Race, Gender and “Difference”: Representations of “Third World Women” in International Development

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Abstract : This paper analyses images of international development through a study of the ways in which development representations produce and circulate “difference” with respect to women and the developing world. Through both overt and subtle narratives, representations of women as “different,” “distant” and “other” construct both the object and subject of development. The paper discusses the process by which racialization operates in development through gender as a signifying practice. Based on a doctoral study of communication materials of Women in Development (WID) images produced by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the paper analyses images of women of the developing world in communication materials attached to major campaigns during the Women in Development (WID) period. WID represents an important legacy of today’s prevalent images of women in development. The paper situates this legacy within the colonial roots of development and its representations, which include historical constructions of the “third world woman” that intricately reproduce a range of colonial images and practices. Images of “third world women” have become development’s most eminent symbol, yet many continue to communicate static and predictable views about the developing world.

Keywords : Race, Gender, Development, “Third World Women”

Introduction

Images of women of the “developing world”¹ are among the most common representations circulated on-line and in the traditional media of most development agencies and NGOs.² The woman of the “developing world” has today become the field’s most recognized symbol, synonymous with international development itself. In colorful photographs, women are often depicted in traditional or local dress going about their daily lives exemplifying development in motion. An African woman with an infant strapped to her back carries firewood on her head; a group of women from India dressed in colorful saris fetch water in earthen-ware pots. On home pages of websites, in video programs, reports, brochures and posters of international development and aid organizations, women plant and harvest crops in fields, they sample new technologies, while they represent a range of subjects.³ This familiar sea of black and brown bodies tells particular stories that consist of a set of familiar ideas about the global woman as markedly “different” from the Western woman. As the core representations of development, these images transport recurring, often problematic, narratives about the “developing world.” At the same time, they reveal a fascination with the gendered embodiment of international development that hierarchizes and emplaces peoples of the South through a range of narratives of which gender and race “difference” are paramount. These images set the stage for North-South relationships and have become widespread, normalized and largely unquestioned.⁴

Uma Kothari (2006) points to the significance of race in international development as silent but prevalent. This silence on race is founded on the assumption that development takes place outside of racialized spaces and histories; it therefore masks and at the same time marks

¹ This paper notes the problematic use of the term “developing world” used as an operating word in development practice. Used to refer to the target group of international development aid, it is sometimes interchanged with the term “third world.” The term divides the world into “developed” and “developing” areas based on annual gross national income (GNI) and assumes that Western Europe and its norms are the ideal to which other nations must aspire in order to be “developed.” Critical postcolonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney and Edward Said, suggest that development reifies the colonial centre as the height of aesthetic, moral, economic, political perfection against which all other cultural formations are judged. When used, in this paper the term is placed in quotation marks.

² Examples of traditional media refers to brochures, pamphlets, reports and videos.

³ Some of these include sustainable development, the environment, food-aid among others. These subjects intersect with larger themes and shifting trends in international development.

⁴ Through development’s modes of establishing expertise and authority, these images represent its truth claims and knowledges in the field.

its centrality in the field (White, 2002). In development, although race is not spoken, it is largely articulated through its complicity with the historical racial legacy upon whose shoulders the field rests. Kothari suggests that racial formations are in fact imbricated in the histories, discourses and practices of development. Using Kothari as a starting point, this paper addresses this illusive, yet common-place presence of race by focusing on development representations. Although race is not explicitly addressed in development literature, I suggest its masking functions through the production of "difference," "distance" and "otherness" within representations. In development practice, the "developing world" is framed as different from the industrialized world, largely illustrated through the marked human body, in particular the female body on display.

The use of difference as an operating concept stems from Stuart Hall's application of the term to racialization, ethnicity and representations of racialized bodies in popular culture (Hall, 1997; Hall, 1996; Hall, 1992). Hall identifies the production and circulation of "difference" through "otherness" within the historical, structural power relations of the media as an important location of culture in contemporary society. Hall (1997) suggests that the racialized body came to have importance in popular representations as the site through which much racialized knowledge is produced and circulated. Racialization as a process in development operates through the creation of opposition/difference and stereotypes and through the discursive production of racial identities. To Hall, "difference" is marked when representing people who are racially and ethnically different from the majority population. The body with its "difference" is made, in order to be seen, and thus provides evidence for naturalized "difference."⁵ This body recurrently codifies "difference" through its framed presentation; thereby allowing the visualizations in development to act as a powerful conveyor of this "difference."

This paper offers an analysis of images of Women in Development (WID) produced by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as a case study. CIDA, now merged within Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, was Canada's governmental agency responsible for international aid; therefore, it elaborated the country's official vision of the world of international development.⁶ Its programs represented Canada's values, through

⁵ Biological arguments about 'naturalized' racial categories have been largely discredited by social scientists who generally agree that race is a socially constructed concept (Gould, 1996; Gilman, 1998; Hannaford, 1996).

⁶ In March 2013, the Conservative government announced that CIDA would be merged with Foreign Affairs and the Departments renamed Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

political, economic and humanitarian international relations with a number of nations and regions. The WID period in CIDA (dated from the mid 1970's to the late 1980's) was one of its most visible programs that targeted "third world" women through special projects and programs in the development process.⁷ When CIDA and other development organizations adopted the WID approach, "third world" women's images assumed immense value and resulted in the compilation of a large bank of materials on women.⁸ This shift has been described by Arturo Escobar (1995) as signaling the deliberate production of a category the "third world woman"⁹ that was markedly defined and identifiable. Women in Development (WID) produced distinct images as accounts of the "third world" that can be identified as a significant moment in the legacy of today's taken-for-granted gendered images of development.

Using textual and interpretative analysis, this essay analyzes images of women of the "developing world" in CIDA communication materials, (mainly brochures and booklets) that circulated through major campaigns during the WID period¹⁰ Visual analysis maps recurring themes and visual tropes that are reproduced in the images under review. The broader project from which this essay is drawn examines more than six hundred CIDA images produced during the WID period using Collier and Collier's unstructured-structured analysis as a step-by-step process that allows the identification of visual chronology, patterns and shifts in images (Collier & Collier, 179).¹¹ Feminist and postcolonial analyses identify tropes and maps major themes and shifts in representational practices. Analyzing the images as visual texts permits identifying the discursive themes and world-views that they reproduce: notably, the

⁷ This was a response to the perceived lack of inclusion of women in development programs.

⁸ These include statistics, country profiles, and images.

⁹ 'Third world' woman as used here refers to the grouping of women from a large, economic, political, imaginative geography to a "single underdeveloped terrain" (Sangari, 1990). The term sets apart women and refers to 'difference.' This paper also notes later use of the term by post-feminist scholars who allowed it to carry more positive connotations based on the standpoint and subjectivities of its deployment.

¹⁰ This paper is informed by my doctoral research that analyzed CIDA images of Women in Development (mid 1970s - late 1980s). The analysis located patterns, shifts, and disjunctures in the way in which images and development rhetoric intersected during the period. See (Abraham, 2008).

¹¹ Collier and Collier's unstructured-structured method of visual analysis allows for formal and informal observations of images that facilitates counting, comparison and allows the researcher to ask questions based upon observation and abstraction through rigorous testing of observations. For more on this method see Collier and Collier, 1986.

processes through which development imagery continuously marks bodies and preserves enduring images of race and ethnicity as “difference.” The paper asks: what are the practices of representation in development that reproduce and circulate race difference? What do these representations draw upon? Exposing the self-evident, natural or commonsense knowledges embedded in these representational practices assists in explaining the ways in which they produce and mediate important power relations in development, and produce racialized, gendered development subjects.

Colonialism and Development

A number of theorists have elaborated the link between international development and colonialism, suggesting that development should be viewed through the lenses of colonial philosophies and practices. Klaus Dodds (2002) describes the origins of the geographical imagination of international development as related to the aftermath of the Second World War, when Western allies attempted to rebuild Europe.¹² The success of the political and economic reconstruction of Europe by the end of the Marshall Plan resulted in the United Nations and industrialized countries turning their attention to conditions in emergent postcolonial states.¹³ In this post-war context Dodds points to the rise of a geographical imagination that transformed the post-war world into “underdeveloped” and prosperous areas. By 1949, the use of the term “development” was linked already to the advancement of the global South, and it had come to connote “the escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment” (Esteva, 1992, p. 7)

Development’s building blocks in modernization theory and progress are thus firmly rooted in Enlightenment thought and have strong links to Europe’s colonial project throughout the world.¹⁴ During early European exploration these spaces were imagined as empty and uninhabited, and thus opened to exploration and exploitation or, as chaotic and disorderly,

¹² To Cowen and Shenton, development is rooted in nineteenth-century European state practice. Ideas of the field emerged as a counter point to progress, to create order out of the social disorder of rapid urbanization, poverty and unemployment (Cowen & Shenton, p.29).

¹³ Escalating tensions between the United States, and the Soviet Union allowed a focus on lesser-developed countries, viewed as easy prey to communism, and potential world security risks.

¹⁴ Some theorists have pointed to the related problematic overlaying of evolutionist, universalizing dimensions of development upon which the transformation of the “underdeveloped world” was premised.

where only outside intervention was able to rebuild the landscape and rescue the benighted inhabitants.¹⁵ In this view, development is rooted in the fundamental politics of difference between pre-modern and modern societies (Watts, 1995) central to which is the notion of traditional, backward societies characterized by general lack and in need of improvement.¹⁶ Early development efforts were influenced by theories of growth that emphasized infrastructural development and capital formation in developing countries. The West would share capital and know-how with the “developing world” through the intervention of capital, knowledge and technical capacity. The field highlighted a dualistic view of the world that eventually would map into the Cold War distinctions between a “first world” and a “third world.”¹⁷ Constructed as problematic and overtly poor, the notion of the “third world” transformed peoples from all over the global South to a homogenized mass, a generic population with generic characteristics in need of transformation.

A number of postcolonial scholars link development theory and practice to colonial knowledges and power structures. According to Jonathan Crush (1995), the transition from colonial moment to development process signaled a shift in emphasis rather than a complete break from one project to another. To MacDonald (1995), the end of formal imperialism did not eliminate the hierarchies of power and status nor the economic or ideological power structures created under empire. Thus, the Eurocentric forms of knowledges produced by the field can be situated partly in the colonial moment (Kothari, 2006, p. 37). Colonial imaginaries flowed into the independence and post-independence periods, and continue to articulate contemporary relationships between the west and the “rest.” Colonizer/colonized relationships are thus re-inscribed as theory and practice in the West, where policy decisions are made regarding where and on what aid should be spent. To a large extent, these colonizer/colonized allocations have made their way into international development discourses and representations

¹⁵ To Crush, development is viewed as having redemptive powers, capable of restoring order and making improvements (Crush, 1995).

¹⁶ These approaches to development were linked to the improvement and civilization of far-away colonized peoples.

¹⁷ Deployed by Western social scientists from around the 1950s, the term pointed to major political and social differences between advanced industrial countries and recently decolonized African, Asian, Caribbean and Middle-Eastern States (Rapley, 2002; Dodds, 2002; Agnew, 1998). While I am aware that “first” and “third” world statuses were originally, and continually defined in relation to ideas about the “second” world, this essay focuses on the phenomenon that emerged from the Cold War among the global North capitalist states that promoted global capitalism: a first/third world binary.

as a clear distinction between an “us” and a “them.” They transport the legacy of continuously constructing the developing world as inferior, primitive, and different (Kothari, 2002). CIDA’s images and approaches draw upon many of these colonial knowledges and practices. WID therefore provides a lens for viewing these representational legacies in practice.

Racialism and Development: “Hidden in Plain View”

Grovogui (2001), points out that development cannot be separated from a history that provided the concept of race as a marker of “difference.” The field is rooted in colonialism’s practices of marking and defining peoples through knowledges around “difference” that largely informed the west’s perception of the developing world. It therefore articulates a discourse founded upon historical classification of people in terms of racial ordering. This ordering is grounded in assumptions in the reduced ability of colonized, non-whites to govern themselves (Macdonald, 1995, p. 135) and characterized by childlike qualities (Mohanty, 1991). Historical colonial representations of the people of the “developing world” have deep roots in practices of surveillance, documentation, and categorization. Arturo Escobar suggests that this practice is heir to an “illustrious genealogy of western conceptions about this world.” Images of these “others” had been important in the cultural construction of ethnic and racial differences from the earliest periods of European contact with colonized people (Lutz & Collins, 1993). These images of non-Western people were organized according to European constructs and practices which today have survived as part of this legacy. Anthropologists and para-anthropologists extensively documented in photographs supposed racial types as part of the discipline’s study of humankind. Anthropologists also used photography as a “visual notebook” to document aspects of material culture produced by these societies (Banks, 1995). In their zeal to depict racial types, authors of survey-type literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries seemed more interested in depicting naked women than men (Boskovic, 2001). Images of costumed, bare-breasted and naked women were highly sought and prized, accompanying embellished accounts of “savage” women’s sexuality¹⁸ and their sexual, cultural difference mediated through images of bodies. McClinock (1995), and Young (1995), point out that these colonial representations were also influenced by the simultaneous, yet conflictual desires and repulsions for the “other.” The production of “difference” based on racialism has been a scientific, political and social construct. Robert Young notes that as race theories developed by the 18th and 19th centuries, such theories were presented in scientific terms, but were

¹⁸ Reference to the “savage” women draws attention to the historical construction of non-European women as inferior and different.

always fundamentally populist in tone, and it was this deliberate popular appeal that enabled such ideas to develop at the cultural level.

Strands of knowledge types and representational practices mingle with more contemporary forms of knowing the “other” and represent today’s “third world” woman. Development images, therefore, draw attention to ways in which the body is visualized as an apparatus of knowing through practices of development. Notions of race “difference” shape international development, yet social scientists have pointed to the instability of the concept and have contested racial formations as structural, institutional, discursive and occurring in multiple social contexts. CIDA’s images of Women in Development (WID) draw from a deep trans-historical archive of colonial knowledges and approaches to the gendered racialized “other” as well as related photographic traditions and conventions.

CIDA’s WID Representations

Women in Development, (WID) in CIDA¹⁹ is associated with the wide range of activities concerning women in the development domain – a domain in which donor agencies, governments, and NGOs became involved, beginning in the 1970s (Razavi & Miller 1995). Earlier international development approaches did not target women as a specific group, but instead, lumped men and women in a grand category of “*people of the third world*” (Rai, 52)²⁰. Some of development’s failures of the previous decades pointed to the need to focus on women who were identified as remaining among the poorest demographics in the South. Influenced by feminist agitation and international currents on the advancement of women, a focus on WID had become a deliberate initiative on the part of CIDA and the government of Canada. Esther Bosrup’s (1970) seminal text “Women’s Role in Economic Development,” provided a feminist challenge to the lack of inclusion of women in development. The text documented the negative impact that the development process had on women. Central to Bosrup’s claim was that when development excludes women from full participation, it denies them benefits and is less effective. Her work called for the inclusion of women in development through the rationales of effectiveness, equality and social justice in order for programs to

¹⁹ CIDA was established in 1968, from which time international development took on a central role in Canada’s foreign policy. The Establishment of CIDA is viewed as having marked Canada as a generous and serious player in development among industrialized countries.

²⁰ Development approaches of the 1960s targeted women largely in relation to welfare and population control programs (Rai, 51).

achieve full efficiency. CIDA, like many aid agencies especially those affiliated with the United Nations, added women’s components to existing programs and set up WID offices. Active in promoting WID internationally, CIDA made WID a centerpiece of its international voice and image.²¹ WID within CIDA²² saw many programs featuring the inclusion of women in projects, women specific programs, and the targeting of appropriate technology toward women in developing countries. To David Morrison, CIDA’s persistent approach to WID policy marked the Agency as a significant world leader in this area. Morrison describes the major influences in Canadian aid as the “conventional trinity of mixed humanitarian, political and economic motives” (13). While aid reflects deep-seated humanitarianism, it is also viewed as important in the distribution of Canadian goods and services while at the same time reinforcing the country’s political ideologies. Since the 1960s, development and aid have been described as one of the clearest international expressions of Canadian values and culture. These values are seen as a desire to help the less fortunate outside of Canada and underscore a strong sense of ethics, human rights, peace and security. Much of the WID images produced during the period was aimed at seeking public support for Canadian aid and was premised on the rationales that surrounded Canadian aid. Coinciding with the WID program, images encompassed the importance and progressiveness of CIDA’s work in the field that embraced the range of Canadian values in development (Parpart, 1995). Studying CIDA’s production of WID images allows the possibility of studying organizational practices, challenges and blind spots that guide and contain institutional images.²³

The visualization of development speaks volumes about the production of “difference” in imagery. The meanings that are given through ways in which concepts and messages in representation are organized, arranged and classified, become the focus of analysis. These images provide a site where photographic conventions, institutional approaches, colonial histories, photographic practices and development ideologies and imaginaries about the “developing world” converge to produce particular images. A study of CIDA’s WID images identifies representational tropes as recurring forms of representations that frame a range of

²¹ Morrison points to detractors who describe CIDA’s preoccupation with WID as a “Canadian fixation” (Morrison, p. 243).

²² Plewes and Stuart suggest that by the 1980s, CIDA adopted both policy and operational objectives to ensure that all branches took responsibility for the implementation of a range of policies on women’s integration in development.

²³ The Agency is viewed as one of the more gender-sensitive agencies in the development business.

narratives about Canadian international development. This process points to the consistency in which images are framed, captured and presented and how they communicate the agency's range of messages and at the same time reinforce "difference." Image representations tend to reflect paradigm shifts and trends in development; in addition, they also mirror new and emerging themes of the field. However what seems clear is that most themes operate through binary views that function around the "difference" of the visible body on display. This section will discuss some of the tropes identified as producing "difference."

Tradition versus Modernity

Many of the images analyzed carry a strong emphasis on a contrast between tradition and modernity. This contrast sets up the world in a simple binary logic of two worlds: the West as modern with science and technology and the rest as traditional and primitive.²⁴ Many images depict women using technologies e.g. pumping water from ground wells carrying a range of materials on their backs and heads (water, firewood, pails or parcels of raw materials). They also show women preparing food over traditional wood fires and stoves. Images depict the "third world" through a chronic lack of modern technologies whereby everyday life is presented as laborious and slow; work is relentless, backbreaking and burdensome. The pre-modern condition is marked by backwardness, a general lack of modern technologies and a desperate need for such technologies. By contrast, modern societies are understood to have advances in knowledge, science and technology and an abundance of resources. The narrative structure celebrates progress where images are presented in a cultural evolutionary trajectory that suggests modernity can be achieved by following a prescribed path. To Watts (1995), the elaboration of the difference between pre-modern and modern societies operates as the central narrative of development. Further to this point, Kothari (2006) argues:

By sustaining for example the "traditional" versus "modern" dichotomy, mapped into *third* and *first* worlds, respectively, development becomes a project drawing upon a colonial imaginary when identifying who and what is "progressive"/"backward" (Kothari, 2006, p. 13). [italics added by author]

Images contribute to public knowledges of development that obscure the agency of those in the developing world and the multifaceted political, economic and social dimensions that cause

²⁴ Traditional in this case is conflated with primitive.

poverty. They also obscure the complexity of women’s lives, hence, the framed image is allowed to take on spectacular properties.

Exotic Dress, Cultural “Difference” and Distance

“Third world” women are shown in traditional dress in more than three-quarters of the photographs analyzed. Fashion operates to frame female “difference” through a search for local and indigenous clothing. Images of local or traditional dress include indigenous and tribal costumes, flamboyant dress featuring indigenous jewelry, and various forms of attractive adornment (see Plate 1). Elaborate head coverings, scarves, and turbans complete a spectacular and colorful show. Images are stunning and fascinating, displaying the desirability of the subject in her environment. To Lutz and Collins images such as these function like National Geographic images, that focus on people performing strange-looking rituals dressed in brightly colored attire (Lutz & Collins, 1993, p. 89). The spectacle of dress that demands at-

Plate 1: Women in local dress learn to read (MAECD/DFATD, 1989). Reprinted with permission of Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada.

tention allows this “other” to be framed as distant. By operating through spectacle, these images provide a sense of distance, and define the implicit audience.²⁶

²⁶ Images are circulated for an implicitly “white” Canadian audience reading these representations from a distance.

The audience provides much meaning for these images. Stuart Hall (1997) suggests that “difference” is needed because meaning can only be constructed in a dialogue with the “other.” To Hall, “otherness” is compelling as a signifying practice through which meaning is assigned to things within a classificatory system. The “other” is fundamental to the construction of the self, the subject and sexual identity.

Mother and Child

Many images analyzed depict mother and child as a lone mother holding a child at the bosom, or strapped to her back; a mother involved in some kind of activity with two children; or small groups of mothers with their children (see Plate 2). To Lutz and Collins (1993), the mother-child image is a well-used and recognized practice in representing women reminiscent of the Madonna-and-child image. These images focus on

Plate 2: Mothers and their children receive Canadian food aid (MAECD/DFATD, 1989). Reprinted with permission of Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada.

motherhood as central to femininity. The mother-child image signifies a special, universal, timeless relationship regardless of historical or social context, however these images also diverge from the universal by conjuring historically specific connotations and imagery. At a glance, they sum up the desperation and poverty of women and their daily problems related to feeding and caring for their children in developing country contexts.

As frequently utilized media narratives to showcase famine and malnutrition of the “third world,” particularly Africa (Kaufman & Shewpased, 2005), these are well-recognized frames. These mother-child images also display contending and deeply historical constructions of certain women’s reproduction or over-reproduction especially linked to the population

debate, which has pursued development aid from its inception. A preoccupation with women’s over-fertility and the need to curb such reproduction has played out throughout various approaches to development for more than five decades of programs in the developing world.²⁷ These mother-child images suggest a fixed view of women that produces a homogeneous identity that negates women’s other roles and social, contextual interactions.²⁸

Labouring Women

A large number of the photographs analyzed are of a relentless world of labouring women. For example, three women squat in a field while harvesting crops, a group of women plough land, another plant and care for crops. Many of these images show women pumping water from wells, carrying water, crops, fuel, firewood, plants or raw materials on their heads and backs. Women are also shown pounding grain or involved in various stages of food processing and preparation showcasing CIDA’s programs (see Plate 3). A vital theme of WID suggested that women perform two-thirds of the world’s work in exchange for a small percentage of income for that work. Through WID, women’s participation in development showcased how effective development could be if all citizens could be targeted through development programs. Associated with an economic logic, images uncover women’s unaccounted work by showing ways in which they contribute economically through their daily routines.²⁹

To Willis and Williams (2002), this trope of the labouring body draws on a frequently photographed view of African or non-white women of the 19th century. Images of “black” women’s bodies revealed their harsh, working bodies as opposed to a European norm.³⁰ These working bodies represent the rural, laboring nature and eternal backwardness of “third world” women. They also stand in for their lack of technical know-how and rank on the scale of modernity. These images also draw on the view of the naturalness of the labouring capacity of

²⁷ Many development approaches toward populations in the South have displayed an anxiety with over-population linked to food scarcity, agricultural output, and slow economic growth (Correa, 1994).

²⁸ A reading of these representations reflect their basis within neoliberal family values preoccupied with showcasing women but at the same time producing absent/irresponsible/despotic males of colour.

²⁹ This focus stresses women’s economic productivity as members of societies.

³⁰ The authors suggest that images of working maids and slaves in the United States and working women of North and Central Africa were often circulated as sole representations of these women.

Food production is falling below the rate of population growth, creating the danger of a growing food shortage. (CIDA photo: Paul Chiasson)

Plate 3: A woman at work preparing grain for food (MAECD/DFATD, 1987). Reprinted with permission of Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada.

certain bodies. “Difference” is depicted through the corporeal embodiment of “third world women” that mark them through work.

Empowerment

The theme of empowerment is presented throughout the WID period and becomes more pronounced toward the mid-to-late 1980s. Empowerment reflects liberal feminism’s goals of equity and redistribution of power relations between men and women. Empowerment stresses women’s inclusion in projects and the targeting of appropriate technology and training to improve productivity and benefits for women. Women are shown as central agents of change; they meet in groups and lead interventions. They are also shown using modern equipment and technologies (see Plate 4). The theme’s most lasting contribution is that of women’s empowerment where women are depicted as innovators or using new technology. In these images, women are shown as central, dignified, and strong. Such images of empowerment embody the central values of WID by focusing on the improvement of women’s lives through development.

© ACDI/CIDA Photo:
 Plate 4: An empowered woman works in a factory (MAECD/DFATD, 1988). Reprinted with permission of Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada.

Race, “Otherness” and “Difference”

A reading of some of the images draws attention to ways in which race operates both explicitly and implicitly through CIDA imagery of WID. To Omi and Winant (1994) racism is entrenched in development history and forms a vital part of the foundation of the discourse of development. To Kothari (2006), race operates in the way knowledge is inscribed in development. Explicit images of a white provider and non-white receiver reinforce the power of whiteness and reify the ways in which development’s authority, expertise and knowledge are racially symbolized. For example: a “white” Canadian man gives advice to a woman working at a wheel. The “white” bearer of knowledge is shown alongside a more primitive, grateful non-“white” receiver of this knowledge (see Plate 5).

These images operate on notions of charity and paternalism that reproduce a colonial knowing about relations between the West and the “developing world.” They reinforce the naturalization of racial inequalities through unequal power relations between these worlds. In this image the accompanying caption serves the function of producing distance through racial symbolism. The caption reads: *“Father Dermont Doran of the Volunteer International Christian Service and a Lesothan Woman.”* In this two-subject photograph the Canadian (White) subject is named and his status revealed: he is an important aid provider with a mission, an identity, therefore a person. The African (black) woman on the other hand is only

Figure 28 “Father Dermot Doran of the Volunteer International Christian Service and a Lesothan woman.” (CIDA Photo)

Plate 5: A Priest instructs a woman working at a Wheel (MAECD/DFATD, 1982). Reprinted with permission of Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada.

“a woman from Lesotho.” She has no name, no status, and therefore functions as just another subject – a “third world woman” to be developed. She, like all third world women is presented as a fragmented, de-personalized subject.

It is worth noting that by the mid-1980s such explicit images of race difference were less shown in general imagery. However, a large part of the imagery carried racialization as an implicit theme especially concealed through the cleansing of development language and terminology. Uma Kothari suggests specialized terminology and the use of criteria that account for poverty and social exclusion disguises race. Development’s use of terms such as “tribalism,” “ethnicity,” “tradition,” and even “culture” sometimes reproduces underlying radicalized views for approaching “developing countries.” These well-used terms carry racial codes that operate through implication. Furthermore, they make distinctions between the colonized and the colonizer through underlying racialized binary distinctions that reinforce “difference” based on those who have the power and knowledge to develop the “other.” In this way, development language continues to produce “difference” and becomes related to the geopolitics of race, where interest in impoverished countries becomes related to Canada’s strategic, political, and economic objectives.

Conclusion

This paper has explored a range of CIDA's WID visual representations in which images reproduce "difference" and distance. This "difference" is reinforced through the production, circulation and repetition of representative tropes that allow image conventions to appear natural. As tropes, these images of "third world" women can be seen as places of encounter where identities are managed. Images carry dichotomous demarcations that mark imaginative geographical spaces of north/south, giver/receiver, knower/ignorant, "white"/non-"white," developed/underdeveloped. Arturo Escobar suggests that WID can be seen as a regime of knowledge, a package of ideologies and a "field of visibilities" (Escobar, 1995, p. 26). According to Escobar, women, framed as a client category, were brought into the space of visibility by development through a process that turned them into spectacles. WID's objectifying gaze turned women into objects of knowledge similar to ways in which the poverty of the third world became the third world's essential trait. As spectacle, the female body is on display and can be viewed, studied, educated, and generally developed.

Herein lies the problematic below the seemingly neutral, humanitarian surface of international development that needs to be troubled. These representational practices continuously reaffirm established knowledges of "difference" about the "third world" woman. In this sense, WID images managed to frame and construct this "other" through well-known readings that Lutz and Collins (1993) describe as building on a deliberate popular appeal of "difference" that offers readers what they already know in new and appealing ways. The "third world" woman is imagined only in reductive homogeneous terms, which can be captured through photographs that reproduce familiar ways of knowing that world.

The "developing world" is positioned as "different" through dress forms, modernity, tradition, work practices, and everyday activities, as opposed to another imagined as modern and philanthropic. These images as texts carry messages and meanings that participate in the production of alterity anchored in racial and geographical divides that recycle cultural hierarchies based on colonial and anthropological ways of knowing the world. By extension, they serve to divide the world through simple categories of race and gender.

The overt and mostly silent racial symbolization in development knowledge and expertise shows ways in which race "difference" continues to underlie the premise of development thought and representation. There is no doubt that some of the representative tropes ushered in by WID which defined the visualized "third world" woman (for example empowerment) remain the program's most lasting contribution. Although more contemporary

and complex themes have since been added to development practice that have themselves influenced novel categories of representations, the tropes identified here endure. Categories such as "labouring women," "traditional versus modern"; or exotic dress, remain untroubled and continue to circulate "difference." Women's images have become development's most eminent symbol and continue to be presented in distinct ways that allow the Southern world's women to be defined and imagined as in need, inferior, distant and "different."

CIDA's mixed objectives and rationales regarding development aid, especially its keen commitment to WID, have in many ways guided the production of these images. Many development scholars argue that WID has been among the Agency's biggest successes. Organizational objectives and values served important public relations roles as it is thought that development, as practice, needs to reaffirm itself within the public domain. The result is, however, that images are produced about one group for a particular audience: the perceived "white" Canadian audience, in this case, which is imagined in a simplistic binary relationship to "third world" difference. In the same way that these representative practices produce an imaginary "third world" woman, they also produce an imaginary Canadian audience. This audience is imagined as "different" and distant from "third world" women as objects on display. Not only is there a disjuncture between the perceived audience and object of representation, but these images speak more about their producers' knowledges than about the very subjectivities that they depict.

This case study draws attention to the need for development organizations to continuously reflect on their actions and to interrogate the categories of representation that produce major gaps and silences about the lives of peoples of the South. Images need to reflect the complexity, and globalized nature of women's lives to more closely resemble the global landscape that we inhabit. Ella Shohat (2002) calls for the widening of development's lenses through an understanding of ways in which images have become mobile in a fluid, global space. To Shohat, these images are typified by their global travel as they operate within a sea of other images, sounds and commodities. Shohat (2002, p. 77) therefore underscores the need to rethink identity designations in order to accommodate transnational relationships to "not see any world as either 'ahead or behind', instead it would see all worlds as coeval, living the same historical moment but under diverse modalities of subordination and hybridization." Therefore, these images need to be critiqued and stripped to show their building blocks in order that the audience they seek to reach better understands the people that they seek to portray. Changes in representations have to begin at the ideological level. In order for different

images to be deployed, development representations need to move away from the embedded binaries upon which they are built.

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