

Reflective Essay:

My project was originally assigned as a semester-long research assignment for Professor Woodson-Boulton's "What is History?" course in Fall 2015; I had to craft my own topic that dealt with any aspect of imperialism. Through various research and exploration, I settled on a project that examines British women's complicated role in 19th century Imperial India, and the lasting repercussions of that legacy for Western women and their relationship to women across the world.

The research process itself morphed my topic from one direction to another over the course of the semester; I spent a great amount of time in Hannon Library, examining various sources on the British female's role in Imperial India. During my search, I discovered a type of primary source that I did not even know existed before beginning my research. This began a descent into the undercover world of British homemakers in 19th century India, through the genre of household advice manuals. Once I uncovered this first primary source, I realized the library had access to multiple other household guides — either physical copies or through access to various online archives. These books discussed the domestic sphere of cooking and cleaning, chores and delegations, housewife and servant relations — a side of the female experience that most scholars focus on. Yet, the more I studied these sources, the more fascinated I became with these incredibly complicated standards and stringent guidelines that imperial women lived by. I began to see their home building as more than just that; these British women were not just taking on more roles and asserting their independence. They were carrying out the imperial

mission, through an intense and thorough invasion of culture, home, society, and commodities.

I became fascinated with these household advice manuals and I began my search for secondary sources that would support the notion that women played a more active and complex role in imperialism than is often acknowledged, but also acknowledged the multifaceted issues with race and class that was implied. I primarily utilized JSTOR and books found through the search catalog on Hannon Library's website. I would check out a book or article, regarding Anglo-Indian homes using the library's database, which would lead me to read an article that mentioned one of the household guides I had read. I would look into the bibliographies of sources I uncovered to find other relevant perspectives or articles on the material, and that would direct me to yet another household advice manual filled with new insights into life in the 19th century Anglo-Indian home. I began noticing that the scholars I was reading were mentioning specific articles or sources that I had already discovered in my research; it was as if I found a niche in the research process where everything clicks into place and these pieces of a puzzle I didn't even know existed fell together. This long process, although time consuming and not without challenges, allowed me to really entrench myself into the world of my research and to see the interconnected ways that primary and secondary sources can function to support and generate a researcher's ideas.

Using the various resources available to me through Hannon Library, I was given the tools and time to truly shape out my own ideas about the sources I discovered there. Through this research on the 19th century British woman in

imperial spaces, I began to find connections between imperialism and first wave feminism in Britain. In this project—which seemed to examine only a narrow aspect of the female and imperial experience—I discovered my own approach to these sources that tied newfound female imperial power to socio-economic and racially exclusive feminist movements of the western world. The process and end product has made me a better student and scholar, but it also gave me a newfound respect and love for research. I've realized my work on this project will never truly be finished, because it has spawned greater interest and study into third wave feminist theory of inclusion. I uncovered information from a whole other world in the past that felt entirely relevant and informed on the world's current state of power and gender politics.