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Expanding Research

Research in the humanities and social sciences expands our understanding of the political, social and economic world in which we live. Dr. O'Neill's research on issues of transmigration of Nepalese youth reminds us of the complexities of household economies and the many patterns by which different communities respond to changing economic and political realities. Indeed, while Dr. O'Neill's research resonates with family histories of immigration to Canada in the last century, the risks to which youth and children are exposed require host societies to reconsider ways to protect migrant workers.

The politically and economically turbulent era in which we live is a dramatic backdrop to the scholarship of Dr. Lizee. His scholarship challenges us to be intellectually open to other ways of seeing the world and understanding the complex contours of our political, economic, philosophic, and religious diverse world.

Combined, the research of Drs. Lizee and O'Neill illustrates how the scholarship of humanists and social scientists informs and influences the formation of public policy or, at the very least, our insights into the ways in which

Dr. Michael Owen, Director
Office of Research Services



Brock University
St. Catharines, ON
Tel: 905-688-5550
Ext: 3127
Fax: 905-688-0748

Journeys of utility: transmigration of Nepalese youth

For most North Americans, the word 'travel' is synonymous with 'tourism'. Travel in North America means luxury and rarely utility. However, many people from other countries think of travel only in terms of utility. Many, youth in particular, must trek across continents in order to contribute to the survival of their families and themselves.

Dr. Tom

O'Neill, Assistant Professor and Graduate Officer with Brock's department of Child and Youth Studies, is conducting a cross-cultural study of the economic uses/abuses of children who must travel abroad to support themselves and their families. More specifically, O'Neill's research focuses on the transmigration of Nepalese youth, particularly between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four.

Interested in transmigration of youth, O'Neill has been researching the situation in Nepal, particularly Kathmandu, since 1998. Dr. O'Neill's research is funded by Brock University's Institutional Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Currently, O'Neill employs three graduate students: Lisa Quiquero, Karen Yeates, and Leanna Leader.

"The principal areas Nepalese youth are going now is the Persian Gulf, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia," explains

O'Neill. The nature of their work is primarily manual labour (men) and domestic work (women). "The idea," suggests O'Neill, "is they work for two years, send remittances home and then



"It's the time to acknowledge that labour will also flow across borders"
~ Dr. Tom O'Neill

they can return themselves later on." According to O'Neill, the situation of transmigration Nepalese youth has resulted in a significant pattern "of intergenerational relationships within the household economy of Nepal

because children are very much a part of household production." In a sense, the transmigration of Nepalese youth is emerging as a Nepal tradition because parents are continually relying on their children to contribute to the overall household income.

Nepal's primary economic activity is subsistence farming, meaning that people grow what they need to eat and sell or barter whatever meagre surpluses they produce. However, the necessities of life have become commodified and, as result, the Nepalese people have to pay cash for many of their necessities. Considering there is very little cash in the rural areas of Nepal, this need adds to the number of youths sent abroad to work.

One problem, however, is that most Nepalese youth who travel to South Asia as migrant manual labourers are treated as second-class citizens, primarily because of their low

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

occupational status and, as guest workers, they have few civic rights in their host country. As a result, O'Neill suggests, "they have no voice and no legal recourse in dangerous or exploitative working conditions. After all, these young people are taking a risk by going abroad to work and then very often they are exploited."

O'Neill's research aims to educate policy makers, as global migration is a worldwide phenomenon and problem. For example, "it's also happening between China and Canada," says

O'Neill. His research contributes then, to a literature that is "waking the world up to what is going on." However, O'Neill's goal is not to stop transmigration or to begin a moral panic: "As a scholar, I try to go in at the ground level. So, my primary interest and responsibility is that person who I'm interviewing. What are their interests? What are their intentions? What are their motivations? How do we protect them, but allow them to continue to do what they do?"

Considering that we live in a

global age, when goods and services are flowing across borders, O'Neill believes that "it's the time to acknowledge that labour will also flow across borders. And, rather than try to forbid people from traveling – try to stop them from migrating – we ought to acknowledge it and develop mechanisms so that they can travel and work abroad safely and easily."

~Julie-Ann Elliott

Assumptions, approaches and interventions in international politics

To understand the nuances of international politics, one must have "patience, understanding and take the time to really comprehend what others are saying," says Associate Professor Pierre Lizée of Brock's Department of Politics. Lizée should know about patience. For the past six years, he has studied the theoretical, policy and empirical spheres of "failed states" - countries such as Haiti and Rwanda where the institutional structures have collapsed. "The countries I examine are typically areas where there is extreme poverty and violence," says Lizée. "Often the intervention by other countries or organizations such as the United Nations is based on reconstruction and development." Reconstruction usually consists of an aid plan to restart the economy, which includes the promotion of elections, the rule of law, and legal reforms. Because similar operations were carried out there, Cambodia is one of the countries to which Lizée has devoted significant scrutiny. Studying Cambodia, and in particular the failure of the 1993 Paris Plan, has given him the opportunity to look at the long-term effects of the approaches used by the international community in multilateral peace operations. He documented his findings in his book, *Peace, Power and Resistance in Cambodia: Global Governance and the Failure of International Conflict Resolution*. It did not take Lizée long to realize that these international intervention approaches usu-

ally fail. He attributes the doom of current methods of reconstruction to the ideological difference between the ways that Western and non-Western cultures understand conflict. "Most often, those involved in conflicts in a region like Southeast Asia see their struggle in complex terms related to a variety of historical and cultural factors," Lizée explains. "The models of conflict resolution proposed by Westerners, in



"The definitions of terrorism are getting further and further apart."

~ Dr. Pierre Lizée

contrast, try to reduce all those dimensions of conflict to a simple incompatibility of interests which can be resolved through direct negotiations." The disparity between Western and non-Western political assumptions is the major barrier to successful interventions.

While Southeast Asia seems distant, our North American post-September 11 mindset has brought the concepts of violence, terrorism and conflict closer to home. Lizée's empirical research takes him to Asia where he talks to academics and policy-makers to gain an understanding of international concepts of the nature of terrorism and violence. "Often, policy

proposals are not implemented because of differences in how the problems are understood," says Lizée. Unfortunately, according to Lizée, "the definitions of terrorism are getting further and further apart. The North American concept of terrorism is actor-based, focusing on the individual act, while the non-Western view is context-based," he explains. "The United States values individual freedoms and therefore sees violence as a choice. Other countries focus more on the context. To them, violence is not a choice, it is imposed."

Making inroads toward a solution is easier said than done. "The simple solution is that you have to deconstruct your own assumptions. The complicated solution is that in a political agenda, you must convince them to put their political will behind your choices." In addition to his international policy efforts, Lizée is also a consultant with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International on matters related to Canadian foreign policy in Southeast Asia. He is involved, in that context, in so-called track-two channels of informal diplomacy in the region. He is also co-director of a three-year, \$2.3-million project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency which examines how civil society can participate in the construction of national and regional security. As with all of his involvements, Lizée follows his own advice: "You must have openness to other understandings and intellectual ideas."

~Kimberley Lee

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Contact: mowen@brocku.ca or cwiley@brocku.ca