training. For six months, I studied asset-based community development, cultural sensitivity, and health and safety protocols alongside forty other volunteers. In June of 2009, I boarded a plane with my brother's old hiking pack strapped to my back and my very own purple cot slung over my shoulder, flying 2000 miles south to the Central American country of Nicaragua. There, along with another teenager from the U.S., I lived in a community of about 150 people, in the home of a fast-talking Nicaraguan woman with five young children. For eight weeks, I forgot about Ivan Illich and threw myself into my experience – I ate tortillas and gallo pinto three meals a day, played games with children who taught me how to swear in Spanish, and spent afternoons kneeling on the tile floor of a local health clinic, folding squares of gauze and rolling balls of cotton for the chatty nurses who liked to interrogate me on my love life. I took myself very seriously, enthusiastically drawing up posters advertising town meetings that no one attended and painstakingly writing up lesson plans for five-minute lectures in the health center about the importance of breastfeeding and the prevention of dengue.

It was only when I returned home to the congratulations of well-meaning friends and family members that I started to yet again wonder uneasily if I had really done “good” during my time in the community of Los Angeles, Nicaragua. All of the praise for my “hard work” and “great sacrifices” echoed hollowly against the reality of my experiences – in my eyes, I had made no great sacrifice, provided no special skills, and made no great difference in anyone's lives, except perhaps my own. Sure, I learned a lot, but did I contribute anything? More importantly: did I, in my quest to do good, actually end up doing harm?

I would be lying if I claimed that I don't still grapple with these questions and others that have developed through my experiences since. In the years following that first trip to Nicaragua, I have remained involved with the same organization – Amigos de las Américas, or simply AMIGOS – returning as a volunteer once more and later rising through the ranks of project staff. I have seen and been a part of dialogues regarding the implications of and best practices for our involvement in countries and cultural contexts not our own. I have seen the organization's terminology change from “volunteers” to “participants.” I have watched it shift its focus from one of community development to an emphasis on collaborative youth leadership development. Throughout it all, I have tried to make sense of this issue of international volunteering and travel experiences. And I am not the only one.

Volunteer tourism, volunteer vacationing, or “voluntourism” is a trend that is sweeping not only the nation, but also the globe – literally. According to Lyons and Wearing, it is currently one of the fastest-growing forms of alternative tourism (6). Although it has yet to (and likely will not any time soon) surpass the popularity of conventional tourism, this rapidly expanding industry is becoming ever more present in the public eye as more and more people decide to spend their free days, weeks, or months mixing altruism with hedonism. As such, the time has come to turn an eye to the discourse of this field, the assumptions it relies on, and the worldview it promotes, both at home and abroad. The time has come to examine what ideologies this “third largest North American export” – the “U.S. idealist,” now in the form of the voluntourist – is taking with her when she steps out into the world beyond her backyard (Illich, “To Hell”).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the rhetorical strategies that voluntourism organizations utilize in order to encourage interest in their programs. Specifically,

the study will focus on three organizations – Cross-Cultural Solutions, Global Volunteers, and Global Citizens Network – and their respective websites. I will first seek to identify the main ideology that these messages promote; then, I will assess this ideology from a postcolonial perspective. Furthermore, I will evaluate the ways in which the organizations’ messages across the sites relate to the values and goals articulated in their mission and vision statements.

Rationales

This study is especially relevant because of the dearth of existing research surrounding the volunteer tourism or “voluntourism” sector. Although the body of scholarship surrounding the voluntourism trend is certainly growing, it is as of yet relatively sparse, due to the relative newness of the volunteer travel market. Sparser still is the collection of studies that focus specifically on the rhetorical practices within the industry; in fact, I was unable to locate any existing studies that analyze the industry’s persuasive strategies, let alone studies focused solely on the three organizations to be examined in this investigation. Most relevant to this analysis was Kate Simpson’s 2004 examination of the gap year industry and its employment of development discourse (Simpson). Beyond this, some existing research deals with such topics as volunteer motivations (Chen and Chen) and volunteer expectations (Andereck, McGehee, Lee, and Clemmons). Indeed, tourism scholar Nancy McGehee explicitly proposes that an examination of “the signs/signifiers of volunteer tourism, including images, language, and discourse in volunteer tourism organizations” would be a “timely research focus” in this rapidly expanding field (“Oppression, Emancipation, and Volunteer Tourism” 97).

Furthermore, this study will likely prove a useful addition to the field of postcolonial criticism by analyzing a relatively new and as-of-yet unexamined manifestation of colonial rhetoric. Scholars have previously studied representations of the “Third World” in NGO

advertisements, focusing on those ways in which these messages rely on existing assumptions of colonial and development discourse in order to create images of the “Third World” (Rideout). My examination will likewise continue the necessary work of unmasking global power relations as they continue to be reproduced, especially considering existing criticisms of voluntourism as a potentially neo-colonial practice (Palacios). Through an identification and analysis of the ideology presented by select organizations within the voluntourism sector, I hope to bring to light any such reinforcements of Western hegemony, thereby contributing to the potential for criticism thereof and challenges thereto.

Finally, beyond its potential to bolster the current body of research in the voluntourism arena, this study is relevant because of the influence that organizations’ preliminary messages have on consumers. Fallon asserts that “evaluation of an experience is framed within a tourist’s preconceived notions,” meaning that the expectations that travelers take with them into a trip will have effects on how they perceive said experiences (qtd. in Andereck, McGehee, Lee, and Clemmons 130). The persuasive strategies of these organizations are therefore instrumental in setting their participants up for how they will perceive their experiences with the organizations’ programs, which is a powerful role for these sites to play, and thus an important one to study.

Definitions

In order to fully understand the study and the rhetorical situation at hand, it is necessary to define and explain three main terms. The first of these, *rhetorical (or persuasive) strategies*, is closely tied to the basic concept of *rhetoric*, which, according to Hauser, is “how humans use symbols, especially language, to reach agreement” or persuade (3). Understanding this definition of rhetoric as persuasive symbol use, we can conceptualize *rhetorical (or persuasive) strategies*

as the methods that a rhetor – in this case the voluntourism organization – uses to “influence audiences’ feelings and behaviors” (Hart and Daughton 7).

The second term necessary for understanding this study is *voluntourism*. A portmanteau of “volunteer” and “tourism,” *voluntourism* is also known as *volunteer travel*, *volunteer vacations*, or simply *volunteer tourism*. Tourism scholars McGehee and Santos define it as “utilizing discretionary time and income to go out of the regular sphere of activity to assist others in need” (760). The online voluntourism resource, Voluntourism.org, offers a similar definition, describing *voluntourism* as “the conscious, seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination and the best, traditional elements of travel – arts, culture, geography, history and recreation – in that destination” (Via International). With these definitions in mind, for the purposes of this investigation, voluntourism will be taken to mean any short-term travel that also contains a significant, organized volunteering or service component.

The third and final term that must be defined is *ideology*. Ideology can be defined as “any system of norms, values, beliefs...directing the social and political attitudes and actions of a group, a social class, or a society as a whole” (Nöth 12). It is, in short, a framework with which to make sense of the world, shared within a group of people. Ideologies exist in various contexts, from sports teams and business organizations to societies and cultures.

Method

This study uses the qualitative method of rhetorical criticism in order to uncover and critique the dominant ideology promoted by voluntourism organizations’ persuasive messaging. Specifically, the artifacts that I examine are the websites of three such organizations: Cross-Cultural Solutions, Global Volunteers, and Global Citizens Network.

As a method, rhetorical criticism hinges on the fundamental belief that “rhetoric can and must be understood,” and that, in doing so, critics can gain insights into not only specific messages, but also human nature (Hart and Daughton 19). Specifically I employ an ideological criticism of the postcolonial variety. Hart and Daughton describe ideological criticism as one that “specifies...the political standard...by which the critic believes rhetorical acts and artifacts should be judged,” with postcolonial criticism focusing specifically on issues of power and agency, especially in relation to Western ideals and colonized thought (309, 329). While I will discuss the specific significance of this methodological choice at greater length in a later chapter, for the moment it is important to note the applicability of a postcolonial perspective to these messages, which exist very starkly in relation with a historically-fraught colonial past.

Conclusion

Clearly, the voluntourism market is ripe for scholarly inquiry. As demonstrated in this chapter, this investigation hopes to contribute to the growing body of research surrounding this field by approaching the industry from another angle, through its marketing tactics. This study has the potential to add yet another layer of consideration to both the existing body of research about voluntourism and that of postcolonial scholarship, and it aims to do so in a well-developed, comprehensible manner. In the following chapter, having established this basic understanding of the question at hand and its significance, I will provide a review of some of the literature currently available on those topics germane to this investigation.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly, or it vanishes.”
– Peter Drucker

Messages do not exist in a vacuum, and, therefore, context is key. To that end, before attempting to approach and analyze current voluntourism organizations and their messages, one must first delve into the literature surrounding the topics and theories at hand. In this chapter, I will provide further information about several topics and theoretical concepts germane to this study, including rhetoric and rhetorical criticism; ideology and power; postcolonial criticism and colonial discourse; development; nonprofit NGO marketing; and voluntourism. By familiarizing myself with this existing literature, I was able to establish a solid theoretical foundation upon which to conduct my analysis. Furthermore, by providing within this chapter a discussion of these topics and their various nuances, I hope to build a solid basis upon which my later analysis and conclusions can be understood.

Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism

To that end, I will begin by explaining the concept of rhetoric. Without a basic comprehension of what rhetoric is, much of the study of human communication – and this study in particular – cannot be understood. Colloquially, some use the term to signify meaningless speech, but rhetoric is much more than empty promises or propaganda (Hauser 2). Best understood among scholars as persuasive symbol use, rhetoric permeates everything we do (Foss 63). Symbols, meanwhile, are the components that make up all communication, the tools through which we engage in the creation of a “shared meaning and interpretation” (Hauser 2). Symbols consist of everything from languages to stop signs. In fact, rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke introduced the concept that humans are symbol-using beings – a characteristic which

distinguishes us from our animal counterparts (Burke 16). Rhetoric, then, must be understood as an important part of our everyday lives. In fact, it plays a part in almost everything we do: from the public discourses with which is it commonly associated, to conversations with friends about what to eat for dinner, to everything in between.

Rhetorical criticism arises from this understanding of rhetoric as a ubiquitous and essential part of our lives. Put simply, rhetorical criticism is the process of deconstructing and finding meaning within rhetorical messages, and explaining or “unpacking” these gleaned insights in a comprehensible way (Hart and Daughton 22). Especially taking into account the idea that rhetoric “is concerned with the use of symbols to induce social action” (Hauser 3), it becomes clear that rhetorical criticism is a valuable tool with which scholars may approach and analyze a message. In doing so, critics may further contribute to understandings of both the message and the world around it.

Ideology and Power

Within the field of rhetorical criticism, various methodologies abound. For the purpose of this study, I will use what is known as an ideological criticism, looking at the ways in which the messages present a certain ideology. Thus, it is important to establish an understanding of what ideology as a concept actually means. Though touched upon in the previous chapter, the idea of ideology – and all it entails – is a complex one. Ideologies are based on a group’s social beliefs, and they influence everything from “shared knowledge” to the group’s attitude toward certain occurrences (Van Dijk, “Discourse” 12). They are not easily articulated or understood – indeed, critics contend that ideology is, in many ways, a “hidden system of meaning in public messages,” shaping the way we think and act without our realization (Nöth 12). In this way, ideology can be seen as an “unconscious system” that drives the beliefs and actions of a group (Grossberg 176),

one that is both “gradually acquired” and “stable” (Van Dijk, “Ideology” 116). Furthermore, it tends to be more general and abstract than specific and concrete; rather than a mere set of beliefs, ideologies are “fundamental or axiomatic,” providing a framework within which to organize specific attitudes or ideas (Van Dijk, “Ideology” 116).

Because of these characteristics – and specifically its unconscious, general, and stable in nature – ideology can at times be difficult to identify and even more difficult to critique. Despite this difficulty, ideological criticism is a form of criticism that “analyzes and challenges the ways in which the status quo of unequal power relations is maintained.” This form of criticism is concerned not only with the contents of the rhetorical message (the “means”) but also with the effects thereof (the “ends”). Furthermore, it “subject[s] those ends to judgment” (Hart and Daughton 309). In this way, the ideological critic is set on challenging the status quo, on raising previously unasked questions, and on tying her criticism to larger social discussions. Overall, ideological critics aim to challenge messages in a way that many other types of critics do not.

Hegemony

Clearly, the power of ideology cannot be overstated, especially when considered in the context of groups’ relationships of domination and subordination. In this vein, it is also important to understand the idea of hegemony. In terms of ideology, “hegemony is the privileging of the ideology of one group over that of other groups” (Foss 210). It can also be described as the way in which one social group exercises control over another. Hegemony occurs when “the dominant group successfully projects its own particular ways of seeing the world, human and social relationship, such that those who are actually subordinated by these views come to accept them as ‘common sense’ or ‘natural’” (Tietze and Dick 123). In this way, it often goes unseen and unquestioned, overriding the beliefs of other, less dominant ideologies within a society.

As with all ideologies, hegemony is not static or fixed; instead, it is a process constantly developing, changing, and reasserting itself in new ways. Those who support this dominant ideology are thus able to “continually reproduce” their worldview “while gaining the tacit approval of those whom the ideology oppresses” (Dow 262). Furthermore, there is no one standard, universal hegemonic ideology. Foss explains that this is because hegemony is not based on any one norm; instead, it is the process of “establishing the norm,” dictating what is seen as natural (210). The U.S. American hegemonic ideology, for example, is different from the Chinese hegemonic ideology, with each of these incorporating specific cultural beliefs and attitudes toward the world that shape their group’s worldview. In regards to this example, however, it is important to note that hegemony is not constrained by geographical boundaries. Indeed, many powerful hegemonic ideologies – such as capitalism or Anglocentrism – often span borders, their influence spilling across various nations and peoples, especially in our increasingly global context.

Regardless of its context, hegemony is often explained as power through consent. This framing further elucidates the idea of hegemony as a dialectic process: it requires “the consent of the majority” (Artz and Murphy 25), meaning that it must establish itself to be in some way beneficial to the majority of those under its power. Those in control of this hegemonic power find themselves, in many ways, bound to the needs or desires of this majority, in order to gain support for their worldview. At the same time, hegemony becomes “the taken-for-granted common sense of the society,” reinforcing itself through this same majority’s endorsement (Cloud 118). When a population accepts hegemonic ways of thinking as the norm – often without consciously intending to do so – they are offering their consent and thus are re-establishing, reaffirming, and further solidifying this hegemonic structure of power.

Discourse and the Power of Language

Much similar to the process of constant renegotiation between dominant and subordinated groups involved in this establishment and re-establishment of hegemony, the relationship between discourse and ideology is also dialectical. The two influence each other directly, with ideologies influencing the ways in which a group discusses certain topics and likewise discourses surrounding these topics influencing the formation of ideologies (Van Dijk, “Discourse” 11). Thus the set of language used in the framing of any one topic may simultaneously be created by and have the power to influence the ideology of certain groups.

But what is discourse? There are, in fact, many ways to define it, but in the context of this study, I will focus on the idea of discourse as “a set of social relations of knowledge” (Frow 91). A colonial discourse, for example, is the way in which colonial knowledge is created, explained, and understood. Discourse includes language, statements, texts, and any and all other messages that communicate an ideology or worldview. It is powerful, inescapable, and tied directly to ideology: according to theorist Michael Foucault, “there cannot be anything outside ideology because reality and truth are mediated by discourse” (Siapera 113). Suffice it to say, then, that the ability to dictate and shape discourse is a potent one. If all that we do – our very reality – is mediated by discourse, as Foucault suggests, the importance of language becomes much more apparent. After all, if we believe that “to ‘name the world’” is “to define reality and to establish rules about what can be validly known, controlled, and imagined” (McLennan 276) – meaning that those who are responsible for selecting the language that is used to describe experiences, phenomena, or objects are in the position to establish the framework within which we will then understand and experience these elements within our lives – then to do this naming is understood to be a fundamental exercise in power.

When it comes to hegemony, however, language is involved not only in the establishment thereof. Rather, language is “an instrument in hegemony, a product of hegemony, and a battlefield where hegemony is renegotiated”(Artz and Murphy 32); that is, language is simultaneously created by and used in both the creation and contestation of hegemony. The process of communication is one of constant renegotiation, and language is often a site of this contention. Rhetorical practices are particularly instrumental in this process; it is through various rhetorical strategies that dominant ideologies can be either supported or challenged (Foss 210). Therefore the exercise of language is inherently a practice in ideology, whether in its reinforcement or resistance.

In the context of power relations and dominance, and in the context of this study in particular, it is important to note the way in which, at times, resistance to hegemonic ideologies is incorporated “into the dominant discourse,” thus allowing for a challenge that “will not contradict and even may support the dominant ideology” (Foss 210). In doing so, those who are in positions of power can maintain the majority’s acceptance of their hegemonic ideology – and their dominance. This incorporation of resistance might appear in different ways: one example in U.S. American culture today is the idea of a “colorblind” society. The assertion that one “does not see color” incorporates a challenge to the structures of white privilege by acknowledging that discrimination based upon skin color is problematic, but it simultaneously minimizes this challenge as unimportant, as such discrimination must not exist in a world that is able to transcend such judgments based on race. Meanwhile, this idea of a “colorblind” society further disregards the systematic inequalities and injustices faced by people of color in U.S. society both historically and to this day. In this way, many of the realities of legitimate challenges to white

privilege are obfuscated by the belief that racial equality can be reached by simply refusing to act upon – or even acknowledge – any difference between people of various races.

Representation

Just as language has power in shaping ideology and ways of seeing the world, representation shapes the way we perceive others. Because so much of our interaction with others, especially those from cultures not our own, is done not directly but through mediated portrayals – which can occur in the form of media messages like those presented on TV or the Internet or simply through others’ descriptions of these people – and because our understanding of both these other people and ourselves is constructed in relation with and through this mediation, the representations presented therein are essential to our understanding of identity, both our own and that of others (Siapera 7).

Kathryn Sorrells describes this as “the power of texts,” explaining how the creation and distribution of texts within a culture – as well as the representations, histories, and perspectives included or excluded therein – is integral to “constructing, maintaining, and legitimizing systems of inequity and domination” (59). This power can be extrapolated beyond mere written texts, however, especially in an age where we are increasingly surrounded by messages of all kinds, including both myriad digital media and more traditional written texts. Furthermore, representations’ significance lies not only in the substance of the messages and their discursive power, but also in their inequitable production – that is to say, the fact that, within a dominant culture, the majority of representations available will be those produced by members of the dominant group (Dyer 4).

Representation can, at times, mean simplification in the portrayal of its subjects, a simplification that frequently depends on or produces stereotypes. Often the term “stereotype” is

met with a knee-jerk negative association, but stereotyping in and of itself is not a pernicious process. Quite simply put, stereotyping is “a reduction of images and ideas to a simple and manageable form” – it is a method through which humans are able to perceive, process, and understand the world without total sensory overload (Loomba 59). While not inherently malevolent, however, Gilman posits that “the function of stereotypes is to perpetuate an artificial sense of difference between ‘self’ and ‘other’” (qtd. in Loomba 60). Thus, in practice stereotypes serve to further a divisionary way of thinking, priming for the creation of an “other,” and with it, an inherent sense of difference. Not only do stereotypes create this sense of difference, however, but they maintain a “sharp boundary” between groups (Cook and Lewington 16).

In this way, representations dependent upon stereotypes contribute to the idea that the world, social categories, and groups are rigidly bound rather than fluid, furthering perceptions of difference. Cook and Lewington refer to this as the process of “making the visible invisible,” wherein nuance is disregarded in the interest of definability (16). Edward Said further articulates this idea of strict division and rigid boundaries, suggesting that to divide the world along arbitrary boundaries – to create an “us” and a “them” – is in human nature (54). He describes these divisions as both “arbitrary” (54) and polarizing (46). Significantly, he argues that through this process of division we limit the potential for “human encounter” between different groups (46). Said does not mean that to internally create division of groups is to literally eliminate physical interaction between groups, although this is sometimes the case. Instead, the creation of these divisions limits one’s ability to interact with another on a human level, outside of our understanding of what these classifications entail.

Gaze

In order to understand the construction of these understandings of others, it is pertinent to discuss the concept of gaze. Gaze, which is a means of “conceptualizing the power of directorial conventions in visual media,” deals with who is looking at whom in mediated representations (Barkin 366). More simply put, it deals with an understanding of whose values and symbols are privileged in the creation of messages (Gill and Wells 46). It has previously been theorized in terms of gender, race, and heteronormativity, among others. Less conventionally, Gill and Wells focused on the idea of “donor gaze” in their examination of nonprofit identity negotiation, explaining that the organization tended to use “symbols and values important to the donor base,” framing them as “integral to their efforts,” thus encouraging involvement while also affirming the donors’ existing worldviews (46).

Particularly relevant to this study, the idea of gaze can also be applied in the tourism sphere. In fact, Van den Berghe argues that a framework of spectacle is inherent to the tourism experience (Van den Berghe 122). He defines this experience as “the intersection of the tourist’s extraordinary world with the host’s ordinary life” (Van den Berghe 6). This opposition between the extraordinary and the ordinary invites the tourist to gaze upon the spectacle of the host. Furthermore, tourism is a practice in consuming culture, of “collecting in some way the commodified essences of otherness” (Meethan 128). In this way, the culture is the “object” upon which the tourist gazes (Urry 57). Thus, representations of culture in regards to tourism are framed in such a way as to privilege and affirm the tourist’s worldview.

In his examination of the phenomenon of the tourist’ gaze, Urry further explains that the relationship between tourist and host have several inherent characteristics, including an economic and social difference that are highlighted through the tourist encounter (57-58). Furthermore, he posits that “part of what is involved in tourism is the purchase of a particular

social experience” (141). Jennifer Craik supports this, outlining the difference between the tourist and the traveler, who is “an independent, genuine explorer on a quest of discovery” to the tourist’s temporary escapist role, although she concedes that “there are elements of both motivations in all travel experiences” (356). In these theorizations, we can see an understanding of the tourist as a consumer – of culture or experience – whose experience is marked by a focus on difference.

Postcolonial Criticism and Colonial Discourse

The idea of gaze and power relations of tourism in many ways relate to an understanding of colonial rhetoric and how it has been employed over the years. In the context of this study, beyond simply examining ideology, I will conduct my analysis from a postcolonial perspective. Therefore, it is essential to break down some of the key ideas within the field of postcolonial studies, impossible though an exhaustive or even comprehensive examination may be within the scope of this project.

Beginning in the context of a rhetorical criticism, postcolonial critics are concerned with how Western values – such as “rationality, order, conquest, and a belief in the perfectibility of human systems” – have come to be accepted as the norm and woven into the prevailing global narrative when, in actuality, they are not the only possible values (Hart and Daughton 330). Postcolonial critics, then, seek to identify these values and challenge how they are presented as unquestionably correct. The field of postcolonial studies is intimately concerned with the ideas of hegemony, its influence, and how it is and can be challenged. As a discipline, it aims to examine, analyze, and respond to colonialism and the legacies that it has left behind – and those that are still enforced (Hart and Daughton 333). Within this, it is complex, dynamic, and rarely harmonious: by virtue of subject matter, postcolonial studies are a contentious, messy business.

Postcolonial scholars concern themselves with colonialism and the colonial aftermath, noting that the end of the official “colonial period” did not necessarily bring about an end to colonial powers’ influence and effects in colonizing and colonized lands. Rather, the process of colonialism fundamentally altered the interactions of the world’s peoples – indeed, Ania Loomba suggests that colonialism in its various iterations “locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationship in human history” (2). This statement may at first seem somewhat drastic, but postcolonial criticism aims to examine the ways in which “established forms of thought and action have colonized people’s minds long after their bodies were ostensibly freed” (Hart and Daughton 329). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall further clarifies the significance of colonial discourse and the actions based thereon, asserting that it is one thing to establish a people or people as “Other,” but still another to “subject them to that ‘knowledge’” – to make them “see and experience [themselves] as ‘Other,’” the latter being a much more pernicious practice (394-395). Keeping in mind this power and the corresponding violence enacted through colonialism and colonial discourse, I will use this section to explain some of the key aspects of this discourse, focusing first on some of the initial characteristics studied within colonial discourse analysis and then paying particular attention to the concepts of global binaries, race, and class.

***Orientalism* and the Origins of Colonial Discourse Theory**

The aforementioned understanding of colonial thought as pervasive and enduring was one of the driving forces that lead to the creation of the field of colonial discourse theory, or colonial discourse analysis. The study of colonial discourse can in many ways trace its origins to the work of Edward Said and his text, *Orientalism*, considered a seminal text in the field (Williams and Chrisman 5). Not without its detractors, *Orientalism* nonetheless played an

important role in theorizing the West¹ and its relation to the rest of the world (Williams and Chrisman 5). In it, Said deconstructs what he sees as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” which he terms “Orientalism” (3). For Said, “the Orient” is understood to be the present-day Middle East, but much of his explanations on the relationship between the Occident and Orient are applicable to the relationship between the Western and non-Western world, as they focus on “the constellation of images, essences, sensibilities, and characteristics associated with a generalized ‘Other’” (Dirks “Orientalism” 247). Thus, by understanding the basic concepts of Orientalism as a discourse, one can begin to understand some of the main ideas of colonial discourse, which is the main body of knowledge with which postcolonial scholars concern themselves.

Much in line with Foucault’s assertion that reality is mediated by discourse, Said suggests that the Orient is not a naturally occurring fact, nor is the Occident. Both are, he posits, man-made in terms of their geographical designations and – perhaps more importantly – in terms of their status as “cultural entities” (5). The manufactured nature of these sectors also means that the two create, support, and reflect each other (5). With this, Said suggests that recognition of the West’s ability to shape both its own and others’ understandings of the rest of the world is key to the study and criticism of the modern-day creation of global narratives and ideologies, and is similarly essential in any attempt to challenge these ideologies.

Likewise important – and perhaps less commonly emphasized – is Said’s assertion of the mutuality of this ability: just as the West has the power to shape global understanding, so too does the non-West, albeit from a place of less inherent dominance than that wielded by the West. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire describes this ability in terms of “the oppressed” coming to

¹ For the purpose of this study, I will generally use the terms “West” and “non-West” (or “Western” and “non-Western”), for reasons to be explained later in this chapter.

recognize and later challenge the domination of the “oppressors,” though he cautions that the oppressed have “internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines,” and that to challenge these guidelines and images is not an easy process (31). Nonetheless, both Said and Freire assert a belief in the ability of non-dominant peoples to wield language to their advantage in the creation and re-creation of reality through knowledge.

Beyond the abstract creation of knowledge, Said claims that the power of colonial discourse must not be ignored, due to “its very close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions” (6). That is to say: the methods of describing the Western and the non-Western world embedded in this discourse not only serve to create a framework for conceptualizing the world, but also manifest themselves in more tangible, structural ways.

One of the key aspects of this framework that does indeed manifest itself in both discursive and structural ways is the construction of the “Other.” By and large, an examination of Orientalism deals with an examination of this construction and its effects. Many perceptions of an “Other” are rooted in the creation of what Said terms a general foreignness (103). In this, all that is not “us” is seen as “them,” indistinguishable in its difference, so that any who are not the West are seen as nebulously foreign, defined first and foremost by their dissimilarity to the Western “norm.” Furthering this opposition between the Western norm and the “Other,” both Freire and Said discuss the process of dehumanization, which they describe as the process through which one regards others as less than himself (Freire 28, Said 108). Said sees this as a process that is undertaken by the Westerner, who “believes it is his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it, just because by definition ‘it’ is not quite as human as ‘we’ are” (108). This articulation highlights the power disparities inherent in the creation of “Other,” which establishes a distinct hierarchical perception of the world.

Global Binaries

In keeping with this divisionary “us” and “them” thinking, the Western world has throughout history tended to divide the world into binaries. The specific terms have varied, from the Orient and Occident described by Said, to the Third and First World, to the Global North and South, but the trend of splitting the world’s nations into two (or more) distinct and classifiable camps has persisted. A background on the history and impact of these dichotomies is integral to understanding the relationship between their constituents, and thus to understanding post-colonial discourse and its subjects.

Many of the most commonly known designations today were popularized by the United Nations: for example, for a time, the accepted terminologies were “developed” and “under-developed” countries. However, as UN membership expanded to include some countries that fell under the label of “under-developed,” the term began to fall out of favor because of its potentially degrading connotations. It was replaced with seemingly milder substitutes such as “‘less-developed’ or ‘developing,’” according to Leslie Wolf-Phillips (1315). In 1969, the Pearson Commission Report *Partners in Development*¹¹ touched on some of the problems of the various terminologies in use at the time, emphasizing the lack of a “firm line between developed and developing countries.” To remedy this uncertainty, they toyed with such options as “rich-poor,” “advanced-backward,” “highly developed-underdeveloped,” and “donor-recipient,” finally settling on “developed-developing” (qtd. in Wolf-Phillips 1317).

At the same time, however, the term pair “Third World-First World” began to gain footing. The idea of “The Third World” was born at the Bandung Conference of 1955 (Berger, “The End” 259). The conference, formally titled the Asian-African Conference, was a gathering

¹¹ A commission formed at the behest of the World Bank, charged with the task of “review[ing] the previous 20 years of development assistance, assess[ing] the results, and mak[ing] recommendations for the future” (“Pages from the World Bank History”).

of nations who created the idea of the “Third World,” a unified group of nation-states interested in de-emphasizing the division between the capitalist “First World” and the communist “Second World” that had taken root in the midst of the Cold War (Berger, “After the Third World” 10). Simultaneously, there was the “East-West” dichotomy, which also represented the division between those forces of capitalism and communism that found themselves grappling for global power and influence throughout the course of the Cold War. This division, however, largely disappeared with the USSR, as the looming threat of communism lessened and the need for the rivalry dissipated (Weiss 271). The disintegration of the USSR (and with it the “Second World”), led to the shift to a dichotomy consisting of “First” and “Third” World. Within this, the “Third World” came to mean those countries who were generally understood to fall on the deficient end of the “developed-developing” or “highly developed-underdeveloped” designations – that is to say, those with less robust or defined economic systems, when compared with the benchmark “First World” nations (Wolf-Phillips 1318). The division marked an appropriation of the “Third World” label, which was originally a largely self-determined one, to support a hierarchical view of the world.

Another division, North/South (or global North/global South), presents an alternative to the “First World”/“Third World” divide. This designation is ostensibly rooted in geography – notably similar to the previously mentioned “East-West” terminology for the capitalism-communism rivalry. Weiss argues, however, that, as many distributions (at least per the UN) make little geographical sense, including Australia and New Zealand’s “North” status, the terms do not actually seek to describe the world geographically – instead, they have replaced the now-defunct “First World-Third World” terminology in many geopolitical circles (Weiss 272). Indeed, Eckl and Weber argues that despite initially seeming more neutral, “North-South” is still

a line drawn between countries based on differences. They suggest that, though initially the lack of value judgments attached to this geographical phrasing seems to be an appealing alternative, its non-geographic actuality is ultimately troublesome precisely because of its implied geographic definitions (Eckl and Weber).

In fact, Eckl and Weber warn that the establishment of distinct sides in general can lead to exclusivity and one-minded thinking, even beyond the context of North/South (8). In other words, binary divisions of the world essentially eliminate the possibilities for complexity in understandings of nations. Such divisions paint “North” and “South” with broad strokes, leaving little room for nuance or acknowledgment of characteristics that might be present in both. Furthermore, they reference Jacques Derrida’s work on binaries, which suggests both that division is oppositional rather than neutral and that such a manner of thinking prevails in Western thought (qtd in Eckl and Weber 4). In other words, the Western tendency is to understand the world through bifurcation, and, in doing so, it creates a conflict between the two that diminishes the possibility for overlap.

Recognizing the potentially troublesome nature of binary terms, I will explain my terminological choices for this study. Because it would be nigh impossible to discuss the concepts at hand without acknowledging and utilizing an existing binary framework to some extent, I have chosen to use the terms *formerly colonizing/formerly colonized* (and other iterations such as *formerly colonizer/formerly colonized* etc.) as well as *West/non-West* (and *Western/non-Western* etc.). The former, though somewhat cumbersome and not entirely inclusive of those whose lives may have been/be affected by colonial ideologies but who may not have lived/live in “formerly colonized” nations, is a relatively value-less term set that focuses more on historic context. The latter is less precise and certainly less accurate – there are many

nations on the western half of the globe who very acutely felt the effects of colonialism and feel the effects of postcolonial legacies – however, due to its pervasiveness and widely-understood nature, this binary seems optimal for communicating the ideas at hand in a succinct and approachable way. Neither set of terms is ideal, certainly, but I would suggest that there is no “perfect” binary terminology in existence (due to the problematic nature of binary designation). For this reason, it is simply necessary to select terms carefully and to acknowledge their potential drawbacks.

Race and Class

In addition to the creation of global binaries, another important element of colonial discourse is its treatment of race and class. I group them together here because the two are often conflated in the context of colonial rhetoric, and thus to unpack representations thereof, it is also important to examine the ways in which they are portrayed as overlapping.

To begin, both race and class have long been used to ascribe value or worth to people and their bodies. Dark skin, for example, has historically been described in terms of its badness by colonizers. As early European travelers returned to their homelands with tales of far-away lands, they brought with them stories of these lands’ inhabitants, whom they painted as “bestial.” These representations were due to “medieval and religious associations of blackness with filth and dirt” as well as the need for an ideological justification for exploitation and subjugation (Loomba 71). Images of the barbaric, dark “Other” were soon reinforced by “scientific knowledge,” which shrouded racism in seemingly credible scientific discourse (Loomba 115). By explaining prejudice and discrimination away with the excuse of biological “knowledge,” colonizers were able to assert a tangible, empirically observable distinction between themselves and their subjects, creating distance from the colonized’s humanity and justifying treatments that could

otherwise have been seen as inhumane or – ironically – barbaric. In this way, colonizers practiced the process of dehumanization described by Said and Freire. By conceptualizing of colonized peoples as “animals or demons or objects” or even as simply characterized by a lesser humanity than colonizers due to their skin color, the colonizers were able to construct an image of rightful subjugation while simultaneously imbuing their society with an understanding of the inherent badness of dark skin, which still manifests itself today in the form of racism (Kuper 11).

This discussion of race, however, must be read with an understanding that the idea of race – and all of the values and assumptions that come with it – is a social construct. Sorrells describes a social construct as “an idea or phenomenon that has been ‘created,’ ‘invented,’ or ‘constructed’ by people in a particular society or culture through communication” (55). In other words, social constructs are based on the discourse surrounding an idea, rather than on empirical fact. Bearing this in mind, we arrive at class, which is a key element in the construction of race, and vice versa. Racial theorist Michael Banton suggests that the two are interrelated, with race seen as contributing to the formation of class (150).

Balaji further explains reactions to the intersection of these two categories, writing that “poverty and famine have long been associated with a dark non-white world” that necessitates intervention from a benevolent white savior (52). She suggests that this image contributes to the “racialization of pity,” a concept that she explains as the representation of poor, dark bodies in terms of their helplessness and hopelessness (Balaji). Reminiscent of Kipling’s *White Man’s Burden*^{III}, a depiction of poverty and blackness as both interconnected and helpless creates a moral obligation to remedy these ills. Joanne Sharp suggests that this creates a “moral high

^{III} “The White Man’s Burden” is a poem written by poet Rudyard Kipling, published in 1899, which portrayed colonizers’ moral obligation to extend their way of life the world over (Sherrill 65).

ground of aid,” wherein aid is seen as “a gift from a rich and enlightened western country,” an image which relies on assumptions of both benevolence and superiority (239).

Development

Drawing upon many of these same assumptions, the trend of development and its discourse creates a modern-day framework within which to interpret the world. Arturo Escobar suggests that development is in many ways a “regime of representation” (15). A discussion of this representation is essential to its comprehension. Development discourse “builds on our assumptions regarding the causes of social problems, and by implication, their solutions” (Wilkins 141). It not only generally impacts global knowledge and interactions, but also plays a role in the creation of understanding within the voluntourism industry specifically. In particular, there are three frameworks that are worth examining for this investigation, and those are the problematization of poverty, the creation of inscrutability, and the establishment of westernization as development.

Problematization of Poverty

One of the oft-professed driving factors behind development is poverty: its characteristics, problems, and the necessary elimination thereof. While poverty is indeed a reality for many, within the context of development discourse, it is also “a myth” (Rahnema). Development organizations – and development discourse in general – tends to focus on poverty as a problem, as needing a solution. Escobar terms this phenomenon “the problematization of poverty” (21). Characterized by such terms as the “war on poverty” and “slums,” this problematization evokes “revulsion, fear, and occasionally outrage” (Martin and Mathema 15). In focusing on the negativity of poverty and the need for its elimination, development discourse fuels a negative sentiment toward the phenomenon. Constructed through this vocabulary of

problems, fear, and negativity, it becomes a nebulous, sinister force, one that the development process necessarily exists to combat.

Furthermore, poverty is seen as not only an individual condition, but as a global issue. Rahnema describes “global poverty” as “an entirely new and modern construct,” detailing the ways in which whole groups of people – including countries or nations – are understood as “poor” (Rahnema). In this context of poverty as part of “the human condition,” the poor are seen as blameless in their plight, an attribution that concurrently lends itself to an image of their helplessness (Illich, “Needs”).

This image creates within it the necessity of outside interventions to combat the phenomenon of poverty (Rahnema). These solutions – which are understood through the language of development to come in the form of economic growth and “development” in general – are made necessary in the face of poverty’s problems (Escobar 24), in order to combat its inherent negativity, and to “ensure progress and world happiness” (Escobar 39). In other words, images of poverty in development discourse provide a justification for Western intervention in “developing” countries in the interest of furthering and maintaining global order.

Creation of Inscrutability

Beyond this scourge of poverty – and, indeed, in order to fight it – development discourse often relies on an emphasis of positive words. These words – such as participation, equality, and social capital, to name a few – position the development undertaking as above reproach. They are words that “admit no negatives,” words that “no-one could possibly disagree with” (Cornwall 2). By evoking seemingly universal values, many aspects of development discourse seem to become immune to criticism, at least when taken at face value.

Just like development – whose meaning remains largely unspecified despite its widespread use (Rist 19) – these inscrutable terms are similarly difficult to define concretely. In a discussion of the word “equality,” C. D. Lummis suggests that “the vagueness of the word places its present toxic meanings under the protection of the dignity of its older uses” (Lummis). With this term, as with many others, its multiple uses and lack of clear definability can lead to obfuscation of any problems associated with its current practices. In this way, any problematic manifestations of these processes are often shielded from critique based on pre-existing meanings that may or may not be relevant in the current context. Furthermore, as Cornwall and Brock phrase it, “they lend the legitimacy that development actors need to justify their interventions” (1044). By employing in new ways terms that traditionally evoke positive ideals, development discourse relies on preexisting understandings of these terminologies, essentially obscuring any less-than-positive realities that these processes may encompass.

The difficulty of criticism found in their unspecifiable nature is further enhanced by the difficulty inherent in evaluating the success of the processes that these terms encompass (Martin and Mathema 4). While indicators such as mortality and literacy rates can be measured relatively concretely, concepts such as empowerment or confidence are far more difficult to gauge. Therefore, their use is not bound to any quantifiable metric, allowing for them to be exercised in a less-than-uniform manner across the field of development.

Establishment of Westernization as Development

Finally, it is important to recognize that development discourse largely situates itself within the notion of West as the norm. In everyday speech, development “describes a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism are released, until it reaches its natural, complete, full-fledge form” (Esteva). To “develop” in the context of “development,” however, is

largely understood based on standards of living that rely on a Western metric of evaluation (Latouche).

Joanne Sharp suggests that the development enterprise in general is focused on “the security of the west,” aimed at transmitting capitalism and industrialization the world over in order to eliminate threats thereto (244). Even when examined in a less critical light, it is necessary to acknowledge that development discourse is created and deployed from the West, and can thus be seen as an endeavor to allow those residing in the non-West to “consume, think, and act like their counterparts” in the West (Guttal 74). Development, then, must be understood as largely rooted in efforts to normalize and spread Western styles of thought and action.

Much of this normalization of Western (and specifically capitalist) structures is seen in the economic terminologies employed within the development discourse. Latouche notes that the notion of development evolved in many ways based on the idea that “what had been produced in the industrialized countries would generalize itself across the planet” (Latouche). Such a view – of industrialization as the generalizable norm to which all countries would strive – represents a normalization of Western economic structures as the global norm. Escobar notes that economists view their knowledge as “a neutral representation of the world and a truth about it” (58). In this way, economic standards of development are seen as relatively value-less, situated within science rather than culture. Nonetheless, Escobar goes on to remark that Western economy is in fact rooted in “historical contingencies,” and that it can thus be considered an aspect of culture that is created rather than naturally occurring (59). To measure development in terms of Western economic structures, therefore, is to rely on this Western cultural component as a benchmark against which to judge other cultures.

Nonprofit NGO Marketing

Much development work is undertaken by nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Additionally, the subjects of this study are all not-for-profit and nongovernmental. As such, this section will examine the characteristics thereof, followed by an overview of some of their marketing realities and common marketing strategies within their specific context.

The nonprofit sector as a whole is commonly referred to as the “third sector” or the “voluntary sector,” a term that scholars and policy-makers alike use to distinguish it from the public (state or governmental) and private (market) sectors. Some scholars argue that this third sector occupies “a distinctive social space outside of both the market and the state” (Salamon and Anheier 1), and should be considered within its own, independent context (Morris 26). Others, however, contend that nonprofits operate within a space where “public and private concerns meet and where individual and social efforts are united” (Frumkin 1) – that is to say, that nonprofits and the nonprofit sector are distinct from the public and private sectors, but that they represent the sometimes untidy overlap of public and private players and interests.

Much of this current conceptualization of nonprofits stems from a fundamentally economic theorizing of the nonprofit; in other words, much of the research surrounding NPOs seeks to explain why and how they exist within the context of a market economy (Koschmann 140). Ott describes this approach as defining the not-for-profit organization by “what it is not” and “what it does not do,” a method that is obviously distinct from the more conventional tactic of asking what it is and what it does (1). This means that, in essence, nonprofits are seen as entities that exist outside of the conventional market and governmental spheres, although they are understood and evaluated within the frameworks developed based on these two, more concretely established sectors.

Bearing this information in mind, the term “nonprofit” (and its equivalents, including “NPO” and “not-for-profit organization”) will be used throughout the course of this study to describe tax-exempt organizations that serve a charitable or educational purpose, which are not operated for the benefit of private interests. More specifically, this study will examine not-for-profit nongovernmental organizations, or NGOS. NGOSs are “actors which exist in order to engage with specific problems related to development and social change” (Pamment 51). In the context of this study – all of whose subjects are both nonprofits and NGOS – this focus is the most logical choice for understanding the realities faced by the organizations under analysis.

Realities of Nonprofit NGO Marketing

In order to better understand this study and its subjects, one must understand the context within which nonprofit NGOS operate, especially in terms of their marketing efforts. Through this, it will be possible to better contextualize the messages that this study examines.

Even though they do not exist to pursue profit, NPOs still need to market in order to promote their brand and efforts. Unsurprisingly, nonprofits’ ability to acquire money is central to their ability to remain in existence, even without the pursuit of profit as a motivating factor. While it is true that making money is not the primary goal of organizations within the third sector, it *is* a necessary one, as Ott explains, because any proceeds are one of the primary resources that the organizations can then utilize to meet their specific end goals (1).

Marketing in the nonprofit sphere, however, differs from for-profit marketing because unlike for-profit businesses, which sell products or services, NPOs sell “their organization’s mission, their ideas, their programs and their services” (Blery, Katseli, and Tsara 57). To this end, one of the primary focuses of nonprofit marketing efforts is often the development of a “well-known identity.” Because an NPO’s mission is, in many senses, its primary “product,” it

becomes necessary for organizations to develop, hone, and promote this identity as such (Blery, Katseli, and Tsara 59). Gill and Wells assert that NPO identities are “closely linked” to views of their legitimacy (30). Reflective of Blery, Katseli, and Tsara’s assertion of the need to hone these identities (59), Gills and Wells’ suggestion further demonstrates the way in which organizations’ identities are tied closely to the generation of buy-in (30): these identities must be seen as legitimate and in line with the organizations’ actions, in order to encourage trust and therefore support.

Furthermore, because NPOs seek, beyond simple product promotion, a promotion of their overall ideals and image, they must find a way to reframe their message or mission as a societal benefit that is needed in the “marketplace” of ideas (Gilligan and Golden 98). This reframing is often referred to as “social marketing,” the process through which marketers attempt to encourage the adoption of an idea (Kotler 489). Within the nonprofit context, social marketing requires organizations to clearly identify and promote the societal benefit that they provide, in addition to simply identifying and promoting their own brand (Gilligan and Golden 99). Additionally, it is not enough to merely identify and promote the organization’s societal benefits and mission; NPOs must be conscious about presenting their organization’s mission and benefits as different from and better than others existing in the social “marketplace.” In order to truly effect behavioral change, “a social cause message...must be perceived as different from other advertising messages” (Sciulli and Bebko 17). In this way, NPOs compete not only for traditional consumers of any goods or services that they may offer, but also for public awareness or interest (Blery, Katseli, and Tsara 59). It is therefore impossible to examine any one nonprofit or group of nonprofits in a vacuum; the messages must instead be examined in the greater context of the third sector as a whole.

These constraints present a very real challenge for not-for-profit organizations as they attempt to craft persuasive messages to encourage donations or other forms of support. It is important to understand and acknowledge the unique reality of organizations in the third sector as they negotiate their place between the public and the private sectors while still appealing to the general populace, especially in the context of this study. These challenges may be a factor in organizations' marketing decisions, leading them to choose certain messages over others in order to draw donors or participants and create support for their cause.

Common Trends in Social Marketing

Thus defining nonprofit NGOs as operating in the context of social marketing, it is now necessary to examine some of the trends within this field. Certainly, no one standard of messaging exists across the field of social marketing, as with any field. Nonetheless, I will examine a few of the current common trends within it, creating a context within which to study voluntourism organizations specifically.

In terms of generating charitable support, several scholars have investigated the efficacy of different appeals. White and Peloza study the effectiveness of “self-benefit” versus “other-benefit” appeals. They report that this effectiveness varies depending on context, including whether the messages were received in public or private (119). Nevertheless, they conclude by indicating that charities will often use both types of appeals (self-benefit and other-benefit) in order to garner the highest level of support (122). Meanwhile, Sciulli and Bebko discover a significant trend toward emotional appeals in social cause advertisements, in comparison with profit-oriented advertisement (31).

With particular relevance to the field of voluntourism and dealings with formerly colonized nations, Rideout – in her analysis conducted of representations of the “Third World” in

NGO advertisements – affirmed a tendency to conduct such representations through the attribution of negative traits, emphasizing “the danger and instability of the Third World.” She further asserts that these representations, despite suggestions of solidarity between the “First and Third World,” actually reinforce a “binary opposition” thereof (35). Through this example, we see that marketing efforts can often fall into the trap of reinforcing hegemonic power structures, even when attempting to challenge stereotypical methods of representation.

Voluntourism

In many ways, voluntourism marketing is a perfect example of marketing in the nonprofit sector and the challenges that it presents. Voluntourism organizations are certainly promoting a product – the volunteer vacation – but, as NPOs, they must also promote their missions and values, as described previously. In order to understand the ways that these organizations strive to do so, I will now examine some of the existing research surrounding the voluntourism industry, providing a foundation upon which to build my later analysis.

In her 2012 article regarding research propositions relating to volunteer tourism, Nancy McGehee asserts that the voluntourists (a corollary term to “voluntourism” that can be used to describe those who participate in voluntourism programs) are “the stakeholder group which [have] received the most attention within volunteer tourism” (“Oppression” 86). This research bent is perhaps due to the relative ease of studying voluntourists – who are more likely to be located close to the largely Western-based tourism scholars – as opposed to the voluntoured (a term meaning those persons who are on the receiving end of “voluntourism” ventures in whatever capacity), who are also not a single homogenous group that can easily be visited and studied. McGehee notes that this focus may be due to the fact that “the differentiation between volunteer tourists and other tourists...begs for a specific theoretical framework of its own”

(“Oppression” 86). The inherent novelty of voluntourism in comparison with other, more traditional forms of tourism therefore generates a significant scholarly interest toward the voluntourist.

Reasons for its existence aside, the wide body of work concerning voluntourists provides many insights into the impetus behind volunteer tourism, at least from the perspective of the volunteer tourist. Potential motivations include a desire “to experience a service project,” to “work, not just be tourists,” and “to give,” according to a study carried out by McIntosh and Zahara (546). Coghlan and Gooch, however, suggest that sometimes “the primary motivation for undertaking volunteer tourism is driven by personal benefits that overshadow altruistic motivations” (715). In other words, voluntourists sometimes enter a voluntourism experience seeking tangible rewards such as “learning and sharing new skills, making friends, [and/or] resolving personal issues through the social interaction that come from volunteering and a sense of accomplishment” (Coghlan and Gooch 715) instead of the less palpable rewards that come from mere altruism. It is notable, however, that such types of motivations are not necessarily mutually exclusive: Sin observes that “volunteer tourists often have a multitude of motivations,” including both some that are “altruistic” and some that are “self-development” oriented (487).

These volunteer motivations are significant because of their relationship with volunteer desires and expectations. By understanding what drives a potential voluntourist to participate in a voluntourism experience, programs can in turn target their messages accordingly. One case study found that most volunteer motivations “were related to the mission of the expeditions,” while also noting that, in regards to short-term trips, “the meaning of the project must be emphasized” because “the importance of the project is a major point of [the voluntourists’] concern” (Chen and Chen 440). This indicates a dialectic relationship between the messages presented by the

organization to the potential volunteer and the desires of the volunteer in shaping those messages: volunteers are both enticed by the organizations' missions and drawn to particular aspects of the project that they already deem important (whether or not these are the explicit focus of the organization).

Within the study of volunteer motivations and voluntourism as a whole, two major justifications arise in the debate over the value of voluntourism. In order to better understand these current prevailing ways of conceptualizing voluntourism experiences and their value, I will look at the frameworks of voluntourism as a vehicle for cultural understanding and a tool for development.

Voluntourism as a Vehicle for Cultural Understanding

One of the primary methods of framing voluntourism is as a vehicle for cultural understanding. Through travel, "we make identifications with other places, persons, and cultures – which means that we incorporate them into ourselves, into our minds and imaginations, so as to effect some kind of transformation in who we are and how we see the world" (Robins 250). Furthermore, based on a case study in New Zealand, McIntosh and Zahra found that "with volunteer tourism, intense rather than superficial social interactions can occur; a new narrative between host and guest is created, a narrative that is engaging, genuine, creative and mutually beneficial" (554). This level of intimacy and connection that goes beyond the superficial can make voluntourism a more effective means of achieving cross-cultural understanding than traditional tourism experiences.

A study by Raymond and Hall found, however, that "while cross-cultural understanding has the potential to develop through volunteer tourism, it cannot be assumed to be an automatic outcome," as some experiences resulted in the reinforcement of existing narratives of how

“lucky” a volunteer was in comparison with the local populations. These narratives indicate a lack of empathy and connection with those people with interactions “perceived as providing memories” rather than as actual, meaningful interactions with actual people (538). Furthermore, in her discussion of volunteer-centered gap year programs, Simpson explains how promotional materials for organizations present the “consumable experiences of ‘the other’” as a “central commodity for sale”; through simplistic descriptions of different work areas, the volunteer tourist comes to know “what to expect and how to consume the experience” (683). In this way, voluntourists are presented with a pre-conceived, over-simplified idea of what other cultures will be like before they have a chance to interact with them.

On the other side of the coin is the idea of a cultural exchange that promotes the hosts’ understanding of the voluntourist’s culture. An ideal commonly held by volunteer tourists is that, through interactions with the local residents of whatever country they are visiting, the voluntourists are “offering a challenge to their national stereotypes” (Raymond and Hall 535). However, this perception is not necessarily correct, as noted by Raymond and Hall, because cross-cultural appreciation happening on an individual level does not necessarily lead to “changes in broader perceptions of nationalities or cultures” – or in other words, just because a member of a local community has an interaction with one friendly U.S. American does not mean that that interaction will change her perceptions of U.S. Americans as a whole. Moreover, the rhetoric often espoused by voluntourist and voluntourism organizations of exceptionality (“not your normal American tourist”), can actually reinforce perceptions of what a “normal” U.S. American (or any other nationality of voluntourist) is like (536).

Voluntourism as a Tool for Development

In addition to cultural exchange, voluntourism as development is a common framework for depicting the voluntourism experience. In her analysis of discourse within the gap year industry, Kate Simpson describes an “apparent paradox” whereby gap year organizations with volunteering focuses rarely make explicit use of the language of international development. Instead, she observes that they focus on “making a difference,” “doing something worthwhile,” or “contributing to the future of others” (683). Nonetheless, she concludes that the industry employs its own “distinct brand of development discourse,” ultimately reinforcing images of westerners as necessary tools in a necessary development process through a rhetoric of change and good intentions (685-686).

Bearing in mind this particular manifestation of development discourse within messages regarding voluntourism, one can more clearly see the ways in which this framework is presented. Furthermore, Carlos Palacios suggests that the language of “volunteering” is inherently problematic, promoting power relationships dependent on “help” and “gratitude,” on a division of voluntourist “giver” and voluntoured “receiver” (867). This self-congratulatory description of the voluntourism experience brings to mind the “white savior” ideal promoted by colonial discourse.

Additionally, Sin describes a volunteer whose narrative of “giving” focuses on how much she has to give, commenting on how such an approach to volunteering has a dual effect, both reinforcing her superiority in having something to offer and in recognizing material disparities but assuaging her guilt in relation thereto (495). Ouma and Dimara also note that, although programs of exchange from West to non-West abound, similar experiences from non-West to West are decidedly less common, which may reinforce the belief that “assistance” from

the West is required in the non-West (5). Palacios concluded that short-term volunteer excursions should not frame their work around the idea of “development aid,” as such a goal can lead to conflict within the team, “Eurocentrism,” and public criticism, among other things, due to the volunteers’ lack of time and proper skills to undertake such a large goal (871).

Conclusion

It seems fitting to end the review of the literature here, with a discussion of common methods of framing of voluntourism, as these frameworks are particularly salient in the forthcoming analysis of specific organizations. In this chapter, I have explored a wide array of literature, in hopes that the topics and theories presented here will provide a necessary knowledge base with which to understand this study. By creating this theoretical and scholarly basis, I can now undertake an in-depth, informed analysis of the organizations on which I chose to focus this examination. I will continue to draw and expand upon these ideas throughout the duration of this study, as they are essential to forming a nuanced understanding of the context in which voluntourism organizations operate.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

*“Every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing.”
- Kenneth Burke*

In the words of Hart and Daughton, “criticism is complicated, yes, but also highly rewarding. To look carefully at what people say and how they say it is to take the human enterprise seriously” (35). Though not easy, the act of criticism is a necessary undertaking, essential in one’s ability to make sense of the world around her. This particular study was completed using the qualitative method of rhetorical criticism. More specifically, I used an ideological criticism of the postcolonial variety to critically examine the strategies that the three selected voluntourism organizations use to persuade website visitors to participate in their programs. In doing so, the investigation aimed to reveal the underlying ideology that these messages promote. In this chapter, I first provide a justification for the use of postcolonial criticism, then discuss the artifacts to be analyzed in the study, and finally describe the methodological steps of ideological criticism.

Justification

There are several reasons why ideological criticism – and postcolonial criticism in particular – was an appropriate method for this study. Firstly, ideological criticism is concerned not only with the identification and analysis of features within artifacts, but also with the judgment of these features and the examination of the implications of the message(s). This method of criticism operates under the understanding that the message creators’ original intent is less important than the potential effects of the message, and thus approaches the process with a willingness to critique all aspects of the message, regardless of the intent behind them. In this way, the ideological critic is free to raise questions “not always asked” rather than attempting to

constrain herself with a fidelity to the rhetor's vision (Hart and Daughton 312). This oppositional approach to criticism was particularly germane to this study of voluntourism organizations, as much of the prevailing understanding of the industry is focused on questions concerning the concrete effects of such programs, not on representations of the communities whom the programs purportedly serve and the potential effects of such representations for both the volunteers and their hosts.

In fact, it was for this reason that the use of postcolonial criticism was particularly apt for this study's purposes. As described in the preceding chapter, the postcolonial critic seeks to interrogate the ways in which the subaltern is represented (Hart and Daughton 331). This consideration of representation, especially representation of the subaltern by former colonial powers, is directly related to the representations of the organizations' host communities. The fact that the organizations examined in this study all operate programs located in previously colonized countries meant that the representation of the host communities as executed by the organizations – all of which are based out of countries who were former colonial powers – was especially worthy of study from a postcolonial perspective.

This methodological choice was also significant due to the unique position of the rhetorical critic when documenting social trends. According to Hart and Daughton, rhetorical criticism allows the critic to “stand simultaneously in the midst of and apart from the events experienced,” therefore granting her the ability to draw attention to rhetorical characteristics that might otherwise be overlooked (23). In the case of voluntourism marketing, this use is particularly important: potential consumers may not notice or understand the certain hegemonic characteristic at play within the messages, even as they are influencing these potential volunteers' way of understanding the world in the midst of their decision as to whether or not to

participate in a program. Moreover, voluntourism organizations themselves may not realize the ways in which their rhetorical choices contribute to existing relationships of power and reinforce certain ways of thinking and seeing the world. A postcolonial analysis, therefore, allowed for a deliberate criticism of these ways of seeing the world, whether deliberately endorsed or not.

Finally, I also brought a particularly unique perspective to this analysis through my own lived experiences. Given my past and continued involvement with AMIGOS – an organization that is in many ways similar in its mission and practices to the organizations that I selected for this study – I benefited from an insider perspective on some of the intricacies inherent in the reality of such organizations. Although significant distinctions certainly do exist between the organizations around which this investigation centers and that with which I am so intimately familiar, this experience nonetheless served me well throughout the undertaking of this study, while simultaneously providing me personally with a rare opportunity for intense self-reflection and criticism.

Artifacts

For the purposes of this study, I examined three organizations: Cross-Cultural Solutions, Global Citizens Network, and Global Volunteers, all of which are 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit organizations that are both non-governmental and secular in nature. They all offer short-term (defined for the purposes of this study as having a duration of less than three months)¹ programs in various countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These organizations were selected for their similar nonprofit status (all are registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax-exempt organizations), for their relatively similar starting period (all were founded between 1984 and 1994), and for their robust online presence.

¹ Cross-Cultural Solutions is the only organization that offers pre-planned trips lasting longer than one month, with up to twelve-week options, although Global Volunteers offers some consecutive options that allow for extension beyond its standard one-, two-, or three-week offerings. Global Citizens Network's pre-planned offerings are generally between one and two weeks long.

Within the context of this study, I examined their respective websites, analyzing textual messaging across the sites. In particular, I focused on specific sections of the sites, including their homepages, their “About Us” or organizational information sections, and the informational pages about specific projects. I also looked at the mission and vision statements that each organization provided, as well as any pages describing the organization’s process.

Due to the extensive nature of the sites, and out of an interest for more direct comparison, there were many components to which I was unable to give consideration. For example, I did not analyze donation sections or social media components, nor did I follow any of the sites’ other external links. I focused on the general trips that the organizations offer, rather than those that are customizable or created for specific groups, due to the lack of uniformity across organizations in this area. I did not analyze newsletters or other organizational materials that are not directly a part of the websites. Notably, I also chose to exclude any pages on the site referencing programs conducted outside of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, both in the interest of consistency in cross-organizational comparison and out of a desire to maintain a focus on the rhetoric toward formerly colonized nations in particular.

Methodological Steps

The study first consisted of a close examination of the websites for salient rhetorical strategies within the individual organizations. While undertaking this preliminary inspection, I used a set of pre-analysis questions to guide my observation, which I formulated based on Foss’ list of the characteristics that betray or hint at ideology, which include “major arguments, types of evidence, images, particular terms, or metaphors” (214). The full set of questions can be found in Appendix A, but a few significant examples include:

- “Are there any binaries presented in this artifact? If so, what are they?”

- “What characteristics are attributed to the West? To the non-West?”
- “How is culture (and cultural difference) presented within this artifact?”
- “In what ways do elements of this message reinforce traditional assumptions about power in a global context? In what ways do they challenge these?”

After completing the initial examination of the sites, I proceeded to group my observations based on the predominant themes or ideas that each organization articulated on its respective site. I next examined these themes in relation to one another, looking for similarities and distinctions from across the sites. In doing so, I kept in mind the characteristics of colonial discourse, questioning the ways in which the themes that I observed challenged or contributed to this dominant ideology. Having completed the work of identifying major themes within the sites, I returned to my artifacts with these themes in mind, this time delving deeper into their nuances and examining their various manifestations within the messages of not only the individual sites, but also across the body of artifacts as a whole. Finally, I considered these themes in relation to the sites’ mission and vision statements. These statements, from which I had identified themes during my preliminary analysis, served as a backdrop against which I considered the messages’ other predominant characteristics.

With this understanding of my methodology in place, I will use the next chapter to move through an articulation of my analysis of these themes. By providing an in-depth explanation of each, I hope to explain my findings and their significance in such a manner that is both enlightening and approachable.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

*“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”
– Rumi*

Voluntourism is about change. Cross-Cultural Solutions (CCS), Global Citizens Network (GCN), and Global Volunteers (GV) all agree – the message echoes across their respective websites. And it’s not just about change in any one form: it is about change that manifests itself in many different ways. The sites tell the reader that through these programs, she will change the world, change lives, and change her perspective. She will *enact* change and *be* changed. They ring with optimism, trumpeting a steadfast belief in the transformation that is made possible through the interconnectedness of humankind, in the meaningful connections that are waiting to be forged across the world through the recognition of our shared humanity. Through this, we can *all* achieve change – the change that we truly deserve and desire.

And yet.

The organizations’ vision and mission statements – which laud “sharing perspectives and fostering cultural understanding,”¹ “cross-cultural understanding and interconnectedness,”² and “people-to-people initiatives”³ – find themselves at odds with an undercurrent of difference pervasive throughout each of the three sites. The organizations, which so earnestly proclaim their confidence in the power of teamwork and connection, rely on a strategy of division to sell their trips, perpetuating the very emphasis on difference that they seek to eliminate. They depict voluntourist and voluntoured, traveler and host, as two separate entities that differ in clear-cut ways, thus depending on a rhetoric of contrast to market their missions of unity.

In this chapter, I will attempt to dissect some important aspects of this discourse of difference, how the organizations construct it, and its myriad manifestations across the sites. To this end, I will begin by detailing the methods that the organizations use to create separate roles for the volunteer and hosts. Following this, I will offer an examination of the various labels that the sites apply to each, and finally, I will highlight strategies that they use to attribute different actions to the two groups.

Roles

Before embarking on a more detailed analysis of the particular dichotomies that these sites present, it is important to note the structure through which the organizations create a general mindset of division. This structure – which portrays volunteer and host in different, oppositional roles – is the foundation upon which all other representations of the two are built.

First, one must note how the process in creating these representations of volunteer and host vary. In his essay entitled “The Second Persona,” Edwin Black presents the idea that messages imply their intended audience and what they might be like, making the distinction between those who may in reality access the message and the intended audience (333). Because often others than the intended audiences can access messages – especially messages that take the form of websites such as those examined in this analysis – this is an important difference. The ways in which a rhetor constructs her intended audience will also give us insight into the ideology that she associates therewith, and thus her own ideology as well (Black 334). Therefore, in this analysis, the ways that the sites present their audience conveys an image of both how the organizations see the volunteer and how they see the world.

At the same time, they portray the hosts in relation to these images of the voluntourist. Such portrayals are what Phillip Wander theorizes in his essay, “The Third Persona.” Wander

presents the idea of the Third Persona, which “refers to being negated” and the power of silence in creating this position (370). In other words, Wander suggests that a text’s failure – or refusal – to incorporate certain perspectives contributes to the nullification of these perspectives’ validity and, in some cases, to a denial of their very existence, especially in relation to those of the audience. Across the sites, the host communities constitute this Third Persona. The sites largely do not present the hosts’ authentic voices amidst the milieu of the organizations’ and voluntourists’ viewpoints, instead relying on their own depictions of the hosts to provide the hosts’ viewpoints, effectively choosing to speak for them.

The process of both creating an ideal image of the audience (the voluntourist) and disregarding the perspectives of another group (the host) continues throughout the sites, but it begins with the separation of the two into their distinct roles within the voluntourism process. Overall, this trend reflects the very basic, polarizing “us” and “them” division that Said identified as typical of colonial discourse (46). The organizations make use of stereotypes in order to explain these roles succinctly and neatly. This strategy is important to note, especially when keeping in mind stereotypes’ tendency to imply well-defined boundaries between their subjects (Cook and Lewington 16). The sites depict volunteer and host as distinct groups, able to recognize their similarities but ultimately separate. Through simplified depictions of each, they portray the two as filling particular roles, roles that are mutually exclusive and often in opposition. The four most significant sets of roles that I identified through my analysis were volunteer and host, West and Other, individual and community, and consumer and consumed.

Volunteer / Host

The act of division begins with pronouns. Each of the three sites largely follows a similar format, regularly speaking directly to the potential volunteer, using second-person pronouns to

explain what “you” can do and how “you” can be a part of their programs. Likewise, the organizations often refer to themselves in the first-person, using the plural “we” and “our” to establish their role as the speaker to the prospective voluntourist audience. “We” explain to “you” what “you” can do when you partner with “us” – and how it will affect “them.” The host communities – meaning those who host the organizations’ programs and volunteers – are described in the third person, using “they,” “them,” and other third person referents.

Through this pronoun usage, visitors to the sites are made to imagine themselves in the midst of a voluntourism adventure, and they are encouraged to actively undertake the volunteer role through the use of second-person commands, even as they sit behind their computer screen reading. The sites open with admonitions to “volunteer abroad,”⁴ “be immersed,”⁵ and “be the change in the world.”⁶ Each of these commands contains an action that it insists the potential volunteer undertake, overtly and directly leading the reader to imagine herself as a participant in the volunteer experience from her very first glance at the homepages. This pronoun use continues throughout the sites, solidifying its effect on the reader and casting her in the role of voluntourist before she has even had time to check the price of an international flight. By speaking to the reader in this way, the organizations transport her into the role of voluntourist, a role that they create, explain, and reinforce with each click of the mouse and each line of text across the pages of the sites.

Interestingly, GCN does not consistently follow the trend of speaking to the volunteer in the second person. On its program pages, the organization describes the volunteer’s actions in terms of “a team”⁷ or “participants”⁸ who exist in relation to “members of their indigenous host community.”⁹ This method of phrasing removes the second-person connection mentioned above, but it still relies on a division of the two, maintaining the distinction between volunteer and host.

The main difference is the pronoun usage, which is inconsistent across GCN's site, sometimes referring to the volunteer in second person and sometimes in third. By at times choosing to refer to the volunteer with third-person pronouns, GCN puts her on a similar plane as the host, as a party for whom the organization is speaking. Regardless of this distinction, however, the site still talks about the two as discrete entities, maintaining the division.

In fact, the organizations preserve the distinction between volunteer and host throughout the sites, even when discussing collaboration and interconnectedness. For example, GCN urges visitors to its site to “work side-by-side and build relationships with members of our indigenous partner communities,”¹⁰ CCS assures readers that there are “countless opportunities to connect with, and learn from, local people,”¹¹ and GV tells the volunteer that their vacations are an opportunity to “use your skills and interests in an unconventional setting to benefit others. In this way, you can wage peace through service connecting on a deeply human level.”¹² In each of these statements, the organizations emphasize connection and commonality while also clearly distinguishing the separation of the two groups. This division is the foundation for all other representations of the two. The sites describe the ways in which they are different, always relying on the framework of volunteer and host to create the distinction – and even opposition – between the two.

West / Other

Hand-in-hand with the volunteer/host division comes another set of roles, one that is well established outside of the voluntourism sector: that of West/Other. This is a dichotomy that frames the two groups in opposition to each other, focusing on the characteristics of the largely homogenous and generalizable “Other” (Dirks “Orientalism” 247). Across the sites, the organizations feed into a representation of this division in various ways.

Although the sites do describe specific cultural aspects on the individual program description pages, these cultural synopses are often portrayed as capable of representing the entire country or region in a few short terms. CCS mentions the “distinct pulse”¹³ of South America on its program page for Brazil, for example, while GV describes the people of Vietnam as “welcoming, family-oriented, hard-working, and focused on the future.”¹⁴ By offering these simplistic summaries of entire cultures, the sites present an image of the homogeneity of these countries, inviting the volunteer to see these people as uniformly separate from her Western context.

Beyond these specific pages whose primary function is to outline the distinct characteristics of each host country or project location, the sites spend most of their time discussing hosts as a single, unilaterally describable group. For example, when explaining its approach, GCN describes how it focuses on “providing opportunities for individuals to interact with people of diverse cultures who share common global values.”¹⁵ In this, the site lumps its partner communities into the category of “people of diverse cultures”¹⁶ who are seen as distinct from the other category of “individuals”¹⁷ who participate in the organization’s programs. Thus, despite acknowledging their shared values, GCN still divides the world into two camps – that of the participant and that of the host communities, the latter of whom are interchangeable and distinguished only by their vaguely referenced and conglomerated “diverse cultures.”¹⁸

Furthermore, the lack of specification when referencing project destinations presents their people and cultures as readily combinable into a single entity, a vague-but-different Other. For example, GV tells volunteers to “leave your mark on the world,”¹⁹ a command that lumps all of their program destinations into a generalized image of “the world.”²⁰ In this way, the sites

indicate that the actual distinctions between the countries and communities where they work are less important than the volunteer's experience or contributions.

Another telling example of this portrayal of a generalizable Other appears on CCS's "Volunteer Opportunities" page. Here, the site offers the volunteer a preview of her experience:

With CCS, you'll do meaningful work that addresses a specific community need. As you immerse yourself in the community – your new neighborhood – and work alongside local people to make a real impact, you'll find beauty in every connection and commonality discovered, large or small. The CCS international volunteer experience offers you a genuine volunteer experience with countless opportunities to connect with, and learn from, local people in those communities in which you'll work to support.²¹

This narrative encourages the reader to imagine herself in the midst of the voluntourism experience, and in order to do so, depicts the faceless, non-descript Other with whom she will interact. Within this description, it does not matter which country the volunteer visits. The site assures her that these benefits will come to pass through the voluntourism experience; the specific destination and the exact people who live there are unimportant.

Meanwhile, although the focus on the explicit description of the West is considerably less, the sites present an image of what the West is like in relation to this Other. They depict the West in terms of the volunteers, their culture, and the organizations themselves. They portray these groups as benevolent and valuable, describing themselves and the volunteers as "contributing responsibly to local economies"²² and undertaking work that "genuinely contributes to communities for the better."²³ In this way, the organizations demonstrate to the reader that the West is invested in change but also conscious in enacting it, creating an image of its benevolence unto the host countries.

Individual / Community

The creation of a homogenous Other in many ways depends on a denial of the hosts' individuality. The sites manifest this by often referring to the hosts as communities, which depicts them as collective units rather than separate entities. Meanwhile, they place an emphasis on the unique and valuable perspectives of each separate volunteer, portraying them all as autonomous actors.

This trend is exemplified in CCS's "Hear What the Community Is Saying" section, which can be found on each of their program pages. This bright orange bar has arrows on either side that allow the reader to scroll back and forth through unattributed quotes lauding the benefits of the volunteers. "The Community" in Guatemala tells readers that "local parents are very grateful because volunteers give children the care they need while the parents go to work to earn an income"²⁴ while in Peru "The Community" shares that "help from foreign volunteers gives our students and their families more hope for their futures."²⁵ Although these quotes presumably come from the host organizations with whom the organization works due to their references to the "staff" and other such details, the complete lack of attribution strips this context and instead portrays "The Community" as a single unit with a single voice and a single opinion.

By depicting the interchangeability of host community members – who are often portrayed as similarly "funny, loving, and generous"²⁶ or otherwise collectively describable – the sites further contribute to the sense that, by meeting one such community member, the volunteer can thereby meet and know the entire community. In this way, the sites present the idea that holistic understanding of a community, and its culture and nuances, can be achieved through simple one-on-one interactions with just a few community members. Such an approach to cultural understanding has its basis in stereotyping: by projecting individual interactions onto an

entire group, the organizations encourage voluntourists to create a stereotyped view of the host culture and to then project it onto all others within that culture.

The emphasis that the sites place on input from local experts further encourages readers to view hosts in a collective role of community. Exemplifying this tendency in their philosophy of service, GV highlights the fact that it “requires volunteers to work at the invitation and under the direction of local community partners.”²⁷ Though this statement evokes collaboration on one level, on another it implies that the invitation of a local partner suffices as justification for the volunteer’s presence, privileging a select person or group of people as the spokesperson for all members of the community. All three of the sites also underscore this tendency to suggest the authority of one person or group to speak for all of the host community or culture in their descriptions of their approach or process. GCN touts its collaboration with “a local grassroots organization active in meeting local needs”²⁸ in each community where it works; GV describes its approach, which is “directed by local leaders”²⁹; and CCS prides itself in “long-standing relationships with local organizations who communicate real-time needs and objectives to the CCS team.”³⁰ By lauding these collaborative efforts alongside descriptions of “work alongside local people,”³¹ the sites suggest that these host community representatives or local organizations are effectively speaking to the needs, interests, and opinions of all community members.

In contrast, the volunteer is portrayed across the sites as full of agency, individualism, and unique insights. Testimonials bearing both past volunteers’ names and a description are scattered across each of the three sites. GCN hears from “Sean,”³² GV shares the story of “John Bochain,”³³ and CCS opens each program page with a quote from a past volunteer, such as “Jennifer Curan.”³⁴ By simply naming the source of the quote, the sites distinguish the individuals who are sharing their experiences and stories as discrete entities, an evident

distinction from the nameless, unattributed testimonials from host community members. Furthermore, many of these examples do go beyond even this act of naming to add descriptors – Sean is further identified as a “Dad,”³⁵ and John Bochain is a “Vietnam War veteran.”³⁶ In this way, the sites encourage the readers to view each volunteer as a unique, autonomous person with his or her own personal background and experiences to bring to the table, while the community members are attributed no such distinctions, their individual roles in the community left undefined.

Another interesting layer to this characterization of volunteers as individuals comes across in the ways that the sites choose to display and measure their impacts. Cross-Cultural Solutions has a ticker at the bottom of their home page that reads: “changing their world. 2,524,045¹ service hours to date”³⁷ and “changing yours. 32,850¹ volunteers since 1995.”³⁸ By measuring impact on host communities in hours of service, the site disregards the individual community members’ participation and contributions, instead logging the work completed by volunteers in their communities. Meanwhile, it measures impact on participants in number of volunteers, thus emphasizing the importance of each individual. Likewise, Global Citizens Network describes how it “has partnered with 20 indigenous communities and 2,000 volunteers”³⁹ over the years. In this way, GCN emphasizes the individual volunteers – all 2,000 of them – while disregarding the individual members of the “20 indigenous communities.”⁴⁰

Consumer / Product

In lumping together all of the hosts’ individual perspectives, the sites also portray a consumer/product relationship between volunteer and host. This set of roles focuses on the voluntourist as the customer within the voluntourism experience, and more so than other roles, within this division the organizations frame the hosts as objects within the larger service that

¹ As of March 22, 2015.

they provide. By establishing the volunteer's ownership over the trip and using culture as a selling feature of their excursions, the sites contribute to an objectified view of the host community members and their cultures.

From the get-go, the sites portray the volunteer as having ownership over the trip and its various components. Through the use of possessive pronouns, they thoroughly establish that it is *her* experience. All three sites make reference to the volunteer's ownership of the trip and its process starting on their homepages. GV takes into consideration "your volunteering goals,"⁴¹ GCN describes the site as a starting point for "your journey,"⁴² and CCS talks about funding for "your trip."⁴³ After reading through the organizations' opening remarks, the volunteer is left with no doubts of whom this experience is about. She is clearly the main actor in the volunteer vacation: she is the client purchasing the voluntourism service that the organizations provide.

As she moves throughout the sites, the voluntourist also comes to understand the role of the host community and culture in relation to her role as consumer of the volunteer vacation. Concurrent to indications of the volunteer's ownership, the organizations describe the host culture as an element of the experience. The main shift from marketing the overall volunteer experience to selling the different host cultures emerges on the program description pages, where the organizations attempt to convince the reader of not only the merits of voluntourism in general, but of the desirability of individual projects as well. Within these pages, the reader finds references to immersion coupled with explanations of her vacation's outcome: "you'll come to see that it's the Peruvian people that make these places so special,"⁴⁴ or through the "cultural wonders of Tanzania,"⁴⁵ you will be transported to "a world without pressures or worries."⁴⁶ The former quote, from CCS's Peru program page, makes use of a very literal form of objectification within its sentence structure. By claiming that it is the Peruvian people "that" make the places

special instead of “who” make the places special, the organization subtly but significantly indicates these people’s status as a cultural feature rather than autonomous individuals. Likewise, the latter two quotes, from GV’s Tanzania program page, portray Tanzanian culture as an avenue for escape to a more carefree world. In this way, the site frames Tanzanian culture as a means to obtaining the volunteer’s end goal – a worry-free vacation spot – rather than an independent, equally valuable culture.

Another method that the sites use to establish the consumer/product relationship is depiction of the host culture as a tool in the volunteer’s personal growth. Each of the three organizations focuses on this personal growth and discovery as a key element of their trips: CCS’s tagline tells volunteers to change their own world, GCN’s homepage commands volunteers to “be immersed”⁴⁷ and “be inspired,”⁴⁸ and GV describes its process as optimized to “change lives – yours.”⁴⁹ Through these quotes and others across the sites, the organizations portray the volunteer’s personal change to be integral to their programs. At the same time, the sites describe the host cultures as conduits for this personal enlightenment. CCS claims that that “you’ll find wisdom and beauty in a way of life different from your own,”⁵⁰ very overtly making the connection between host culture and enlightenment. Meanwhile, GCN’s above mentioned mandate to be immersed and inspired represents a more subtle appeal: the parallelism and sequential nature of the two (followed also by a command to “create change”⁵¹) implies that one follows the other. Ergo, through immersion, the volunteer will be inspired, and through this inspiration, she will create change. In these ways, the organizations present the host cultures – and, by proxy, the host community members – as elements in the voluntourism experience, or otherwise as tools whose use is part and parcel of the volunteer’s consumption of the trip.

By framing culture this way – as either an element within the voluntourism experience or a tool to achieve the volunteer’s goals therein – the sites create an image of the hosts and their cultures as an object or service that the volunteer is purchasing as a part of her experience. The implications of such objectification are clear: when the potential volunteer sees the host as an element of her experience rather than an autonomous human being, she is less able to identify commonalities and shared humanity between the two, and instead finds herself in a situation of power over a sub-human other. Like all of the other roles before it, the consumer/product relationship is one of strict division that allows for no overlap between the two, furthering an image of fundamental difference between volunteer and host.

Labels

Beyond the specific roles that they portray for the two parties, the sites also describe what these parties are like. These descriptions can be sorted into an array of different labels, most of which depend on existing assumptions about volunteer and/or host, such as those found in development discourse regarding development as a finite, Western-defined goal, or those in colonial discourse portraying an exotic Other. The main labels that I identified through my analysis were as follows: volunteer as dynamic, developed, and normal and host as static, developing, and exotic.

Dynamic/Static

In order to create an image of the volunteer as a vibrant, active force of transformation, the organizations describe her first and foremost as responsible for and capable of personal change. CCS describes the volunteer experience as an opportunity to learn about another culture “while learning about yourself”⁵² while GV touts the volunteer’s ability to “exceed your own expectations.”⁵³ These statements and others like them indicate to the potential voluntourist that

she is capable of personal discovery and growth. By highlighting the opportunities for learning and also intimating a potential for achievement beyond the volunteer's own anticipations for herself, the sites produce an image of flexibility and growth for the voluntourist.

In some cases, the organizations directly connect this personal dynamism to the voluntourist's global impact. For example, the description of GCN's approach claims that its participants "learn about the society, knowledge, art and livelihood of other cultures"⁵⁴ and through this, have an increased "impact on issues of local and global concern."⁵⁵ In this way, GCN explicitly links personal growth – in the form of learning – with the volunteer's ability to have an impact on a variety of levels.

This dynamism, however, is not constrained to the volunteer's abilities of change. At an even more basic level, the sites demonstrate the voluntourist's dynamic nature through portrayals of her physical mobility. Billing their participants as "globally-minded"⁵⁶ and "adventurers,"⁵⁷ the organizations create a focus on both the volunteer's worldly global outlook and her capacity for movement around the world. Through these descriptions of global-mindedness and mobility, the sites emphasize her ability to see and understand not only her current context, but beyond it into current situation of the entire globe. Likewise, the label of "adventurer" implies movement and travel, striking out into parts unknown. In this way, the sites show that their participants are both informed about the world and ready to set out into it, capable of traveling and gathering experiences from it.

Meanwhile, the sites' representations of the hosts portray them as static and constrained to their local context. While the organizations emphasize the volunteers' capacity for internal personal growth, the growth or change they depict in host communities is more often change to living situations. For example, CCS describes how volunteers will "work alongside vulnerable

people to raise their quality of life.”⁵⁸ In this, the site portrays the change in terms of “quality of life”⁵⁹ rather than the internal change attributed to volunteers.

Furthermore, the organizations acknowledge their partners’ and host communities’ expertise, but only within their specific local contexts. They make references to their partners’ abilities to “communicate real-time needs and objectives”⁶⁰ as well as “projects identified by the community,”⁶¹ in this way focusing on the abilities of the local agencies or organizations to identify and communicate needs within their communities, but never mentioning any knowledge or expertise beyond this.

This constraint to a local context also comes across in discussions of the indigenous nature and preservation of the host cultures. Of the three organizations, GCN most focuses on this indigenous nature of the hosts. Its approach centers on the idea of revering and preserving local cultures, and its explanation of its process describes its emphasis on indigenous communities:

Global Citizens Network provides unique travel experiences that emphasize intercultural understanding and service learning to connect the globally-minded with indigenous communities world-wide. Global Citizens Network works to promote peace, justice and respect through cross-cultural understanding and global cooperation. It is an organization that’s committed to enhancing quality of life around the world while preserving indigenous cultures, traditions and ecologies.⁶²

Here, the organization presents a clear distinction between “the globally-minded”⁶³ and “indigenous communities.”⁶⁴ Somewhat ironically, the focus on connection actually contributes to this division, showing the reader that a difference exists between the two groups that only a travel experience such as those offered by GCN can bridge. In this way, the emphasis on the

indigenous host increases the separation between voluntourist and host. At the same time, in articulating a desire to preserve indigenous culture, GCN communicates an image of these communities as static and needing to remain so; by highlighting the indigenous culture and traditional aspect of these communities and then suggesting preservation, the site shows the community to be bound by and to their cultures.

Developed/Developing

Almost contradictorily, the organizations portray the volunteer as coming from a country that is developed, while they describe those of the host as developing. The focus within this division is on the hosts and their incompleteness, reflecting the Westernization-as-development mindset discussed in Chapter II.

The degree to which the sites explicitly portray their trips as international development experiences varies between the organizations. GV openly declares that their vacations play a part in the implementation of “serious development,”⁶⁵ and of the three, is the organization that places the most emphasis on the theme of development across its site. Mention of “serious development”⁶⁶ appears first on the home page, but the site later explains what is so serious about the development process that the volunteer takes part in:

Our methods of volunteer engagement and program management set the standard for appropriate community service. We take a comprehensive, integrated approach to community development to catalyze sustained partnerships directed by local leaders, targeting at-risk children. Each program is evaluated frequently, and maintained over the long term. We choose our host partners thoughtfully, and prepare our volunteers carefully. Most important, Global Volunteers is led by experts grounded in development to ensure that the work we do genuinely contributes to communities for the better. When

you work with us, you maximize your contribution as a “servant learner.” That’s how you change lives – yours and community members’.⁶⁷

Within this description, the organization assures the reader of Western oversight on its community-driven projects. By stating that it sets “the standard for appropriate community service,”⁶⁸ the site presents itself, a Western entity, as the authority on community service. Furthermore, the references throughout to the steps that GV takes to assure the impact of the program – including taking a comprehensive approach, evaluating frequently, and choosing partners with care – demonstrate that the primary guiding force of the projects is ultimately the organization. More specifically, in explaining that GV is “led by experts grounded in development” and connecting this leadership directly to the ability to “ensure that the work we do genuinely contributes to communities for the better,” the site achieves two outcomes. First, it demonstrates the organization’s belief in the value of development by emphasizing this knowledge among its leadership. Secondly, by clearly linking this expertise to the betterment of the community, it asserts its superior knowledge of what is best for the community.

In comparison, CCS and GCN do not have the same clearly articulated focus on development. Nonetheless, they mention both collaboration with partners who have experience in the field of “international development”⁶⁹ (in the case of CCS) and “community development projects driven by the community” (in the case of GCN). These references to development indicate to the reader that some kind of development is needed in the communities by presenting it as a given that development would be among the organizations’ top priorities. In this way, the sites lead the potential volunteer to see the host communities as existing within a separate context from her own, specifically one that is lacking or in need of developing.

The division between developed and developing countries on the sites also manifests itself less overtly in the discussion of safety. Although GV does not put much emphasis on safety on its site, GCN and CCS do, each having specific sections outlining the specific safety measures that the organizations take to safeguard their volunteers. Through these discussions of protective methods, the sites imply danger within the communities where they work, in comparison to the relative implied safety of the volunteer's home country.

CCS repeats the actual words "safe" and "safety" regularly, including in descriptions of the program as a "safe, exciting adventure,"⁷⁰ descriptions of the volunteer housing as located in "a safe and beautiful neighborhood,"⁷¹ and descriptions of the organization's dedication to "ensuring the safety"⁷² of its programs. This constant reminder of the organization's commitment to safety implies the importance of its safety measures. In this way, the site actually communicates the relative lack of safety in their host communities through the discussion of their commitment to safety, emphasizing the difference of the context within which the volunteer is participating and that within which she lives.

Similarly, GCN relies on this tacit indication of the danger of its host communities by detailing specific safety measures taken to safeguard the volunteer. On the site, each program description is accompanied by a chart describing the "Site Specifics,"⁷³ which include such features as the type of water that the volunteer will drink (i.e. "boiled or bottled"⁷⁴), the location of the nearest hospital, and links to the Center for Disease Control's information sheet on the area as well as the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisories and Updates regarding the region. By choosing to include such facts, GCN communicates an emphasis on precautions and awareness of the safety measures necessary in its host communities, which similarly contributes to a sense of inherent danger within the host countries. The specific inclusion of identifiable

safety measures (such as boiling water) that are not necessary in the volunteer's day-to-day life brings into relief the host country's dangerous difference. Furthermore, by providing links to the Center for Disease Control and the U.S. State Department – both U.S. government organizations – GCN attributes authority on safety to these Western bodies, further legitimizing a Western-defined standard of safety.

Normal/Exotic

Another distinction between the two groups comes across most evidently in descriptions of the program destinations. Throughout the various depictions of volunteer and host, the sites weave together narratives of beauty, adventure, and wonder to create a portrayal of the exoticism of the host communities, their members, and their cultures. Meanwhile, the volunteer's Western culture quietly settles into the background as the natural norm by which these other people and their cultures may be experienced and understood. In this way, the organizations create a division between voluntourist and voluntoured that is difficult to bridge, rooted in comparison of the exotic – the host culture – and the natural norm of the volunteer's culture.

The image of the host culture as a departure from the normalcy of the volunteer's culture comes across in the organizations' emphasis on journeys and adventure. The sites describe their vacations as “life-changing journeys”⁷⁵ and “exciting adventure[s],”⁷⁶ thus framing the experiences as a thrilling escape from the norm. The effect of this framing is twofold: the organizations both imply the notable difference between volunteer and host cultures, and they indicate that the volunteer's culture is the standard, while the host culture is a departure from that norm. Furthermore, the vocabulary of journeys and adventure conjure images of exploration – of wandering from the broken path to seek enlightenment in a world far removed from the volunteer's own.

Within this framework of journeying, the sites portray the West as the natural starting and ending point for the volunteer's adventure. CCS describes "the full experience – a safe, immersive, and impactful adventure of a lifetime."⁷⁷ By describing the trip as "the full experience,"⁷⁸ the site implies definitiveness, framing the volunteer vacation as an adventure that, once returned from, is complete. In another vein, GV promotes itself with the tagline "leave your mark on the world."⁷⁹ This slogan suggests that the destinations to which GV travels are "the world"⁸⁰ upon which the volunteer will make her impression, returning afterwards to the normalcy of her life in her own country. The idea of leaving a mark implies that the volunteer herself will also leave the context in which she is creating that mark; in this case, that context is the host community.

The sites further expand upon this idea of the host cultures as a break from the norm by portraying them as a conduit for enlightenment. The program pages ring with descriptors like "charming"⁸¹ "scenic,"⁸² and "a place you've only ever dreamed of,"⁸³ all of which encourage the reader to see their destinations as a departure from her normal context, one so far removed as to be completely unlike anything she has experienced, except in her dreams. In this way, the sites highlight the remarkable nature of the host culture and place it on a pedestal, emphasizing the difference and furthering the distance between voluntourist and host.

Another aspect of this reverence for the host culture relies on recognition of the material disparities present between host and volunteer, followed by a deliberate disregard of these differences. The sites offer testimonials such as: "Simple, happy moments are far more important than a big house or a fancy car."⁸⁴ In this example, the statement not only acknowledges the material differences, but also suggests that these differences are proprietary to each group – host community members will not have, for example, a big house or a fancy car. Nonetheless, the

main point of the testimonial focuses on the importance of “simple, happy moments”⁸⁵ in comparison to these more material differences. In doing so, the organization dismisses the importance of these differences, absolving the volunteer of any guilt or responsibility associated with this disparity.

Actions

The roles and labels that the sites portray for volunteer and host create an image of who each is and what they are like. Through these, the organizations encourage the reader to identify as the volunteer, allowing her to view the host in relation to herself. Along with this, they dedicate much of their sites to describing what the volunteer does – or what the reader will do as a voluntourist. These actions appear alongside those of the hosts, complementary but separate. More so than the other two categories, the actions that the organizations associate with volunteer and host convey the voluntourist’s power over the host. The volunteer’s actions exist in direct relation to the hosts’ so as to portray the her agency in relation to the hosts’ passive helplessness. This creates an image of the hosts’ dependency on the volunteer. Specifically, the actions can be divided into three sets: giving and receiving, fixing and needing, and acting and reacting.

Giving / Receiving

The first of these sets portrays the volunteer as giving and the host as receiving. Within this division, most of the focus is on the volunteer’s action, while that of the host is implied in relation thereto. By describing the potential voluntourist in terms of what she is giving to the host community, the sites portray the host on the receiving end of the interaction, thus emphasizing the hosts’ passivity by failing to articulate their action.

Across the sites, the organizations focus on the volunteer, constructing an image of her innate value. They assure her that she need not possess any one specific set of abilities, because

there is surely a program that will “be a perfect match for your skills.”⁸⁶ In other words, the volunteer has something to offer no matter what her skillset may be. This statement relies upon the basic assumptions that: first, the volunteer undoubtedly possesses skills, and second, the programs and the people they serve (the hosts) will benefit from these. GV addresses potential concerns about the voluntourist’s qualifications specifically:

Prospective volunteers often ask if their expertise and interests can be used in a host community. If you’re open to new challenges, and enjoy working with and learning from local people, you can contribute your skills and energy in a meaningful way on a Global Volunteers volunteer vacation. Our development partnerships help deliver essential services to host communities – so that your personal contribution of a week or more directly impacts long-term improvements in the welfare of children worldwide.⁸⁷

In this way, the site openly reassures the voluntourist of her inherent worth and its power in affecting the lives of the hosts.

In addition to affirming the volunteer’s value, the sites portray her as giving something through her volunteer experience, bringing with her knowledge, abilities, or even the mere gift of herself to the communities. Presented in the above quote as “your personal contribution,”⁸⁸ the sites all utilize a similar framework to describe the volunteer in the act of giving. They establish this action by describing the volunteer experience as “sharing your heart and hands with others,”⁸⁹ which frames the volunteer as offering herself to her hosts; as an opportunity to “lend your passion to the cause,”⁹⁰ which depicts her as supplying her enthusiasm to the cause; and as a chance to “provide support,”⁹¹ which portrays her as contributing (undefined) aid to the communities and their residents. Put together, these examples – and the many like them that

appear across the sites – encourage the reader to see the volunteer engaged in the act of giving, bestowing a whole array of tangible and intangible resources upon the host communities.

Meanwhile, the host communities are rarely mentioned directly within the sites' descriptions of the volunteer's act of giving, and this silence leads the reader to extrapolate how the hosts figure into the equation. To this end, although the sites do not explicitly focus on the host communities' action, they offer up images of the hosts as receiving within descriptions of the volunteer's acts of giving. The organizations depict voluntourists as "offering attention and support to students"⁹² or "providing 'helping hands' to community development programs in host communities."⁹³ Examples such as these frame the volunteer's contributions (in these cases, "attention and support" and "helping hands") while also identifying their beneficiaries ("students" and "community development programs in host communities"). In fact, within these examples, the hosts are the objects of the sentence, receiving the action of the verb that the volunteer enacts. In this way, the hosts' action comes to light – defined in direct relation to that of the volunteer – as one of receiving the benefits that the volunteer brings.

Furthermore, the depiction of the volunteer's inherent worth hints at the communities' inherent lack: claims of the volunteer's ability to support the host communities with no specific skillset implies an integral deficiency on the part of community members. Descriptions such as those of the voluntourist's ability to "bestow confidence on students and teachers alike"⁹⁴ and her ability to provide "a passport out of poverty"⁹⁵ outline the ways in which the hosts are lacking, but do so by identifying the remedy that the volunteer provides (the "confidence" or "passport") instead of directly focusing on the inferiority (e.g. lacking confidence or stranded in poverty). In this way the organizations, without specifically emphasizing the communities' inferiority, still put a spotlight on this deficit by constructing it in terms of the volunteer's alleviatory effects.

Thus, the sites construct the hosts' lack and position it as the justification for their act of receiving the benefits that the volunteer gives.

Fixing / Needing

In other instances, however, the organizations do make direct reference to the hosts' deficiency. These references in turn give rise to a portrayal of the actions that the volunteer will take to address this deficiency, while the host communities engage in the act of needing. This contrast underscores the overarching theme of activity versus passivity, with the volunteer portrayed as actively stepping in to address needs that the host community members passively possess.

These needs and deficiencies come across most evidently on the sites' various program description pages, and on those of CCS and GV in particular. These pages describe host countries and communities so that the volunteer can select the project that suits her best. Amid mentions of natural wonders and living accommodations, the potential voluntourist finds a call to action in the form of the communities' litany of needs. Tanzania suffers from such "human realities"⁹⁶ as "high infant mortality, poor health care, and low literacy rates."⁹⁷ In Guatemala, "a high birth-rate has depleted resources,"⁹⁸ and Thai students are unable to thrive due to "enormous class sizes and inadequately equipped classrooms."⁹⁹ The sites repeatedly identify problems within the host countries, framing them as primary characteristics thereof, thus underscoring the countries' neediness.

It is worth noting that this division plays out most prominently on CCS and GV's sites. In comparison, GCN largely avoids depicting the hosts' needs in these ways, primarily through its highlighting on the mutual involvement of volunteer and host in the project process. Specifically, though it does mention "local needs,"¹⁰⁰ it circumvents the emphasis on passivity that often goes

along with such a mention by describing specific, concrete needs and the projects that have been used to address these. Examples of these include the repair of “damaged roofs”¹⁰¹ or a request to “support the needs of bilingual education”¹⁰² that is met through the construction of “additional classrooms, restrooms and a playground space.”¹⁰³ By focusing on specific, host-identified needs in tandem with specific, host-identified solutions instead of referencing larger, unattributed social issues, GCN shifts the role of the host from one of passive neediness to one of active collaboration in addressing these needs.

On a larger scale across the sites, however, the organizations frame the hosts’ needs as the impetus for the volunteer’s presence. CCS articulates this sentiment explicitly, following an inventory of social issues in Thailand with the assertion that it is these issues that create “the context for your volunteer experience.”¹⁰⁴ This framework of need-as-context accentuates the action of the volunteer in relation to the inaction of the host: the voluntourist endeavor occurs against the inert backdrop of the host country’s needs. Furthermore, description of these needs in terms of social issues such as “the large economic divide”¹⁰⁵ or “racial and ethnic inequality”¹⁰⁶ refine the specifics of the hosts’ action of needing to a state of powerless passivity. The sinister-but-nebulous nature of these terms – similar to the benign-but-nebulous nature of many of the terms that development discourse uses for the creation of inscrutability – does not attribute the responsibility for the general negativity that they convey. Instead, it portrays the hosts in a position of powerless passivity, neither culpable for nor capable of affecting their situation

The sites further underscore this helplessness by placing the hosts’ potential in juxtaposition with their reality, which is again described in terms of how they need. For example, although students may “value any opportunity to learn,”¹⁰⁷ they are stymied by “severely under-resourced classrooms and few or no teaching staff.”¹⁰⁸ In other words, the need eliminates the

hosts' agency. Because they are depicted as aspiring for something beyond their situations and because they are shown to have no control over the social issues that create these situations, the hosts are both blameless and helpless.

This lack of power sets the scene for the importance of the volunteer's fixing action, creating an imbalance in agency between host and voluntourist. In contrast to their depictions of the hosts' inaction, the sites clearly emphasize not only the actions of the volunteer, but their efficacy. The program descriptions spell out the ways in which a voluntourist can actively combat the inequalities to which the host communities have fallen victim: "you can help students learn,"¹⁰⁹ "improve health and the sense of dignity among the elderly,"¹¹⁰ and "provide essential services to improve future opportunities in these young lives."¹¹¹ Through these concrete examples of her potential contributions, the sites show the volunteer the various ways that she is needed, allowing her to both feel efficacious in her decision to participate and creating a relationship of unequal power between voluntourist and host community member. GV even goes so far as to describe the potential voluntourist as "a lifeline,"¹¹² the phrasing of which clearly communicates the helplessness of the host community members and their dire need for the volunteer's assistance. By positioning the volunteer as the antidote to the host communities' underlying, systematic problems, the organizations give her power over the community members: they need her.

Acting / Reacting

Often, the sites move beyond describing their methods for directly addressing needs to describe a more abstract commitment to change. As a general theme, change appears consistently across the sites, most often in the form of changing oneself, changing others, and, more broadly, changing the world. Across these various levels of change, the sites portray the volunteer as

undertaking the action in each, while the host is reacting, the object of both change to others and change to the world.

The organizations emphasize the importance of changing oneself through methods such as descriptions of the need for people to develop a willingness to “change themselves—the way they think, the way they act,”¹¹³ as well as indications of their duty to “be inspired.”¹¹⁴ These statements, both descriptive and commanding in nature, present both the possibility and the necessity of personal change for the volunteer. The emphasis on changing others comes across through the use of direct terms, such as a banner on GV’s homepage that promises the potential to “change children’s lives”¹¹⁵ or the CCS motto that calls the volunteer to “change their world.”¹¹⁶ These statements unambiguously portray change as enacted upon someone or something else, from children’s lives to others’ worlds. Finally, the sites portray a potential to change the world, using statements such as “real change”^{117,118} and the ability to “make a difference”¹¹⁹ to refer to change that goes beyond directly affecting either volunteer or any specified other and instead applies more generally to the world as a whole. In these cases, the actual form of the change is less specified, with the organizations focusing instead on its extensiveness and importance.

Meanwhile, the sites rarely mention the hosts’ reaction explicitly, but rather allowing for the reader to infer it based on the action of the volunteer. The organizations make use of this method of silent implication throughout the sites in order to establish and reinforce understandings of the volunteer and host’s respective actions in within the voluntourism process. For example, CCS describes how the volunteer will be “bringing change to people and the communities in which they live”¹²⁰; GCN is “committed to enhancing quality of life around the world”¹²¹; GV explains that its volunteers are “providing essential resources.”¹²² Each of these

statements describes an action that the volunteer will take, be it “bringing change,”¹²³ “enhancing,”¹²⁴ or “providing.”¹²⁵ What they do not describe is the role the host community plays in these actions. Instead, these actions – or reactions – are left unspoken for the reader to infer through contrast. If the volunteer is “bringing change”¹²⁶ the reader can conclude that the “people and the communities in which they live”¹²⁷ are receiving it. The volunteer is “enhancing quality of life,”¹²⁸ and the host community members’ lives are being enhanced. The “essential resources”¹²⁹ that the volunteer is “providing”¹³⁰ will be received by someone, and that someone is understood to be the host communities. In this way, descriptions of the volunteer’s also depict the host’s actions – or rather, their reactions.

Furthermore, the sites often choose to make global change the focus of their messages, portraying the acts of changing oneself and changing others as steps or tools in the process of changing the world. Cross-Cultural Solutions most explicitly exemplifies this approach, as seen in this description from its homepage:

More than ever, people around the world want change. Change in the inequities that polarize. Change in the corrupt systems that prevent self-determination. Change in the unjust repression of entire populations.

But the change we all wish to see won’t be realized through big, sweeping acts—not by governments, or armies, or the UN. Instead, lasting change will be achieved through small, personal acts of kindness and selflessness, and through the spreading of tolerance and understanding between people and cultures. Only as people become more willing to change themselves—the way they think, the way they act—will real change become possible.¹³¹

In this, we see the clear assertion that change, if it is to be “lasting”¹³² or “real,”¹³³ must arise from “small, personal acts.”¹³⁴ The focus on the authenticity of change comes immediately following descriptions of a global desire for change – in the form of the statement that “people around the world want change”¹³⁵ – implying that this authentic, enduring change is the kind of change that people desire. CCS asserts that this genuineness and permanency must be achieved through personal acts, indicating the ability that the volunteer possesses to effect this change.

The establishment of the importance of personal action in the undertaking of global change leads to a portrayal of the volunteer as an agent of this change, an agency whose action the metaphor of the “ripple effect”¹³⁶ exemplifies. Both CCS and GCN make use of this metaphor, which underscores the volunteer’s potency in the act of change. GCN’s logo contains a spiral that “depicts the action of throwing a pebble into a lake and its rippling effect in the water.”¹³⁷ The description equates the pebble to volunteers, describing how they will “go out and make connections that ripple and spiral out all over the world.”¹³⁸ CCS depicts the volunteer’s impact in similar terms, followed by a more explicit explanation of her role in “bringing change to people and the communities in which they live.”¹³⁹ This metaphor is an overt portrayal of the voluntourist taking action and the implications thereof: only through this action does the water begin to move and change.

This metaphor also underscores the passivity of the host in reaction to the volunteer. The water is still and unmoving until acted upon by the pebble, a characteristic that evokes an image of the hosts as inert except in reaction to the volunteer. The ability of the water to move – and thus, the ability of the host to take part in global change – depends on action of the pebble/volunteer. Thus despite acknowledging the role that the hosts play in this ultimate overarching change, the sites relegate them to tools in achievement this end goal. Through this

metaphor, they present an image of the hosts in a state of reaction, directly related to and waiting on the volunteer's action.

Overall, the sites focus their description on change as volunteer enacts it, and in doing so, contribute to a perception of the hosts as passive in the process, sometimes reacting but never engaging in the pursuit of this ultimate goal. Volunteers “wage peace and promote justice,”¹⁴⁰ and the sites do not mention the actions of the hosts. Volunteers “find wisdom and beauty”¹⁴¹ and the sites do not consider host community members' findings. Volunteers “learn about the society, knowledge, art and livelihood of other cultures”¹⁴² and – despite giving nod to the hosts' existence – the sites do not mention their experiences. Time and time again, the organizations assert and reassert the actions of the volunteer. By failing to explicitly articulate the actions of the hosts, however, the sites impart an image of these community members as a part rather than a player in their process of global change.

Conclusion

Clearly, the theme of change echoes across the sites loud and clear. Through my analysis, however, I uncovered another important theme, which runs contradictorily to many of the organizations' professed goals and values from their mission and vision statements. Division and difference mark the relationship between volunteer and host across the sites.

This division manifests itself in various ways – and to various degrees across the site. Specifically, I examined the sites' portrayals of difference in terms of roles, labels, and actions of the hosts and volunteer. Within each of these, there were several ways in which the organizations chose to represent the two groups. These various methods of characterizing the two groups largely depended on existing ways of portraying or understanding the two. Overall, although I found that each site had a slightly different method for using these representations to portray difference, all

relied on a similar framework of division in order to present their messages. Within this division, the sites attributed power between the two parties, most often unequally between volunteer and host.

¹ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "About CCS."

² Global Citizens Network. "Mission/Vision."

³ Global Volunteers. "Global Volunteers' Vision and Mission."

⁴ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer Abroad with Cross-Cultural Solutions."

⁵ Global Citizens Network. "GCN Around the World."

⁶ Global Volunteers. "Home Page."

⁷ Global Citizens Network. "Where We Go."

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Global Citizens Network. "GCN Around the World."

¹¹ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer Opportunities."

¹² Global Volunteers. "FAQ."

¹³ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer in Brazil."

¹⁴ Global Volunteers. "Volunteer in Vietnam."

¹⁵ Global Citizens Network. "Mission/Vision."

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Global Volunteers. "Home Page."

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer Opportunities."

²² Cross-Cultural Solutions. "About CCS."

²³ Global Volunteers. "Global Volunteers' Vision and Mission."

²⁴ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer in Guatemala."

²⁵ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer in Peru."

²⁶ Global Citizens Network. "Luo People of Odiénya, Kenya."

²⁷ Global Volunteers. "Global Volunteers Philosophy of Service."

²⁸ Global Citizens Network. "Mission/Vision."

²⁹ Global Volunteers. "Global Volunteers' Vision and Mission."

³⁰ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "About CCS."

³¹ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer Opportunities."

³² Global Citizens Network. "Tribal Groups of Guntur, India."

³³ Global Volunteers. "Vietnam Volunteer Vacation Testimonials."

³⁴ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer India."

³⁵ Global Citizens Network. "Tribal Groups of Guntur, India."

³⁶ Global Volunteers. "Vietnam Volunteer Vacation Testimonials."

³⁷ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer Abroad with Cross-Cultural Solutions."

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Global Citizens Network. "GCN: Off the tourist path, changing lives for 20 years."

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Global Citizens Network. "GCN Around the World."

⁴³ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer Abroad with Cross-Cultural Solutions."

⁴⁴ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer in Peru."

⁴⁵ Global Volunteers. "Volunteer in Tanzania."

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Global Citizens Network. "GCN Around the World."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Global Volunteers. "Global Volunteers' Vision and Mission."

⁵⁰ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer Abroad with Cross-Cultural Solutions."

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- ⁵¹ Global Citizens Network. "GCN Around the World."
⁵² Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer Abroad with Cross-Cultural Solutions."
⁵³ Global Volunteers. "Home Page."
⁵⁴ Global Citizens Network. "Mission/Vision."
⁵⁵ Ibid.
⁵⁶ Global Citizens Network. "GCN: Off the tourist path, changing lives for 20 years."
⁵⁷ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "About CCS."
⁵⁸ Cross-Cultural Solutions. "Volunteer in Costa Rica."
⁵⁹ Ibid.
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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*“Those who authentically commit themselves to the people
must re-examine themselves constantly.”*

– Paulo Freire

Change is hard. The kind of change that these organizations are selling as a part of their voluntourism experiences – that is, fundamental transformation on all levels, from personal to systematic – is not something that can be achieved simply. Much similar to the act of criticism, change is a process that requires deliberate engagement and conscious action. It requires self-reflection, flexibility, and dialogue. And it does not happen overnight. Change that is truly transformational and significant is not a commodity to be purchased, nor an experience to be consumed. In fact, it is not even a finite, achievable goal: instead, it is a nonstop undertaking, a lifelong commitment to the growth of oneself and others.

Through careful analysis of three voluntourism organizations’ websites, I sought to gain an understanding of the main ideology espoused in the organizations’ online messages. By subjecting the rhetorical trends that I identified to criticism from a postcolonial perspective, I attempted to uncover the ways in which these sites contribute to the reproduction of unequal power relations. I also compared the sites’ overarching rhetorical strategies against their mission and vision statements, examining the ways in which these strategies related to the values expressed therein.

In this chapter, I will attempt to draw this investigation to a close, presenting its findings in a comprehensive – and comprehensible – way. To this end, I will walk through this study’s major conclusions, its potential implications, the limitations that it faced, and recommendations for further research, before offering some of my final thoughts.

Major Conclusions

My basic finding was that the sites, despite an articulated focus on collaboration, interconnectedness, and global respect within their mission and vision statements, actually rely on divisions between voluntourist and host in order to describe their organizations' trips in a way that encourages volunteer participation. Within these portrayals of difference, the organizations also play into traditional hierarchical conceptualizations of the world, contributing to the reinforcement of a prevailing view of the world with the West at its apex. Furthermore, they rely on many existing assumptions about Western and non-Western countries, cultures, and people to shape their representations thereof. In this way, the organizations' sites paradoxically hamper the very goals that they articulate with such conviction in their mission and vision statements.

Bearing this in mind, it is also important to acknowledge the differences that exist, even between the sites. Although all three certainly depend on division to frame their messages, I did uncover strategies that challenged ways of conceptualizing of the different parties. GCN most consistently defies traditional methods of portraying the two, often refusing to make use of typical portrayals of volunteer and host and instead describing the two groups on an equal level in terms of agency within the projects. Meanwhile, GV tends to rely much more heavily on traditional depictions of the two, consistently underscoring the volunteer's importance and the hosts' need. CCS focuses most on the volunteer and her experience, allowing much of the reader's images of the hosts to come in relation to these portrayals.

Ultimately, however, the sites all depended on the division of volunteer and host. Despite sometimes challenging typical methods for presenting each, they do differentiate and – in doing so – portray the two as oppositional forces. The organizations' focus is on the voluntourist, and therefore all representations of the hosts are defined in relation to and for the benefit of the

volunteer. Because of this, depictions of the host fall short at best, taking a backseat to the importance of the volunteer and her experiences, and are facile or disempowering at worst, existing solely for the volunteer and her experience and denying agency to the hosts.

Implications

In the context of this analysis, it is important to recognize that the idea of voluntourism incorporates the hedonism associated with tourism and vacationing into the organizations' offerings. By framing their trips as volunteer vacations, the sites set themselves up to fall short of their missions and visions, because they are focused primarily on a certain group of stakeholders within their process – those who are paying for the experience. Because tourism is understood to be a self-satisfying undertaking, the framework of voluntourism constrains the organizations by forcing them to present themselves in service of the voluntourist's desires and needs, and thus constraining them to her context.

Although there is no one clear method for re-framing these experiences in a way that is less limited to the volunteer's perspective, one potential technique might be to present them instead as collaborative cross-cultural learning experiences. This framework would emphasize the mutual benefit and exchange happening between the two parties, and create a space within which they could have shared roles. To this end, the sites could incorporate stories and perspectives directly from the hosts, allowing them the opportunity to speak for themselves and best present their experiences to the potential traveler.

Adjusting their messaging may also allow these organizations both to draw and to shape more efficacious participants. By reflecting their core professed values in their marketing messages, the sites can lay the groundwork for participants who are more in line with these values. Through their attraction to and understanding of the mission and vision statements – and

through an understanding of their role in the implementation thereof – these participants will be better equipped to undertake the lofty goals laid out by the organizations.

Beyond these implications for the organizations – and others like them in the voluntourism sector – my project provides a significant scholarly contribution in several ways. The first of these is in its addition to the study of voluntourism. Especially given the relatively new, as-of-yet under-researched nature of the field, and the lack of previous studies dealing with organizations' messaging strategies, this investigation adds to the body of research in a new and innovative way, hopefully paving the way for others like it. Furthermore, this study is meaningful in terms of its contribution to the study of colonial rhetoric in a postcolonial setting, as it examines a novel manifestation thereof. In doing so, it uncovers a present-day trend of constructing and reinforcing unequal power hierarchies.

Limitations

Comprehensive though it tried to be, this study has several limitations, the most significant of which I will outline here. The first and most obvious of these is scope. Not only was the examination focused solely on specific organizations within the voluntourism industry, but it was also limited within its analysis of these organizations. By only looking at websites, and by only looking at specific pages on these websites, I was able to examine only a few of the trends that exist within these sites' messaging strategies. Even within these, there were myriad other rhetorical characteristics which I could have analyzed in greater depth. Thus this investigation, while a thorough examination of one of the main trends on these sites, is merely the tip of the iceberg in a much larger rhetorical landscape.

Secondly, this study was constrained by its examination of the messages in isolation, without any way to measure their actual, measurable effects. The ways in which readers actually

perceive these messages, whether they accept or reject the power dynamics presented, and how persuasive they find them are all worthwhile questions that I did not seek to answer through this investigation.

Finally, although my unique experiences contributed to my ability to approach this analysis from what was in many ways a distinct insider perspective, I must also acknowledge that my background in the field may have influenced the way in which I carried out this study. Just as my involvement with AMIGOS has in many way shaped my understanding of how experiences such as these can affect people's lives, so too has it instilled in me an inherent optimism toward the potential for positive, impactful cross-cultural experiences. It is an optimism that does not shy from criticism, but an optimism nonetheless. Furthermore, I approached this study – and arrived at my conclusions – with a certain idealism that may or may not fit with the reality of voluntourism in general and these organizations in particular. Because of my involvement with an organization that does work in many ways similar to that of the organizations that I focused on in this study, and because my experiences with that organization have been ones of genuine dedication to the values espoused in its mission statement, I based many of my conclusions on a belief that these organizations and their stakeholders are similarly sincere in their commitments. The realist in me must concede that this is not a given, though I hope and want to believe that it is the case.

Recommendations for Further Research

Now more than ever, as the sector continues to expand and establish itself within popular culture, the voluntourism trend is rich with potential research topics. This study – though a significant contribution to the body of research – barely scratches the surface of the wide array of possible avenues for exploration. It is my hope that it will serve as a jumping-off point for further

scholarship, opening the door for further critical analysis of the voluntourism trend. In particular, my suggestions focus on two distinct areas for future exploration: further rhetorical analyses and possible practical investigations.

In regards to the rhetorical, the field is rife with potential. First, more widespread examination of various organizations' sites is important to reveal whether the trends that I observed within the context of this study prove consistent across the board. Given the variation present in even the three sites that I chose for this study, it will be important in the future to broaden the scope of the organizations analyzed in order to allow for the extrapolation of more widely generalizable conclusions. Furthermore, within these organizations, the body of works available for examination is seemingly endless. Future researchers could conduct studies of volunteer testimonials, providing insight into the volunteer's framing of their experiences. Studies could also focus on volunteer training materials, visual messaging components (e.g. pictures and videos), or social media efforts. The list goes on and on – as these organizations continue to grow and develop, so does the need for thoughtfully undertaken criticism of their rhetorical choices, both from within the organizations and from without.

Beyond the messaging, much potential for further study lies in actual organizational practices. How do these messages affect volunteer expectations as they embark on these experiences? How do these experiences affect volunteers' perceptions of and interactions with host cultures? And moving beyond the volunteer: what are the effects for the host communities? How do they perceive these visitors, and do these expeditions contribute to the ways in which they perceive themselves? In terms of the organizations, how do they enact their missions of collaboration and interconnectedness in practice, and how effective are these methods? How do they equip their staffs to handle the facilitation of impactful intercultural experiences, and to do

so to the benefit of both volunteer and host? The potential for inquiry is endless; in fact, throughout the course of this study, I often found that it raised more questions than it answered.

Final Thoughts

Not twenty-four hours after wrapping up work on a late-stage draft of my analysis for this project, my phone buzzes with an email alert. The subject line, “Need some Quick Opinions: recruitment video!,” piques my interest and after skimming the message – a request to look over AMIGOS’ most recent recruitment video, which is in its final stages of edits – I flip open my computer, clicking through to the Vimeo link.

After a short lead-in of scenic b-roll, my own face fills the screen. Clad in my AMIGOS-issued purple polo – complete with its distinctive logo and a special 50th anniversary patch on the shoulder – I am looking into the camera and explaining how my experiences with the organization have shaped me. I remember this interview. Taken over the summer in the living room of the tiny, rented house that the rest of my ten-person staff and I called home, it was a spur-of-the-moment deal, filmed in the small window between waking up and dashing out of the house for the first meeting of the day by a visiting videographer, a fellow AMIGO. It is strange watching myself: my eyebrows rise and fall for emphasis and my head bobs as I jerk my chin down to drive home certain words, tics that I didn’t even realize were a part of my speaking style. Despite these, I don’t seem hesitant as I speak to the camera, my tone reflective but conversational. “I don’t think that AMIGOS changed my life. I think that AMIGOS gave me the space and the tools to change my own life. So, it gave me this new confidence and all of these skills that I can now take into different parts of my life and really become the person I want to be. And I think AMIGOS was that challenge that pushed me to be the person that I now want to become.”

Even watching myself after more than nine months (and countless hours of criticism), I still believe this. What's more, in my journey from where I was then to where I am now, I have come to feel the same way about this project. At sixteen, I didn't know what I was getting myself into as I stuffed my permethrin-soaked khaki pants into my hiking pack, and at twenty-one, I didn't know what I was getting myself into when I sat down to write a senior thesis armed with little more than a library-owned copy of *Orientalism* and an overly-ambitious outline of deadlines and critical probes. On both occasions, I threw myself into an experience that challenged me in ways I never thought possible, defying my expectations time and time again. And I survived both, buoyed along the way by a sometimes foolhardy but always genuine enthusiasm. At the end of the day, I would bill them both as incredible learning experiences. So...what did I learn?

Change is a process.

Wish though we might, no one person or organization can tear down existing power structures, nor destroy traditional ways of thinking and seeing the world, even when armed with the knowledge of how these might be problematic or harmful. Still, in order to move forward toward this important vision of global understanding and respect, we all *must* re-examine ourselves constantly, identifying these ideologically-embedded frameworks for seeing and understanding the world and seeking out ways to critique and challenge them when necessary. Just as no one entity bears the singular responsibility of identifying and challenging harmful ways of thinking, nor is any one absolved of this obligation.

For organizations like Cross-Cultural Solutions, Global Citizens Network, Global Volunteers, and even AMIGOS, this means constantly evaluating and re-evaluating their missions and visions, adjusting their processes as needed, and, in relation to this study, taking the

necessary steps to recognize and strive to eliminate divisionary strategies within their messaging while representing their programs in an effective and genuine way. It means openly and consistently acknowledging the historically produced power disparities inherent in international experiences and continually searching for new ways to address them. It means actively seeking out, listening to, and incorporating the perspectives of all stakeholders – especially those of the hosts, which are currently woefully underrepresented – and constantly re-dedicating themselves to the values espoused in their mission statements, values of collaboration, interconnectedness, and global respect.

For people like me and you, it also means evaluation, but on a personal level. It means constantly questioning, constantly seeking new ways of knowing, and constantly striving to understand our roles as citizens of our interconnected world. In attempt to articulate my firm belief in the importance of this constant evaluation and unending search for knowledge, perspective, and understanding, I will leave you with a final quote from Hart and Daughton regarding the outcomes of criticism: “In paying this much attention to what people say, we also pay attention to ourselves, which makes criticism a journey in self-discovery as well” (35).

If nothing else, this study has proven this for me. It has shown me that criticism – and along with it, change – is a journey, and it is one that we have the responsibility to undertake constantly, deliberately, unfailingly.

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APPENDIX A
PRE-ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

- What are the basic characteristics of this message?
 - Who is the speaker?
 - Who is the audience?
 - What is the purpose?
 - What is the setting?
- Are there any recurring words or phrases in this artifact?
 - If so, what are they?
- What are the salient themes in this artifact?
- Are there any binaries presented in this artifact?
 - If so, what are they?
- Whose voices are represented in this artifact?
 - Whose voices are not represented?
- What characteristics are attributed:
 - ...to the West?
 - ...to the non-West?
- How is culture presented within this artifact?
 - Specifically, how are cultural differences presented?
- What standards are presented as necessary or ideal?
- In what ways do elements of this message reinforce traditional assumptions:
 - ...about power in a global context?
 - ...about Western/non-Western relations?
 - ...about race?
 - ...about class?
 - ...other traditional assumptions?
- In what ways do they challenge these?