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Aid, education and adventure

**An exploration of the impact of development scholarship schemes on
women's lives**

A Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy
in
Development Studies
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Abstract

This thesis examines the outcomes associated with women's participation in development scholarship schemes. These schemes, which provide citizens from Third World countries with opportunities to undertake tertiary training abroad, have featured prominently within the development assistance programmes of many Western nations. However, the longer-term impact of this type of educational experience on the lives and communities of individuals who take up this form of aid remains under-studied. This is particularly the case for female development scholars, who have been both historically excluded from opportunities to take part in these schemes, as well as marginalised within academic evaluations of their outcomes.

This research provides an in-depth qualitative exploration of the experiences of twenty women who have completed a tertiary qualification through a development scholarship scheme. The participant sample is diverse, and includes a group of New Zealand-based female doctoral students who have participated in several of these programmes, as well as two groups of women from Thailand who have returned home after taking part in a scholarship scheme funded by the New Zealand Agency for International Development.

This research identifies a number of positive and negative outcomes for women associated with this distinct type of educational experience. Beneficial outcomes include greater emotional autonomy, increased cross-cultural knowledge, new professional networks, new work skills, and improved English-language competency. Participants within this research report that these benefits have translated into increased respect within their workplaces; new opportunities to represent their organisations at home and abroad; greater participation in international research and policy forums; increased control over negotiations with foreign consultants; and an enhanced commitment to collaboration with other professionals in the ASEAN region.

Negative outcomes to arise out of the scholarship experience include role tension and relationship conflict for married women; career disruption associated with employment bonding and job restructuring during the period of absence abroad; new unwanted work responsibilities; and dissatisfaction with some aspects of quality of life in their country of origin. This thesis provides rich narrative material that increases our understanding of the concrete ways that this form of educational aid is 'lived out' in the lives and communities of female development scholars.

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Chapter One – Introduction

Introduction

This thesis is an exploration of the impact that development scholarship schemes have on the lives of women who choose to take up this form of educational ‘aid’. Development scholarships - endowments that provide individuals from so-called ‘Third-World’ or ‘developing’ nations¹ with opportunities to complete tertiary training in Western universities - are an historically important, yet increasingly contested form of development assistance. Yet meaningful debates over the future of this type of aid continue to be limited by a global paucity of research on the outcomes associated with these schemes. The experiences of women who participate in development scholarship programmes is a particularly neglected area of research. This research aims to expand our understanding of the ways that this form of educational aid is ‘lived out’ in the personal and professional worlds of female development scholars.

Imagining the ‘scholarship girl’ - past, present, future

International education scholarships have traditionally been the centre of an important ‘diaspora of hope’ (Appadurai, 1996) for many men and women from countries with poorly-funded, low-quality tertiary institutions. The image of the local scholar educated abroad has come to play an important role in the educational imaginary of both host and recipient countries. It has functioned as a touchstone around which we have come to understand and play out notions of educational ‘progress’ and development obligation. And, until recently, these images of progress have been overwhelmingly male. Goodson and Sikes (2001) argue that the story of the ‘scholarship boy’ functioned as a central

¹ There is considerable debate around what is the most accurate and respectful terminology to use here. Terms like the Third World, developing nations, the South, the two-thirds world, or the majority world all gloss over the vast social cleavages that exist within and between the societies that these terms describe. They also gloss over the considerable areas of commonality between these societies and the so-called ‘West’ or ‘developed world’ that they are defined in opposition to. However, from a policy perspective, these terms also retain a degree of intellectual (and political) utility because they provide the vocabulary necessary to establish debate and consensus around mechanisms for addressing vast global inequalities in income, health, education etc. The acknowledgement of the existence of these broad patterns of inequality remains the primary reason why nations like New Zealand commit a proportion of the national budget to meet ‘international development’ goals. Development scholarships represent an important part of efforts to operationalise this commitment. Thus, I have chosen to stick with the use of the terms ‘Third World’ nation and ‘developing’ countries (interchangeably, to provide a degree of stylistic diversity) because they are the most well-known, and are, therefore, I believe, still the most meaningful to readers. As such, in the absence of more compelling alternatives, these terms should be read as useful but contested vocabulary.

trope within mid-twentieth-century Western critiques of class inequality. They assert that stories about both local working-class boys made good, as well as colonial scholars, while now devalued as “reminiscent of outmoded models of meritocracies, masculinities, and Marxisms”, occupied a central role within the utopian optimism prevalent in the post-WWII era (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:78).

Images of the ‘scholarship girl’ have not been so easy to come by; in part because traditional gender roles have historically prevented women from taking up these sorts of opportunities, and also because, even where women have managed to access higher education, the sexist bias within education research has often rendered such experiences less worthy of academic attention. Early influential feminist comparative education theorist Gail P. Kelly (1978) describes her formative years in the education and development field:

When I was a graduate student in the early 1970s being trained to do research on education in Asia and Africa, not one ‘classic’ in the field ever mentioned women. I read tomes on social change, on modernization, on pedagogical theories and on colonialism and their relation to schooling. Women simply did not exist. It was presumed that education affected women in the same ways as it did men. If there was any difference between the sexes in the impact of schooling, such differences were thought insignificant. (Kelly, 1978:365)

Since the 1970s, feminist education writers have sought to redress this imbalance by seeking new ways to theorise and document women’s educational experiences. However, such efforts have only been partially successful. Writing on the impact of higher education on the professional identities and career trajectories of women still remains dominated by a concern with the experiences of Western women (Bhalalusesa, 1998:24; Morley, 2005:210; Richie et al., 1997). And where feminist education research has considered the experiences of women from non-Western nations, it has tended to focus on quantitative measures of educational outcomes such as rates of enrolment, levels of attainment, and labour force participation rates (Biraimah, 1997:207; Heward, 1999b:10; Morley, 2005:211; Robinson-Pant, 2004:473).

However, this type of research has become increasingly problematised by a number of feminist authors who point to the shortcomings of such a reductive approach to educational experience. Unterhalter (2005a:113) argues that the obsession with target setting and quantitative measures of success within the major development institutions

has led to a research model that isolates education from other social conditions, and effectively “crowds out all other educational aspirations”. Bunwaree (1999:64) contends that despite considerable critique of the limitations of this kind of approach, it continues to dominate institutions like the World Bank, and results in the ongoing neglect of the “microrealities and life worlds of girls and women”. This type of research has tended to position women as objects, rather than ‘subjects’ of educational inquiry, and has resulted in a dearth of research concerned with how women themselves perceive the usefulness of their training (Biraimah, 1997; Bunwaree, 1999:141).

The limitations of previous research within this field have important implications for our ability to understand and theorise the changes in women’s lives that have resulted from the global expansion of their educational opportunities. Since the 1950s, there has been a significant global increase in the numbers of women participating in tertiary education (UNESCO, 1999:5). Yet it is clear that this expansion has not always been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the opportunities women have to contribute to the policy process within the development community. The exclusion of educated women from the development policy process is in part perpetuated by our lack of knowledge of, and therefore inability to conceptualise, the experiences of women from developing nations who do not fit traditional images of Third World women as poor and uneducated.

The continuing reliance on these stereotypes within Western development thought limits the possibilities for exploring the ways that increased access to education may have altered the personal and professional choices available to women in Third World societies. Ultimately, it also prevents recognition of the fact that the increased internationalisation and ‘feminisation’ of higher education may be creating new professional landscapes that provide different actors with opportunities to contribute to the development policy process.

Everjoice Win (2004), in her article *Not very poor, powerless or pregnant: The African woman forgotten by development*, provides an, at times amusing, discussion of the difficulties she has been taken seriously within a development community that struggles to imagine the existence of (let alone the contribution of) the tertiary-educated African woman. As she relays:

The world does not yet know how to deal with the articulate non-poor African feminist. Is it because she talks back? Is it because she does not fit the image of the charity case? As African feminists we have learnt to laugh at the comment made by our Northern colleagues: 'Oh you are *sooo* articulate Everjoyce!' We ask ourselves, what we were supposed to be? Incoherent? (Win, 2004:63, emphasis in original)

Win (2004) goes on to argue that the shift within development studies towards focusing on capturing the voices of the 'grassroots poor' has actually led to further neglect of the professional contributions made by educated women within Third World societies. She contends that this shift, far from challenging the hegemony of Western academic knowledge production within the development policy process, has led to a bifurcation of knowledge characterised by the use of grassroots anecdotes - which are assigned the status of illustrative stories - alongside the 'proper' academic work produced by Western academics:

The results are all too visible; it is still largely Northern academics or feminists who write and get published; it is their work which is used by policy-makers and is quoted in international media. The "village based" micro analyst, or anecdote-telling African activist is not that well respected. Her work often gets relegated to the human-interest stories section. (Win, 2004:63)

Win (2004) asserts that in order to be taken seriously within the development community, Third World women must constantly demonstrate their links to 'the poor'. A standard that, she argues, does not apply to Western feminist/development theorists; and a trend that perpetuates the myth that "Africa has no policy analysis capacity" (Win, 2004:63).

Krishna Sen's (1998) research on professional women in Indonesia reinforces Win's concerns about the lack of attention paid to the experiences of educated women within Third World societies. She argues that despite the considerable number of Indonesian women now occupying influential roles within both the government and business sectors, it is still not possible to mention the words 'women' and 'work' in a Third World context without raising expectations amongst development audiences that the subjects of her research are "the poor and exploited woman living in dirty slums and working long shifts on assembly lines" (Sen, 1998:36)

This situation is further complicated by the fact that, now, as women have started to make some progress (albeit unevenly) towards gender equality in higher education, support for development assistance to promote this goal has fallen from favour in recent decades. As Chapter Three highlights, both the ‘crisis’ of Third World education that occurred in the late sixties and radical critiques of Western education that emerged in the 1970s have prompted a reprioritising of ‘basic literacy’ and traditional ‘non-formal’ education over Western tertiary training. Ama Ata Aidoo’s (1979) influential novel *Our sister killjoy, or, Reflections from a black-eyed squint*, about a woman from Ghana who travels to Europe on a development scholarship, perfectly captures the intensity of feeling that existed within the immediate post-colonial period about the ways in which overseas education might constitute a sort of intellectual neo-colonialism:

[T]he story is as old as empires. Oppressed multi-tudes from the provinces rush to the imperial seat because that is where they know all salvation comes from. But as other imperial subjects in other times and other places have discovered, for the slave, there is nothing at the center but worse slavery.

Where
Warming itself up in a single cold room by a
Paraffin lamp,
Covering its
Nakedness and
Disappointed hopes with
The old tickets of the
Football pools
or
Glorious,
With degrees.

(Aidoo, 1979:87-88)

Sissie, the main character in Aidoo’s novel argues that, in an environment where most people do not even have access to basic education, tertiary scholarships entrench the privileges of elites, who return only to regale locals with tales of “how the water from their shit-bowls is better than what the villagers drink” (Aidoo, 1979:58). Her novel positions these types of scholarships as, at best, the “leftovers of imperial handouts” (Aidoo, 1979:86). Critiques like this from Aidoo and others have problematised traditional assumptions about the role of Western higher education as a motor for social and economic development, and provided important grounds for questioning the allocation of scarce aid funding to higher education scholarship schemes.

Others, however, while acknowledging the importance of these critiques - particularly in light of the continuing overrepresentation of women amongst those without access to basic education - have expressed concern that this shift in focus will undermine long-established campaigns aimed at realising women's right to higher education. This is a right that, they argue, remains crucial to improving the political and economic status of women within developing societies. As Chapter Three highlights, there are many enduring reasons to argue that tertiary education should remain a central policy priority amongst those concerned with gender equality, including its potential to raise women's incomes, to increase their participation in development decision-making processes, and to expand their potential for leadership. These goals, it has become increasingly apparent are being sidelined in the move towards much-needed basic education campaigns. Professor Peter Katjavivi commented on this dilemma in relation to Namibia's education strategy:

As with many other developing countries, Namibia has chosen to invest foremost in education meeting the basic requirements of the country. The education given has to be economically profitable, which means that priority is given to courses giving maximum social, cultural and economic return. Women in higher education can thus become a neglected area in terms of the resources invested therein. Nevertheless, it is crucial for the empowerment of women in the field of social decision-making. (Katjavivi in UNESCO, 1999:12)

The future of development scholarship schemes that enable women from Third World nations to access higher education in the West is likely to rest on debates over the relative gains and losses associated within this type of aid. Yet these debates are continuing to take place in an environment characterised by a lack of knowledge of the concrete ways in which this type of development assistance is actually lived out in communities. Knowledge of how women "take hold of" education (Maddox, 2005:124) is particularly crucial because tensions between their traditional role within the private sphere and emerging opportunities to participate in the public sphere mean that educational opportunities do not neatly translate into improved social mobility for women, rather any gains must be actively negotiated. As this UNESCO (1999) report on gender and higher education sums up:

In a changing world, the tension between respect for cultural identity and realization of personal potential through education, including advanced study, emerges as one of the new problems to be faced by women. Choice and reconciliation will be needed – often with the attendant compromise. (UNESCO, 1999:10)

Okeke-Ihejirika (2004), in her work on the experiences of tertiary-educated Igbo women in Nigeria, argues that there is an urgent need for more research on the specific conditions under which women are able to successfully translate educational opportunities into changes within their lives and societies:

The global database on policies and programs for development leads us to believe that with greater educational attainment, women in developing countries such as Nigeria can pursue careers in formal employment and ultimately advance their social status. But the literature on African women suggests that the power and status conferred on them by formal education and paid employment are mediated by the social boundaries and expectations to which they must adhere. Very little is known, however, about how specific female groups deal with these boundaries and expectations and how the particular circumstances of each group mediate its experiences. I believe that without such critical investigations, the resources we invest in women's formal training may not achieve the desired purpose. (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004:3)

Pessate-Schubert (2003) also argues for greater exploration of how women are able to successfully negotiate their dual private and public roles in ways that make it possible for them to benefit from new educational experiences. Here she comments on her work with tertiary-educated Bedouin women:

Access to knowledge is of great relevance in gender-segregated societies, where separation between men and women is characterized by a separation in their cultural and social knowledge. ... In this context, it is important to explore what role education plays for Bedouin women, who are traditionally identified with the private sphere. In other words, how private and public spaces are reconciled within the private sphere (home and family) and especially how these educated women achieve this. ... The women presented in this article provide us with the context in which to view this process. Via their new status as students, they are "doing" something to change their world. Throughout this process, they grow and cross borders, negotiate, and participate within their community. As such, they value the "public" and the "private" differently than before, governed by a different logic of action and attitudes. If previously these two spheres were separated, they are now interwoven and any change in one impacts the other. (Pessate-Schubert, 2003:287)

As part of a small, yet privileged, group of educated women within their communities, development scholarships place these women at the forefront of negotiations over notions of femininity and modernity. Research on the experiences of female development scholars has the potential to provide valuable insights into contemporary relationships between gender, higher education and social change within Third World societies.

This thesis provides an in-depth qualitative exploration of the experiences of twenty women who have completed a tertiary qualification through a development scholarship scheme. All of these women have studied in New Zealand, and all but one of them have participated in a scholarship scheme funded by the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID). As well as providing substantive empirical material that will contribute to the ongoing evaluation of the impact of NZAID's scholarship programme, this thesis seeks to correct the historical exclusion of the voices of Third World women from debates around the meaning and the value of this type of development assistance.

Chapter outline

Chapter Two examines the contributions and the limitations of previous empirical work that investigates the experiences of female development scholars. It brings together a diverse range of literature that is considered relevant to the experiences of the specific demographic under study in this research project: female development scholars who have completed a qualification in a New Zealand university. This literature includes research examining psychological dimensions of 're-entry' adjustment; writing on women's experiences of overseas study; and New Zealand research on the experiences of 'returnees' - including former NZAID scholars. The particular status of international scholarship schemes as a development initiative – both internationally, and in New Zealand – is also highlighted and explored within this chapter. It is argued that as an aid initiative, research on the impact of these schemes also needs to be situated within wider debates over the value of education for women as a development goal.

Chapter Three provides an overview of these debates, identifying five main discourses that have dominated discussions over the value and meaning of higher education for women from Third World countries. I have labelled these discourses 'education for reproduction', 'education for production', 'education for submission', 'education for empowerment', and 'education as experience'. This chapter examines the strengths and weaknesses of interpreting women's educational experience within each of these bodies of thought, making the case for a 'hybrid' or collaborative analytical framework that calls upon the contributions made by each discourse. This analytical framework is established as a set of five principles that will be used as a guide for the analysis of the interview data collected within this research.

Chapter Four identifies the emerging field of feminist post-development research as a suitable epistemological and methodological home for this type of research approach. This chapter explores the parameters of this new field of studies, arguing that it can best be described as an attempt to bring together the strengths of utopian Black feminist thought with the critical insights of Third World feminist poststructuralist writers. It is argued that the emphasis on the ‘critical mobility’ of feminist political practice within this field of writing provides methodological encouragement for the development of the flexible analytical framework that I have outlined in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five provides an overview of the methods used within this research. In particular, it outlines the reasons for my decision to use qualitative methods, and semi-structured interviewing. It also provides a detailed overview of the data collection process, including participant selection, ethical issues, preparation for research, the construction of an interview guide, issues of research reliability, and data analysis and presentation.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight present the results of the interviews conducted within this research. Chapter Six explores the experiences of three Thai women who had studied in New Zealand for a Bachelors degree nearly twenty years previously. Chapter Seven examines the experiences of twelve Thai women who had completed a Masters degree through an NZAID scholarship programme within the last five years. Chapter Eight then provides an overview of the experiences of the group of five female PhD students that I interviewed in New Zealand. Each of these chapters follows a similar format: opening with one or two extended stories from participants, and then proceeding to a discussion of the major themes to emerge from each participant group.

Chapter Nine then provides a more detailed discussion of the themes identified within Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, using the analytical framework developed within Chapter Three as a tool for promoting discussion on the significance of these research outcomes. This chapter also examines how these themes compare to those identified within the previous empirical research discussed within Chapter Two. Finally, this chapter also

discusses the implications of this study for future research on the impact of NZAID scholarship programmes. Chapter Nine is then followed by a brief conclusion (Chapter Ten) that summarises and reviews the key contributions made by this thesis.

Chapter Two - Research on the experience of overseas study: Moving from pathology and ‘consumer’ satisfaction’ to aid and ‘development’.

Introduction

This chapter explores the contribution that previous research on the experience of overseas study can make to understanding the outcomes associated with women’s participation in development scholarship schemes. In particular, it is argued that traditional research on the experiences of international students has had a narrow psycho-therapeutic and marketing mandate that has limited its ability to produce holistic portraits of the complex impacts and ‘politics’ of this type of educational aid. Despite these limitations, however, writers within this field have contributed a number of important insights into the daily realities of study abroad that are essential for understanding the longer-term outcomes of this type of educational experience.

This chapter examines the contributions made by writers within this field, and explores the potential to expand the scope of existing literature to include broader concerns with the longer-term ‘development’ impact of study abroad. The chapter makes the case for the importance of situating research on the experience of the ‘scholarship girl’² within an expanded body of development literature devoted to exploring the impact of education on women’s lives.

Research on the life of the ‘international student’.

This research project has evolved partly in response to my own desire to read more vivid accounts of the experiences of female development scholars. As I have argued, the focus on quantitative expressions of experience within traditional gender, education and development literature restricts our ability to tell stories that do justice to the complexity and diversity of the experiences of female development scholars. Unfortunately, literature examining the lives of ‘international students’ also has major shortcomings.

² Given the age of the majority of the participants within this study, and the imperialist connotations associated with term, I used inverted commas to problematise it. The term ‘scholarship girl’ is used in reference to Goodson and Sikes (2001) comments, in Chapter One, about the ways in which the category of the “scholarship boy” monopolised discussions about the experiences of development scholars within the colonial era. They point to investigations into the experiences of the “scholarship girl” as a missing category of social analysis.

While, unlike the former body of thought, this group of researchers do contribute a concern with documenting personal dimensions of experience, their work has been dominated by psychological approaches which adopt a narrow, negative focus on ‘adjustment’ (Kenway & Bullen, 2003:6; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991:164), and more recently by marketing approaches designed to identify strategies for increasing ‘consumer satisfaction’.

From early accounts of ‘tropical neurasthenia’³ to later models of ‘culture shock’, research on sojourners has been overwhelmed by a fascination with how these individuals ‘cope’ with the ‘disruption’ associated with cross-cultural encounter (James et al., 2004:112). The term ‘culture shock’, first used by anthropologist Kalvero Oberg (1960) has been widely employed to explore the sense of dislocation and confusion that international students face when confronted with new cultural environments (Furnham, 1997:15; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward & Searle, 1991).

Research on ‘culture shock’ has focused strongly on issues of psychopathology surrounding cross-culture adaptation, documenting the significant decline in mental health experienced by many international students during the early stages of immersion within their host culture:

The first few months ... are often a time of stress, anxiety, and temporary reduction in normal capacity to adapt and cope. Acute loneliness (especially if family is not present), depression and difficulties associated with inadequate living conditions, food and climate may combine to have a significantly negative effect on the student’s ability to study at a time when language difficulties and unfamiliar academic expectations are already eroding confidence (Barker, 1990:10).

Several authors have identified ‘culture shock’ as a particularly severe problem for international students from developing countries, because these students experience the greatest contrasts between their local education system and the learning environment in their host country, and because they often have high expectations of Western education systems (Burns, 1991:62; Elsey, 1990:1). Other authors have also found that scholarship students, in particular, face elevated levels of adjustment stress associated with the

³ An early medical diagnosis based on the adjustment difficulties experienced by Europeans who moved to the tropics, said to be brought on by excessive indulgence in, amongst other things, bridge, dinner parties, alcohol, and sunlight (James et al., 2004:112).

pressure to maintain high academic performance (Kenway & Langmead, 1999:24; Okorocha, 1997:5; Sodjakusumah, 1996:61), and the need to deal with negative attitudes towards international scholarship schemes within the host culture (Devneesh, 1999:113; Wild & Scheyvens, 2000:67).

Explorations of the positive or productive dimensions of the sojourn experience are rare (Kenway & Langmead, 1999:6; Lackland Sam, 2000:316; Marks, 1987:12). The tendency to focus on the negative aspects of overseas study is perhaps understandable given the desire of many of these researchers to motivate tertiary institutions to address the institutional barriers faced by these students. However, this tendency has limited the scope of this field of research: reducing its ability to provide useful commentary of the beneficial impacts of the overseas education. Marks (1987), in particular, argues that the term 'culture shock' should be replaced with a more positive concern with examining the effects of cross-cultural 'encounter':

[E]xposure to a new culture can more constructively be viewed as an 'encounter' (not necessarily a shock) that offers unique opportunities for insight into oneself, one's home culture, and the culture of the host country. In this more positive vein, direct confrontation with another is the best way to learn about alien modes of life or to gain perspective into one's culture (Marks, 1987:124).

As well as being overly concerned with the negative aspects of international student experience, this body of research has a number of other limitations that reduce its usefulness for this study. The preoccupation with psychological adjustment means that these authors have been largely uninterested in exploring the wider, long-term impacts of overseas education (James et al., 2004:124; Martin, 1984:130). In more recent years, models of culture shock have been expanded to examine the phenomenon of "re-entry shock" - the psychological adjustment required by international students returning home (for example, see Brabant et al., 1990; Furukawa, 1997; Martin, 1984; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Uehara, 1986). However, there has been little interest in investigating the more enduring personal or social outcomes that emerge beyond the initial home-coming period.

Brabant et al. (1990:388) argue that the dearth of literature on long-term dimensions of international educational experience is in large part due to the practical difficulties researchers have tracking down students when they return home. However, this absence

is also equally likely to be due to the fact that this field has been dominated by psychology researchers concerned with personal adjustment.

This body of research has also displayed a strong quantitative bias, concerned as it has been with developing models of mal/adjustment. This emphasis on the development of universal models has tended to homogenise the diversity of experience attached to the category of the ‘international student’. As Koehne notes:

International students are a diverse group, but they have often been spoken about in academic literature and in academic conversations as an entity, rather than as individuals with a range of personal histories and experiences, and a range of personal motivations and desires which have constructed the desire to become an international student. (Koehne, 2005:104)

The empiricism underpinning models of ‘adjustment’ has also led to a lack of acknowledgement of the theoretical and political assumptions underlying this concept. Butcher (2002:4) argues that traditional literature on international students would likely “claim it was atheoretical”. However, ideas about the desirability of cultural adjustment clearly cannot be isolated from larger theoretical and political debates around which groups are being expected to ‘adjust’, and why. As Kenway and Langmead (1999) argue:

[T]he concepts ‘adaptation’ and ‘culture shock’ individualise, pathologise and depoliticise the complex cultural and political processes ... which are involved in international study. ... They imply that those from outside a national border must simply adapt, adjust to and accept the institutions within. It implies that the adaptations required are all on one side. (Kenway & Langmead, 1999:14)

Given the historical role that overseas education has played within colonial programmes designed to promote cultural ‘adjustment’, it would appear essential to acknowledge and explore the contested nature of this concept. Similarly, the concept of ‘re-adjustment’ also needs to be problematised. The idea that it is necessarily a good thing for a student to fit back into old ways of being, because this will create less immediate stress in their lives, is also disputed by some writers. Kluger (1996), for example, points to the debate amongst those involved in development scholarship schemes about the value of encouraging female scholarship students, in particular, to ‘readjust’ to cultural practices that may no longer suit their interests:

There is some debate among program staff, experts in women's issues, and among female scholarship recipients themselves on how important so-called 'readjustment' or 're-entry' problems are for women, and how much emphasis should be placed on them. Some ... see helping women scholars minimize re-entry dislocations as of key importance. Others argue strongly that returning women scholars are important potential 'change agents' for their societies because of how they have changed while abroad. Thus the accent should not be on helping them readjust, but on supporting them as they seek to make changes in their societies. (Kluger, 1996:87-8)

Finally, research on the experiences of international students has traditionally displayed a strong male bias (Kenway & Bullen, 2003:6; Wright, 1997:94). Gender was absent as a category of analysis within most early studies, where the student was assumed to be male, and women were assigned the status of 'wives' of scholars (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985:8; Kenway & Bullen, 2003:6; Wright, 1997:94). Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985) quote from a typical pamphlet on support for overseas students produced within the United Kingdom in 1970. The quote, written by a university adviser, is extracted from a lengthy section on the "problem of wives and families":

The local office of the British Council does run a club for overseas wives which meets weekly for talks, cookery demonstrations, etc. Edinburgh University runs an overseas wives club and language classes. Sometimes the wife of an overseas student who is herself a graduate can follow a course at the University or one of the local colleges while her husband pursues his own studies. A problem may arise if there are children of pre-school age. I have had one or two successes in persuading the mothers of very young children that the interests of their infants must come before their careers. So far the fostering of children to enable both parents to pursue academic careers has not been a problem with our overseas students. (Laing in Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985:10)

While it is not common to encounter such explicit gender stereotyping within contemporary literature on international students, it is clear that gender bias still remains an issue within the field. Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985:10) argue that throughout the 1970s and 1980s, during a time in which gender was emerging as an increasingly central axis of analysis within education research, the international student literature was marked by its lack of attention to the issue. Kenway and Bullen (2003) assert that, in contemporary times, gender-bias within the field is now more commonly encountered in the use of a 'gender-neutral' approach to the experience of foreign students:

Women international students' perspectives are mentioned by a very few authors compared with those whose work represents 'general' students' perspectives. [The] ... tendency has been to normalise male students and thereby, to assign to the woman student the subordinate status of 'other'. In other words it is assumed that the student is male. (Kenway & Bullen, 2003:6)

Wright (1997) contends that the lack of attention to the experiences of this group of students cannot be justified by the fact that they have traditionally been under-represented within the student population:

An obvious rejoinder to any charge that the overseas student literature has implicitly or explicitly focused on male students is that this reflects the fact that women are but a minority of overseas students. This is indeed the case... [y]et, ignoring the experiences and perspectives of those students who are female, however few, is not justified, especially since the proportion of female students from overseas is increasing. Indeed the views of female students may be under-represented in surveys of overseas students precisely because gender issues are not taken into account. (Wright, 1997:94-5)

While the more recent work of authors such as Wright (1997) and others (for example, Davis & Dodds, 1993; Kenway & Bullen, 2003; Leonard, 1998; Nicholls, 1989) provides evidence of a shift towards greater gender awareness within the international student literature, this area of research is still very small. Like the broader student sojourner literature, it also tends to focus primarily on 'adjustment' and the immediate study experience, rather than the longer-term outcomes associated with taking up study opportunities abroad.

In addition, Kenway and Bullen (2003:7) argue that this small body of research on the experience of female international students displays a strong liberal bias that has encouraged an over-emphasis on the disadvantages experienced by this group. They contend that this literature has been dominated by liberal feminist perspectives that focus on access and equity issues. They also claim that this research has been largely theoretical rather than empirical: characterising it as, "the product of a synthesis of existing secondary materials and 'Western' feminist theories" (Kenway & Bullen, 2003:7).

The following section examines the broad parameters of research on the experiences of female international students, focusing particularly on the examples of qualitative research that have provided these women with the opportunity to share stories and speak

about their experiences. The demographic under study varies widely within this body of research. Some of the authors focus exclusively on the experiences of female international students, while others offer comparisons between the experiences of male and female students. Most of the writers do not identify the source of financial support received by the students within their study. The discussion within the following section seeks to overlap these diverse research projects in ways that make it possible to build up a more comprehensive picture of the issues likely to be faced by my quite specific research demographic.

Research on the experiences of women as international students

The early work produced by British researchers Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985) *It ain't half sexist Mum: Women as overseas students in the UK* remains one of the richest and most influential contributions to this field of inquiry. This research highlighted the then dramatic under-representation of women within development scholarship schemes, and documented the ways that traditional gender roles and institutional sexism were limiting the opportunities for women from developing countries to study successfully in the United Kingdom. Goldsmith and Shawcross' (1985) work focused primarily on the adversities faced by this group of women. They pointed to domestic and family responsibilities, in particular, as a major source of conflict and stress for female international students.

Combining family and study

Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985) reported that marriage has a considerable negative impact on the ability of women to negotiate time away to study overseas; and, therefore, that female sojourners tend to be single, or to be mature students who have completed their families:

There is considerable social and psychological pressure on women to remain with husbands and family after marriage. ... Married women need the active cooperation of their husbands, especially if they have children, in order to have the freedom to be away from home for a period of two to three years. A considerable proportion of those in our sample who were married had been able to study in Britain only because they were accompanying their husbands or already had family connections here. (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985:22)

These authors noted that domestic tensions were particularly acute for female students from Third World countries, who often marry at a younger age, and therefore face the greatest pressure to remain single or wait to attend as a ‘mature student’ (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985:22).

Contemporary research on the experiences of female international students makes similar conclusions about the difficulties women have negotiating family and study. Wright (1997) notes that female sojourners often face a double burden associated with attempting to adjust to a new academic environment whilst also trying to figure out how to meet the welfare needs of their family:

Finding suitable accommodation for children and convenient and affordable child care facilities, as well as coming to grips with local schools and the National Health Service, are all time-consuming activities that generally fall more to women than men. (Wright, 1997:100)

Beyond the initial settling-in period, these women often struggle with the long working hours and exhaustion associated with efforts to reconcile family and study commitments. Bhalalusesa’s (1998:30) study of female international students from developing countries highlights the time pressure experienced by this group of students. As one of her participants details:

My husband doesn’t like anybody to cook for the family except myself. Even before we married he encouraged me to be a teacher. He said teachers have more time with children. I wasn’t interested in teaching, but I opted for it because of him. So before I came here I had a very tight timetable. In the morning I would take [my children] to an Arabic school where they would stay until 5pm. In between I would do my fast cooking to ensure that everything is done in time. At 7pm my husband could come back and wants dinner. Thereafter I would do the cleaning up to about 9pm. It is from 9pm to midnight that I would now sit down and do office work and prepare myself for the next day. When I joined the university it became more challenging. I was supposed to spend more hours on work. I had to adjust myself. So I would rush home during lunch time and do the cooking. For the Arabic classes I decided to take the next shift (5-7pm.). Now here it is even more challenging. All the same my roles as a wife and mother still prevail. (Participant in Bhalalusesa, 1998:30)

Women who chose to avoid this source of stress by delaying child-bearing, or by leaving family behind in their home countries, often experience other types of stress associated with this decision. Wright (1997:101) argues that while all parents who leave their

families at home experience a profound sense of loss and worry, the social stigma attached to women ‘abandoning’ their children makes this a particularly stressful experience for female international students. Bhalalusesa (1998) also comments on this phenomenon:

[I]n most developing countries, it is very exciting and considered an achievement for the entire family when a man (head of the family and provider) leaves home to go abroad (to a developed country) for further studies. However, the opposite is experienced by a woman. This is supported by the fact that the society continues to identify women as having the primary responsibility to care for the family. Therefore the decision to leave aside the responsibility is not an easy task for a woman. Rather, it is a complex process full of mixed feelings, ambivalence and psychological conflict within the woman herself, the family, and even close relatives. (Bhalalusesa, 1998:22)

Bhalalusesa (1998) argues that women often need to do a considerable amount of role renegotiation (with varying degrees of success) within their relationships in order to enable them take up opportunities abroad. She reports that this role renegotiation is frequently a source of relationship conflict, as husbands are usually not happy to take on traditionally ‘feminine’ domestic responsibilities. As one of the welfare support staff in Wild and Scheyvens’ (2000:37) research on the experiences of NZAID scholars within a New Zealand university relayed:

I was speaking to a woman recently who was saying about how she got this scholarship and her husband wasn’t keen on the idea that he should accompany her over here as a dependent. [E]ven though he is entitled to an allowance and everything under the scholarship scheme, that’s not an appropriate role for him, because he is the bread-winner in their family and he is the high profile public servant or whatever he is back home. So she had no choice but to come alone, even though economically they could afford to be here.

One of Bhalalusesa’s (1998) participants indicates that the stigma attached to the idea of men ‘following’ their wives abroad is still perpetuated by the attitudes of many scholarship committees:

I remember when I sat for the interview to be awarded a scholarship. One of the questions asked was whether or not I was going to bring my family with me. Their main concern was about my husband. What will he do? They couldn’t imagine a man leaving his prosperous business to just follow me here and depend on my allowance. I don’t think they ask similar questions to men. (Participant in Bhalalusesa, 1998:31)

Bhalalusesa (1998), herself an international doctoral student, was inspired to undertake her research in response to the conflicts she personally experienced trying to reconcile family and study commitments. She eventually decided to leave her family at home in Tanzania, and was able to successfully negotiate this with her husband; although she still struggled to deal with her own feelings of loss, as well as with the attitudes of others to her decision:

I remember the feelings I had when I received the letter of award from the Association of Commonwealth Universities in the UK to pursue doctoral studies in Bristol. My immediate concern both consciously and unconsciously (maybe) was how to leave my family (children and their father) for 3 years. For me this represented a series of difficult choices. What should be the priority: my professional development or my roles as a mother and wife, as expected of me by society? ... Interestingly, even after my arrival in Britain both men and women often ask me how I managed to leave my family behind and who was taking care of my husband and children. The same question is seldom asked of the men colleagues we are studying with. (Bhalalusesa, 1998:23)

One of the academic staff members within Wild and Scheyvens' (2000) research spoke of his awareness of the intense emotions female international students experience around the decision to leave a child and/or a partner at home:

What got me most was once early on when we were here we had two women who were out [in New Zealand] by themselves, and I was aware that they were married, with their partners back home, but we had a do at our place one time and one of them. ... latched on to our two kids. ... and I said something to her during the night, and she said 'my daughter is this age', and, ... here she was, out here for two years, away, leaving her kids behind. And I thought, my god ... I couldn't handle that. [S]he was quite emotional about it, but I'd never seen a sign of that before – work, dead serious, and worked hard, and so on. And it was just that little inkling. I thought, God, we think we understand homesickness, but how can you comprehend being away from your ... seven year old kid? (Participant in Wild & Scheyvens, 2000:36)

Bhalalusesa (1998) reports that women who decide not to marry or have children in order to pursue study opportunities also experience significant internal conflict over this decision. Several of her participants shared their feelings of sadness and anger that in the eyes of their culture, by choosing to study abroad they had effectively 'educated themselves out of marriage':

My career means a lot to me. But at the same time it limits my chances of getting a life partner. A career is not a substitute for having a family or getting married. But the chances are less. In my country men have the mentality that highly educated women are proud and feminists. (Bhalalusesa, 1998:28)

As well as making substantial personal sacrifices in order to study abroad, research suggests that many female international students also face gender-related difficulties during their study experience.

Gender and student life

Participants in both Goldsmith and Shawcross' (1985:29) and Kenway and Bullen's (2003:13) research said they felt that, as female students, they were expected to be more serious about their study, and to work harder while they were overseas than men; and that they were given less leeway to have fun and enjoy the social aspects of the study experience. As a Zambian student in Goldsmith and Shawcross' (1985) study relayed:

There is a kind of social pressure which means that if you are a man and you want to go overseas you'd want to enjoy yourself, which is acceptable. If you're a woman, you're expected to concentrate single-mindedly on your studies. (Participant in Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985:29)

Several authors have reported that female international students are more likely to suffer greater initial social adjustment difficulties (Martin et al., 1995:103; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991:175). Some attribute this to the tendency of female international students to experience greater social isolation (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985:23-25; Leonard, 1998:29; Ward & Masgoret, 2004:53). Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985:25) argue that the 'male' and 'youth' focus of student culture within Western cultures, in particular, the emphasis on socialising in bars, acts to exclude female international students, who tend to be 'mature' and to face stronger cultural restrictions on mixed-gender socialising and alcohol consumption. Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985:23) found that this difficulty was particularly acute for students from poorer nations, who were more likely to be older students. Research by Wild and Scheyvens (2000) also discusses the social challenges faced by mature female students. As one female participant in this study relayed:

[W]hen you want to have a break, where do you go? I mean, most of us ... I'm in that age group, I can't just walk down the road to the night-club and dance with the eighteen year olds. And some of us don't have our husbands here, but

we still want to have a social life, we still want to meet together on a Friday night, especially so that you can have a break on Friday night. (Participant in Wild & Scheyvens, 2000:66)

Further, Leonard (1998) argues that the cultural notion that women have a special role in upholding traditions and customs frequently makes it more difficult for them to undergo the degree of adjustment required to participate in host social culture:

Women are positioned differently from men in the role they are expected to play as bearers of their home (or minority ethnic) culture – as ‘keepers of the hearth’ – being required to be more conformist in dietary, clothing, cultural and religious mores. (Leonard, 1998:30)

The fact that women in most cultures are socialised to place high value on interpersonal connection means that the loss of normal support systems and social isolation experienced in the new environment is also potentially more distressing for female international students (Rohrlich & Martin, 1991:176). However, despite, or indeed because of, the considerable difficulties faced by this group of students, most studies report that female sojourners report a huge sense of achievement associated with completing their programme of study.

Positive outcomes of the experience often centre around the opportunity to become more independent, and to live within a culture that places higher value on female competence. Students within Goldsmith and Shawcross' (1985:25) study listed gaining the opportunity to experience greater “independence and freedom” as one of the most satisfactory aspects of studying abroad. The female international students in Davis and Dodd's study (1993:12) on US College life also attached considerable importance to the opportunity they had to live within a culture where women experience “greater independence and self-determination”, and were more “outspoken on public issues.” This experience of greater personal autonomy generally translates into feelings of increased confidence and self-pride amongst female sojourners (Ghosh & Wang, 2003:274; Kluger, 1996:41).

For many women, the opportunity to challenge traditional gender roles, and, for some women, the chance to encounter feminist ideas within their coursework leads to a more positive revaluation of their sense of ‘femaleness’, as well as a commitment to improving the lives of women within their communities. A Chinese student in Garrod and Davis’ (1999) seminal narrative work *Crossing customs: International students write on U.S. college life and culture* talks about how her study experience has provided her with a newfound appreciation of the hardships faced by her mother and other women within her culture:

Had Mother known that, twenty-four years later, her daughter would be living a relatively carefree life and receiving a good education in one of the most prestigious colleges in America, would that have brought her some comfort in the midst of poverty, starvation and cruelty? Maybe. But I know what would have brought her greatest comfort, had she known it: I would remember all she had gone through as a girl and woman; that I have made an asset of her life stories and remained true to them; and that she is the greatest reason to appreciate how girls and women, such as my mother, my female friends and classmates, have shaped my life and aspirations. And I have felt the urge to sing their unsung songs for them: songs of frustration, forbearance, courage, and determination. (Chen, 1999:150)

While not all female sojourners take such an explicitly feminist approach to their experience, it is clear that many women enjoy having the opportunity to at least broaden their understanding of the possible roles open to women. They are also equally likely to report a sense of satisfaction associated with getting the chance to challenge racist stereotypes within their host culture about women from their societies (Kenway & Bullen, 2003:14; Misun Kim, 1999:139-140). In finding themselves in the position of both critic and defender of familiar gender roles, many female international students report an increased awareness of their ability to ‘choose’ what it means to be a woman. As Sutama Ghosh (2003), an Indian woman studying in Toronto, recounts in her autobiographical work, the sojourn experience makes visible the new opportunities women have to live between the old and the new on their own terms:

In the summer, I visited home for a short while. Before the journey, I began contemplating whether I should be ‘like me’ in Toronto or ‘like me’ in Kolkata – should I wear trousers or shalwar kameez – particularly when I get off the airplane in Kolkata. I was worried which external appearance of mine would be more appropriate. Ultimately I decided to wear trousers until London and shalwar kameez thereafter. To my surprise, in the women’s washrooms of the Heathrow airport, I found I was just one of the many homebound women of

Indian origin busy transforming from a mem to a *desi*⁴. I was amazed how easily and competently married women, in particular, put on *bindi* (dot), *sindoor* (vermillion), *sari* and *churi* (bangles) and metaphosed in minutes into the traditional *bou* (daughter-in-law). In the privacy of those ‘green rooms’, many others like me were hastily getting ready for the next role, to be played at the next destination. (Ghosh in Ghosh & Wang, 2003:275, emphasis in original)

For women with children, the study experience can also provide the chance to broaden their son’s and daughter’s understandings of the options open to women. Two of the respondents in Bhalalusesa’s (1998) study mentioned the special value they attached to being able to show their children that women are capable of achieving at a high level within public life. As one of these women, a doctoral student, recounts, she wanted to show her daughters that anything is possible, including combining domestic roles with a career:

As a woman and a mother I felt that this was the best example I could set for my children. To grow up professionally as a human being. I value being together with them. I know it is difficult. Sometimes I come back home very tired but I would at least spend some time with them. I want them to be part of this and realise that it is always possible to combine family responsibilities and academic commitments. That is one of the reasons why I came with my family. I am certainly sure that I am setting a role model for them to create their own targets in life. (Participant in Bhalalusesa, 1998:28)

To date, there has been very little research that explores the long-term impact of the overseas study experience on women’s lives. The following section examines the small body of literature that reflects on the phenomenon of ‘return’

Women’s experience of homecoming

Kenway and Langmead (1999) asked the female international students who participated in their research to anticipate the types of difficulties they were likely to face on their return home. They listed these anticipated difficulties as: finding ways to assert themselves within a more hierarchical and patriarchal society; fitting back into a more bureaucratic work environment; adjusting back to having less rights as a woman; coping with the jealousy of work colleagues; missing the multiculturalism of their host culture; and feeling pressured to make choices about which parts of their new identity they would keep and which parts they would leave behind (Kenway & Langmead, 1999:27).

⁴ Colloquial term for someone from the ‘homeland’ (Ghosh & Wang, 2003:274).

Hazen and Alberts (2006:211), who conducted focus groups with international students in the US to gauge the reasons why sojourners attempt to emigrate rather than return home, noted that women were particularly likely to list gender-related restrictions on their work and personal lives in their country of origin as a reason to avoid returning. Christofi and Thompson's (2007:59) research on the experiences of international students who chose to return to their sojourn country after only a brief period back in their country of origin also listed a heightened awareness of gender inequalities as a reason for female students reluctance to return home. As one of their female participants, from Cyprus, relayed:

[G]oing back there I think what I felt a lot was angry. [I] realised that women were still objectified and treated as less than human sometimes. ... When I moved back home, it didn't occur to me that these things would bother me. ... I guess on the surface things seemed to have progressed a little bit as far as, you know, society and people's attitudes. On the other hand, a lot of things stayed the same, like the way women are treated. ... We talk in this country [United States] about how women are still sometimes treated unfairly in the workplace, but in Cyprus it's so blatant. ('Susan' in Christofi & Thompson, 2007:59)

As noted earlier, a number of women in Bhalalusesa's (1998) study also expressed concerns about how their new educational qualifications would affect their potential to find a romantic partner. Both Martin's (1984:124) and Brabant et al.'s (1990) research on re-entry adjustment also found that female international students were more likely to experience re-adjustment stress related to efforts to try and renegotiate relationships with family. They reported that:

[S]ex was the single most important variable in our analysis in terms of predicting problems returning home. Females were more likely than males to report problems with both family and daily life, and to find their friends had changed. Perhaps it is because the women have changed ... although ... it is the response of significant others to these changes rather than the changes themselves that are problematic. (Brabant et al., 1990:397)

When exploring the longer-term impacts of overseas education on women's lives, it is also at least partly possible to extrapolate from accounts that students give about visits home during their study experience. While the feelings and family dynamics associated with these brief homecomings are likely to be different to those associated with permanent return, these accounts do provide some insights into the impacts of the study

experience on life at home. Ghosh (2003) talks about the ways that a holiday back in Kolkata revealed to her that her educational experience was changing her status within her family:

During my stay in Kolkata, I was careful not to reveal any of my newly acquired Canadian vocabulary or changed habits. I was earnestly trying to prove that I was the same person. In contrast to my fears of being negatively judged by ‘my people’, however, I found my relatives showering attention on me. I felt that my status had risen in their eyes; after all, as Mamoni (my aunt) said, I was now a *billet ferot* (foreigner returned). This time I was actually able to argue why women should have the independence to choose their lives, and why going to *bidesh* (foreign land) does not necessarily mean forsaking one’s traditions (Ghosh in Ghosh & Wang, 2003:275).

However, Pakistani student Aassia Haroon (1999) argues that this increase in social status can also be the cause of conflict within personal relationships. She talks about her own visits home, and her realisation that her time abroad was often the source of jealousy, especially from other women:

I have realized, by watching people’s eyes, that escape is something every girl and woman in Pakistan yearns for. Even those who do not admit it: I can see the longing in their guarded glances toward me, thinking I have managed it by coming to America. I understand their shadowed study, their darting pupils, because I remember watching others who had left before me with the same envy, the same disbelief, “Why couldn’t I leave?” I always used to think. Why wasn’t that me, with the fresh-faced just-returned-from-abroad look? (Haroon, 1999:21)

Thus, this small but growing body of research on the experience of female international students positions overseas study as the source of both conflict as well as considerable personal expansion for women. Domestic responsibilities as well as expectations of female ‘propriety’ are identified as particular restrictions on women’s ability to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the sojourn experience. Overseas study is also identified as a time in which women have the opportunity to re-evaluate their ideas about gender roles and the life choices open to them. Another small but relevant body of research that is relevant to this project is that which investigates the experience of return for sojourners who have studied at a New Zealand university. The following section explores the insights provided by this emerging literature.

New Zealand research on the experiences of ‘returnees’

Two important pieces of New Zealand research exploring the phenomena of return or ‘re-entry’ for international students are the studies undertaken by Butcher (2002) and McGrath (1998). Butcher’s research focuses on the experiences of students from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Hong Kong, while McGrath’s study examines the experiences of students from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. The majority of the participants in both studies were young, full-fee paying students, so, as a result, this research tends to centre on the issues faced by this demographic. In particular, both studies tend to position the re-entry process within the broader processes of transition from adolescence to adulthood. There are, however, a small number of older students and scholarship students in both studies, and a number of important points are made about the distinctive aspects of their experience.

Both McGrath (1998:42) and Butcher (2002:139) point to employment, and, in particular, finding a job as one of the biggest sources of frustration and disappointment experienced by returnees. Further, when returnees do find a job, McGrath argues, they tend to face difficulties reconciling their expectations with the realities of their new work environment. Returnees in his study reported that their sojourn had changed their ideas about what to expect in the workplace. New expectations of teamwork, friendships between workmates, the use of initiative, and rapport with one’s supervisor had been challenged by the realities of work environments characterised by competitiveness, rigid hierarchies, and long working hours (McGrath, 1998:43).

McGrath (1998:43) reported that, for this reason, students who had found jobs within ‘multinationals with a Western ethos’ had experienced fewer work-related adjustment issues. He also relayed that scholarship students who had a job to return to found re-entry less problematic, because they didn’t face the stress of job hunting (McGrath, 1998:42). Interestingly, however, Butcher (2002) found that scholarship students who were financially ‘bonded’ to return to secure government jobs faced other sorts of stresses around the need to abandon desires to pursue new career opportunities or to seek out better working conditions. As he noted:

[W]hile the bond secured their employment, it may have been for a company they would have rather not worked for, perhaps because of the hours worked or the company ethics or other reasons, and for a period of time (up to seven years or more) that they would rather not have worked to. Bonds, therefore, significantly limited the options of their holders. (Butcher, 2002:140)

Both Butcher (2002) and McGrath (1998) found that returnees had also experienced important shifts in their worldview. Most felt that their time in New Zealand had challenged their belief in materialism as the only route to personal and cultural success. According to McGrath, the sojourn in New Zealand had led many students to challenge the emphasis on the “5 Cs of success”, “cash, credit card, car, condominium, career, and country club⁵”, valorised by the middle class within their culture. He argued that after their time in New Zealand many students now found “aspects of this pursuit repugnant” (McGrath, 1998:57). Butcher (2002:133) reached similar conclusions, stating that returnees felt that “being in New Zealand gives you a picture of what alternatives to materialism can look like”. McGrath (1998:50) noted that this change in values was often a source of conflict with family, who had expectations that returnees would embrace the 5 Cs lifestyle and earn a high income on their return.

Interestingly, in a result not mentioned within other studies, McGrath (1998:58) noted that these family expectations were a particular cause of stress for a number of women in his study, who had decided to adopt a ‘Western’ model of stay-at-home motherhood on their return. He argued that, as middle-class women, they faced strong societal expectations to use their new qualifications to improve the income of the family, and that the decision to stay at home with children was a source of conflict with family.

Neither McGrath’s (1998) nor Butcher’s (2002) research provides any in-depth discussion of the impact of gender on the experience of returnees. McGrath did disaggregate his statistics by gender, and found that while women and men generally had similar re-entry experiences, women had more problems related to being “expected to listen to elders”, and expressed more “impatience with slow promotion and concern over the lack of quick material success” (McGrath, 1998:96,100). It is not clear whether this latter statement means women were experiencing greater problems securing a promotion or pay rise than men, or whether the experience was similar for both, but women

⁵ McGrath notes that while this term was widely used by returnees, they provided slightly different definitions of what exactly the 5 Cs were. Hence, his definition actually includes 6Cs!

experienced greater frustration related to it. If the latter were true, it is unclear what factors would make women more “impatient”. While Butcher (2002) does not directly address the issue of the ‘gendered’ nature of international student experience, he includes one quote from a woman that touches on some of the cultural challenges women, in particular, face fitting back into families again:

My father always tells me that he ... regrets sending me away because I am so ... defiant, as a girl. I now don't come home by ten, and I do what I want, whereas Asian girls should be quiet and not seen. (Participant in Butcher, 2002:146)

Four other studies that specifically address the long-term impacts of overseas education, and are particularly relevant to this study because they interview former NZAID scholarship students, are those produced by Quinn (1994), Inoncillo (1997), Davenport and Low (2004), and Strachan et al. (2007). Quinn's study examines the experiences of women from the Solomon Islands who had received an NZAID scholarship to complete a tertiary qualification in New Zealand or at another Pacific university. Inoncillo's (1997) research investigates the impact of the NZAID scholarship programme on the lives of recipients from the Philippines. Davenport and Low's (2004) study examines the experiences of NZAID returnees from the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. Finally, Strachan et al.'s recent research explores the experiences of ni Vanuatu⁶ women who have returned home after studying in New Zealand through an NZAID scholarship scheme.

Quinn's (1994) research found that returning female scholars generally experienced improved employment opportunities; an increase in social status; and a greater sense of confidence, independence and purpose. She also found that these gains were accompanied by a number of losses, including increased conflict with spouses and family over gender roles and responsibilities, and, for a small number, a felt sense of alienation from their culture. Many of the women within Quinn's (1994) study reported finding their homecoming harder than they had anticipated. They recounted feeling a mixture of pride at their accomplishments, excitement at reconnecting with home life and family, and confusion over how their new experiences and changed social status would affect their relationships. One of her participants, 'Hilary', describes her homecoming to Quinn:

⁶Indigenous people of Vanuatu

My family are happy now that I have finished my studies and I can get a job and look after myself. I was the first woman from our village to have done tertiary study and some people seemed a bit shocked and kept quiet. They didn't treat me as a normal woman in the village. They seemed to have a lot of respect and saw me as someone of 'high rank', an 'academic'. Some people asked about life overseas. They had never experienced a woman who had done this and were keen to hear stories. I often felt uncomfortable ... like I was an outsider. I had very mixed feelings about it all. My family is very important to me, and I'd been looking forward to going home, going fishing and swimming and so on. I did all those things, but I realised that I had changed a lot. My attitude to some traditional things is different. I'm still friends with people I was with in primary school, but I realise I've come back as someone else. I feel sad when I see people looking at me, as if I'm someone different. ('Hilary' in Quinn, 1994:183)

The sense that they had 'changed', Quinn (1994) reports, was most controversial within relationships with spouses and parents-in-law, who were particularly critical of efforts to be more assertive, and to combine a career with a family. While the women's own parents were often very proud of their achievements, they did not always receive the same support from their husband's family. As one woman, who had since separated from her husband due to this source of conflict, explained:

In terms of the family, I came back with a very open attitude. I used to just listen when my father-in-law spoke and agreed with everything, but I came back much more outspoken. At first I tried to get my husband to speak to him, but he couldn't stand up to him. So I told him directly that they shouldn't just depend on us for money. They should ask their other children for help, too. My husband was very upset at that. His parents think that it's not right for me to teach adults, liaise with male staff, travel overseas, and so on. They say it is a bad influence. I tell my husband we should encourage our daughters to speak up for themselves. His parents can't stand that, but my experience of teaching and the TESL course has taught me that there can be real problems if you don't say anything. We need to change that. I encourage the children to be independent and try to introduce new ideas. My husband always says, "Don't say anything that will upset my parents"... Lots of things have happened as a result of my New Zealand experience. I have different attitudes and am more outspoken. I have suffered because of it, but it is worth it. ('Therese' in Quinn, 1994:184)

Quinn (1994:185) found, however, that, for the majority of the women in her study, any increase in familial conflict was balanced out by the increased social standing they now have within their communities, and the new sense of purpose and commitment that they had to providing their community with a 'return' on this investment in their education.

She relayed that these women expressed a strong desire to use their new skills to contribute to the development of their nation, and that they were particularly focused on improving the lives of women in their communities (Quinn, 1994:204,212).

The women within Quinn's study had no problems securing good employment, and most, including those who had failed to complete their qualification, felt that the skills they had gained overseas had made a valuable contribution to their current employment. She noted that these women were now occupying positions of considerable power and responsibility within the Solomon Islands, with a number of former students being the first women to take up important posts:

Among the women who had completed tertiary qualifications, there were a number of 'firsts' for Solomon Islands' women. Most notable among these ... was the appointment of the first woman permanent secretary in the public service in the history of the Solomon Islands. Gabrielle had also been the first Solomon Island's woman to hold a New Zealand Government scholarship, attending USP⁷ in 1973/4. Other 'firsts' included the first woman lawyer, the first woman physical planner, and the first person to qualify for a dispensary assistant's certificate. Former New Zealand scholarship holders also returned to become the first woman senior planning officer in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the first woman Head of Department (not including Home Sciences) at King George VI Secondary School, and first woman in Solomon Islands Airlines (SOLAIR) management. (Quinn, 1994:187-8)

Quinn (1994:189) noted that a very high proportion of the female returnees had gone on to pursue further study. She links this to the high degree of frustration expressed by the participants about the sexist barriers they faced within their workplaces. While the women had not had trouble finding valued work, they did, however, report finding it difficult to advance within their positions. Many linked these difficulties to harassment in the workplace and discriminatory promotion practices (Quinn, 1994:192-3,200). She contended that the desire to undertake further education was likely to be linked to the need for women to be much more qualified than men in order to have a hope of overcoming sexist barriers to career advancement (Quinn, 1994:189). She reported that the women found their lack of career advancement particularly frustrating because they felt it was limiting them from fully utilising their new skills and knowledge to assist in their country's development (Quinn, 1994:204).

⁷ The University of the South Pacific

Inoncillo's (1997) study on Filipino NZAID returnees takes quite a different approach to that used by Quinn (1994). She uses a quantitative 'human capital approach'⁸, which specifically focuses on employment and 'skills-transfer', omitting broader personal and relational aspects of life experience. However, her research does examine whether gender impacts on work-related dimensions of the scholarship experience. Inoncillo's study found that women who took up an NZAID scholarship tended to be slightly older, and more likely to be working in urban areas than male recipients (Inoncillo, 1997:88-89). She also found that women were more likely to be studying for certificate training courses than men, who were more likely to undertake a Masters or PhD degree. She noted that this is particularly significant in the Filipino context, as the 'diploma', the qualification that most women received, is not a recognised qualification in that country.

Her research showed that women and men reported a number of similar benefits from participation in the scholarship programme, including promotion, broadened experience, making new contacts, and a belief that it had led to an improved level of international understanding between their country and New Zealand (Inoncillo, 1997:119). Women were slightly less likely to have translated their qualification into an increased salary in the two years since their return (73%, as opposed to 85% of men). However, both women and men were equally likely to believe that their educational experience has been useful within their current job overall (Inoncillo, 1997:94). Women and men also reported experiencing similar employment-related adversities. Being assigned to another department or given a different job on their return was a particular source of frustration for some, who felt this had prevented them from fully utilising their new skills (Inoncillo, 1997:96).

Davenport and Low's (2004) research is a tracer study contracted by NZAID. Their research examines the experiences of 124 former NZAID scholarship recipients from the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu. These individuals had participated in a range of NZAID scholarship schemes at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The report examines the "development impact" of participation in these schemes, as measured by four criteria: "successful completion of programme of study; return to home country; use of skills learnt during study in paid employment; [and] use of skills

⁸ See Chapter Three, page 54 for further discussion of the principles of human capital theory.

learnt during study in civic/private life (Davenport & Low, 2004:9).⁹ The inclusion of civic/private life means that the scope of this study is slightly wider than Inoncillo's (1997), which focuses almost exclusively on the impact on paid employment.

Davenport and Low's (2004) research found that men and women had similar completion rates (93% and 91%)⁹ (pg.15); however, women were less likely to find their qualification useful in helping them to get their first job (61% of men said the qualification had been 'absolutely necessary', as opposed to 42% of women) (pg. 30), and women were slightly less likely to report that the skills gained during their study had been useful within their first job, and their current job (40% of women as opposed to 49% of men said that they used their skills 'all the time' during their first job. For the current job these figures were 22% and 29% respectively) (pg. 32, 35). Significantly, Davenport and Low (2004) noted that nearly a quarter (22%) of women (and no men) reported that these skills have been of 'only a little' use within their current job (pg. 35).

This study also found that women were significantly less likely to report that they would still be resident in their country in five years time (81% of men said 'yes', compared to 61% of women. Nine percent of men said 'no', and 9% said 'maybe'. In comparison, 15% of women said 'no', and 18% of women said 'maybe'). The potential reasons for these gender differences are not explored. Davenport and Low (2004) also reported that women were less likely than men (73% compared to 88%) to find that they had the opportunity to use skills gained during the study within civic/private life¹⁰. They noted that this discrepancy could be due to the greater responsibilities women have for childcare: "As one solo mother of four stated, she has sole responsibility for all her children and a full time, demanding teaching job – this leaves no time to get involved in other activities" (Davenport & Low, 2004:37).

Davenport and Low's (2004) interviews also included an open-ended question asking respondents to comment on the benefits of the experience to themselves, their community, and their country. Unfortunately, these responses were not gender-disaggregated. Benefits to self included increased financial security, great self-knowledge

⁹ It is important to note that with a sample size of 124, the margin of error within this study was fairly high at 8%.

¹⁰ This was defined fairly broadly. Participants were asked whether they had used their new skills in "areas outside of paid work, such as in the church, in civic organisations, non-profits, NGO sector etc." (Davenport & Low, 2004:89)

and self-confidence, greater career satisfaction, increased independence, and a broadened social ‘outlook’. Benefits to community strongly centred around an increased ability to provide financial support to family. Benefits to country were identified as increasing the pool of quality ‘human resources’ available within their nation (Davenport & Low, 2004:Annex 1, 22-25).

Strachan et al.’s (2007) research on the experiences of ni Vanuatu women who have received NZAID scholarships presents a generally positive picture of the impact of the study experience. They noted that almost all the returnees in her study believed that they had gained knowledge and skills that have been useful within their jobs (Strachan et al., 2007). They found that this was true even where students had studied topics that relied heavily on New Zealand-related examples and course material (Strachan et al., 2007:151). Despite this, however, a number of their participants also expressed concern that no one had worked with them to ensure that there was a match between the skills they had gained and the jobs they have ended up in.

As Strachan et al. (2007) note, “The labour needs of the Vanuatu government and businesses are taken into consideration when awarding scholarships, yet on completion of their degrees there is very little follow up on their employment destinations” (Strachan et al., 2007:152). In addition, they found that while for those who were bonded to a government job, re-entry was fairly “seamless”, finding employment was extremely difficult for others. One woman in the study took over four and half years to find employment after her return (Strachan et al., 2007:150).

They also reported that there was considerable variation in the impact of the study experience on family and social life. For most, family were reported to be the primary source of support during the resettling period. However, many also found that after having been independent for several years, their desire for increased autonomy was a cause of friction with their family of origin (Strachan et al., 2007:149). The impact on friendships was varied. While some reported experiencing no problems fitting back into social networks, others reported feeling somewhat alienated from friends, who had often made different life choices during their absence (Strachan et al., 2007:149). As one woman noted, “your friends have moved on in life. Life in Vanuatu revolves around making babies, finding partners and settling down” (Strachan et al., 2007:149). Students

who had had the opportunity to return frequently during their time abroad appeared to experience the least friction within their family and social relationships on return. This friction was most acute for the woman who had been away six years without an opportunity to return:

When I returned to Vanuatu it was very hard. I was not used to extended family. I was used to living alone without anyone expecting anything from me. Social obligations, I had none [overseas]. I did not fit in [when I returned]. I did not understand how to fit in. Vanuatu had become alien to me. I had grown away from my family. ('Susan' in Strachan et al., 2007:149, additions in original)

Study abroad as a 'development' initiative

It is clear from this previous research that overseas study, and the scholarship experience in particular, has the potential to provide women with a range of important new opportunities, including increased social status, greater personal confidence, improved employment opportunities, increased income, new work skills, and greater cultural knowledge. It is also evident that these benefits can be accompanied by a number of losses: conflict in marriage and wider family relationships, stress and exhaustion associated with increased domestic responsibilities, career frustrations, and a degree of cultural alienation.

However, it is also clear that the extent to which these things should be seen as opportunities or losses is contestable. For instance, while, for some, the fact that overseas education may make women more likely to challenge existing gender roles or hierarchical working environments is seen as a positive thing, for others this is seen as an unfortunate side-effect of education abroad that causes social disharmony and personal adjustment difficulties. The uncritical focus on successful 'adjustment' and 'readjustment' within traditional literature on the international student limits our ability to examine the wider social and political implications of women's participation in development scholarship schemes.

Given the status of development scholarships as a form of educational aid, it is imperative that research into the impact of this distinctive type of overseas study experience also engages with broader political debates over the value of higher education

for women as a ‘development’ objective. This section examines the history of development scholarships as an aid initiative.

For students from low-income nations, development scholarships have traditionally been an important source of funding for tertiary training. Vast global inequalities in wealth continue to play themselves out in very uneven access to higher education. In 2004, 69 out of every 100 North American adults of tertiary-age were enrolled in tertiary education, compared to only 10 in 100 in South and West Asia, and 5 in 100 in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2006:20). Difficulties with the quality and availability of tertiary education in many parts of the developing world continue to fuel the emphasis on undertaking tertiary training in the West. The World Bank taskforce on Higher Education and Society (2000) describes the academic environment in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A situation it describes as characteristic of the problems faced by universities within many developing nations:

The current situation is extremely difficult. Most universities, public and private, lack the necessary funds to provide basic educational infrastructure – sufficiently spacious classrooms, laboratories, equipped teaching hospitals, libraries, computers, and Internet access. In general, students have no textbooks, and professors must dictate their notes or copy them onto a blackboard. The majority of schools have no library, no telephone, and not a single computer that students can use. (World Bank, 2000:18)

Essayist Heather Hewett (2004) paints a similar picture of the university in Senegal where she was employed as a lecturer. She speaks of the shock at encountering first hand the reality that, as a PhD student from the United States, she “could write about books written in countries where college students and their professors had little or no access to them” (Hewett, 2004:719):

I was supposed to be finishing my dissertation, but I couldn’t shake off the images from the previous 4 months. One, in particular, haunted me: the library tower at the center of the university campus where I taught. Seven stories high, it had been built in the hope that the university would play an important role in changing Senegal’s future ... The library stood in the middle of campus, looming high over the small cluster of squat buildings, scraggly trees and bleating goats. There was plenty of activity on the first floor – bustling librarians, students poring over books, racks filled with out-of-date copies of *The Economist* and *Le Soleil*. But once I began to climb the stairs, as I did one day early in the semester, I was met with the same scene: floor after floor of empty

bookshelves, open windows caked with grime, and a fine filigree of sand blanketing it all. The empty library sighed with the wind, as if it had recognized the futility of resisting what seemed to be an inevitable onslaught of desert sand. (Hewett, 2004:719)

The types of challenges faced by these universities in Sub-Saharan Africa, while not necessarily representative, in their severity, of those faced by all universities in the Third World, are evidence of the ways in which global inequalities in wealth continue to translate into reduced access to important social services – in this case quality higher education. These disparities have fuelled the ongoing popularity of scholarship schemes that provide students from Third World nations with access to education in Western universities. In 2004, one out of every 16 (or 5.9 %) of students from Sub-Saharan Africa were studying abroad, compared to only one out of every 250 North American students (0.4%) (UNESCO, 2006:37). As a Bhalalusesa (1998:26) explains:

In developing countries overseas training is often regarded as complementary to local training. It is normally resorted to because of absence of local facilities in the right discipline or at the right level. Overseas training is dominant at the postgraduate level.

Development scholarship schemes have been particularly important for women, who have traditionally faced the greatest financial and social barriers to accessing university education (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985:16; Mlama, 1998:477; UNESCO, 1999:17). A desire to address these barriers, and confront global gender disparities in educational access has come through as one of the primary goals of international conferences on education and development within the last two decades. The World Declaration on Education for All, formulated in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, stated that:

The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. (UNESCO, 2000:75)

Ten years later, the World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000, declared that:

Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realizing the right to education. (UNESCO, 2000:16)

At this conference, 189 countries signed up to what have become the ‘Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs) for education. One of the most significant of these goals, MDG3, target four, was the commitment to:

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015. (UNESCO, 2000:8)

These MDG commitments have been formulated on the back of sustained evidence that women as a group face particular barriers to realising their rights to education, and that this problem is a global phenomenon. Within many developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia, women remain under-represented at all levels of educational provision: from primary through to tertiary training. In all societies, including Western ones (where women now make up over half of all tertiary enrolments) women remain segregated into areas of study (education, health, humanities and social sciences) that lead to lower paid, lower status employment; and they are still less likely to undertake postgraduate training, or to be employed and promoted within universities.

Table One provides a picture of the global educational status of women at the tertiary level. This table is based on statistics from a selected range of countries¹¹. As well as highlighting the lower enrolment rates of women in tertiary institutions in Africa and parts of Asia, this table also provides evidence of the disciplinary segregation and lower rates of postgraduate enrolment experienced by women in most nations. However, it is important to note that these sorts of statistical analyses tend to paint an overly positive view of women’s educational achievement, due to the fact that a significant proportion of countries do not or cannot collect this sort of gender-disaggregated data (UNESCO, 2006:19). Missing, biased and infrequently updated data are major, ongoing issues hampering the compilation of global education statistics (Heyneman, 1993:381). As UNESCO note, it is acknowledged that countries with higher female participation rates are, on the whole, also more likely to have the financial and organisational resources to collect education statistics, which results in statistical bias:

Gender questions cannot be reduced to equity in participation or graduation ratios. In the vast majority of reporting countries, most tertiary graduates are female. However, one-half of the world’s countries, including large nations in East and South Asia, lack these kinds of gender-disaggregated data.

¹¹ Priority was given to countries with the most comprehensive datasets available. Attempts were also made to include countries from all regions, and to highlight a degree of diversity within each region.

Table 1. Percentage of tertiary students, graduates, and teaching staff who are female, selected countries, 2004

Country or territory	Enrolments		Graduates										Teaching staff
	Total % female	% female at postgraduate level*	Total % female	Science	Engineering, manufacturing and construction	Education	Humanities and arts	Social science, business and law	Agriculture	Health and welfare	Services	Total % female	
Bangladesh	32	28	33	24	11	41	37	32	17	36	27	15	
Cambodia	31	27	29	14	2	30	31	32	14	27	41	16	
Chile	48	40	51	49	23	79	56	56	37	72	...	...
Czech Republic	51	36	55	39	25	75	63	59	49	78	48	39	
El Salvador	54	9	58	49	30	76	62	56	15	76	43	32	
Eritrea	13	...	14	11	2	14	22	18	10	21	...	14	
Ethiopia	25	...	29	22	6	20	17	39	14	29	...	9	
Finland	53	50	62	49	22	84	75	70	48	86	66	45	
Iran	51	25	47	60	13	61	70	49	31	68	36	16	
Iraq	36	35	33	51	11	53	42	35	26	37	37	35	
Japan	46	29	49	26	13	77	69	37	41	68	77	...	
Jordan	51	26	50	46	24	75	70	46	56	57	66	20	
Namibia	53	44	56	46	11	52	72	57	43	92	52	27	
New Zealand	59	49	61	38	31	82	64	59	42	80	61	47	
Philippines	55	62	60	61	32	77	59	70	54	76	15	55	
Saudi Arabia	59	35	53	45	7	78	29	39	...	44	60	34	
Switzerland	45	39	44	22	11	74	59	42	35	72	42	27	
Thailand	54	62	51	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	47	
Turkey	42	37	44	44	25	52	55	49	43	60	26	37	
United Kingdom	57	44	58	37	20	73	63	56	60	80	68	38	
United States	57	51	58	43	22	77	60	55	49	76	56	43	

... Indicates no data available

* Defined as a course that leads to the 'award of an advanced research qualification' that requires the submission of a thesis, and is not solely based on course-work.

Source: UNESCO (2006) Global education digest: Comparing education statistics across the world. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Consequently, it is impossible to formulate regional or global conclusions on gender parity in fields of study at the tertiary level. Furthermore, the countries that lack data generally have lower female tertiary enrolment ratios. (UNESCO, 2006:19)

However, many fear that the campaign to increase women's participation in higher education is becoming increasingly difficult to defend within a climate of worsening conditions within the tertiary sector within many Third World nations. As Mlama (1998) argues:

The challenges in salvaging the education system at all levels are staggering. ... The big concern is whether gender issues have any chance of getting attention in the face of all these problems. Will gender issues be accorded a meaningful place in this overcrowded agenda? What chances do activities intended to bring gender equity have to be allocated funds in competition with acquisition of books, laboratory equipment or increases in staff remuneration? (Mlama, 1998:467)

Within the context of continuing disparities in women's access to quality tertiary education services, scholarship schemes still address an important development imperative. As UNESCO (1999) argue:

Some sort of affirmative action remains absolutely necessary as a way of ensuring access of women to higher education. This has to be followed by a system of loans and scholarships, not only for qualified girls without family resources but also as an encouragement for all girls to continue their studies. (UNESCO, 1999:17)

Tertiary scholarships have historically played an important role within New Zealand's overseas aid programme. The following section explores the rationale behind New Zealand's commitment to this form of educational assistance as a development priority.

New Zealand's development scholarship programme

Education, and higher education scholarships in particular, have traditionally been one of the most important funding priorities within New Zealand's aid programme. Historically, around a third of all aid funding has been allocated to meeting educational objectives (NZAID, 2007b:3). In the 2006/2007 financial year, NZAID allocated \$32.9 million to fund tertiary scholarships (Were, 2006:20). The majority of these scholarships (\$25.2 million) were allocated through NZAID's bilateral aid programme, which provides recipient governments in the Pacific and South-East Asia with the opportunity to select candidates based on identified national human resource needs and development

priorities. The New Zealand Development Scholarship (NZDS) (Public) is largest scholarship category within the NZAID bilateral scholarship programme. Recipients of these bilateral scholarships tend to be government/civil service employees. The majority of the Thai participants within this research received an NZDS (Public) grant¹².

NZAID also operates a smaller non-bilateral scholarship programme that allows individuals from the private sector and NGOs in countries in Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and Africa to apply directly to New Zealand universities to complete postgraduate training that will contribute to the development of their country (NZAID, 2007f). Several of the participants within this research who were completing PhD programmes were receiving one of these scholarships, labelled the New Zealand Development Scholarship (Open). In 2007, a total of 45 countries were eligible for participation in NZAID's scholarship programme (NZAID, 2007c).¹³

NZAID's modern day scholarship schemes have grown out of two important historical relationships, New Zealand's colonial relationships within the South Pacific, and New Zealand's membership of the 'Colombo Plan', a development coalition formed in 1950 to counter communism in Asia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2001:5). Khanh Tuoc Trinh a Vietnamese student who was a graduate of New Zealand's Colombo scholarship programme in the 1960s explained the emphasis within this era on the graduate as the 'ambassador' for Western culture in the new 'post-colonial' world:

He [the graduate] is expected to bring, on his return, new ideas and an image of the West entirely different from the one lingering from colonial days. In short, he must be a modern Marco Polo in reverse who should be able to inform at least his close circle of friends, relatives and neighbours about the advisability of accepting Western civilization, as practices in the West, and the extent to which it should be assimilated. (Trinh, 1968:17)

Mirroring the global shift within aid policy away from concern with halting communism towards the more recent focus on 'poverty alleviation', the objectives of New Zealand's scholarship development programme have changed over time. A wide-reaching ministerial review of New Zealand's aid objectives conducted in 2001 identified a degree

¹² Formerly known as 'Study Awards'

¹³ NZAID also runs several other smaller scholarship schemes, including the Short-Term Training Awards scheme, and the Regional Development Scholarship Scheme (available to selected Pacific Island nations). NZAID also administers the Commonwealth Scholarships scheme.

of ambiguity surrounding the contemporary aims of New Zealand's development scholarship programme. The report argued that, historically, there has been a confusing mix of "foreign policy/diplomatic, trade/commercial and development objectives" underpinning scholarship policy (Ministerial Review Team, 2001:57). Since this critical review, NZAID has moved to tie scholarship opportunities more closely to the goal of "poverty elimination" and to ensure that training needs are linked to specific development objectives identified by partner countries (NZAID, 2007b:12).

NZAID identifies four primary commitments underpinning its contemporary education programme, including:

- a) a commitment to education as a 'human right' under article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);
- b) a commitment to education as an 'end in itself' that increases the capacity of individuals to make meaningful decisions about their lives;
- c) a commitment to meeting the international Millennium Development Goals related to education; and
- d) a commitment to education as a mechanism for contributing to "poverty elimination and other development goals" (NZAID, 2007b:9-12).

These "other development goals" are broad and varied, as defined within this section from NZAID's education policy:

The technical, analytical and strategic capability that emerges from higher education is a prerequisite to understanding poverty and poverty-related issues, delivering basic services, developing and maintaining infrastructure, attaining economic growth, attaining and maintaining international competitiveness, achieving and maintaining social cohesion, protecting the environment and delivering transparent and accountable governance. In particular, high rates of participation in post-basic education contribute greatly to export-led growth, increased trade and the capability of countries to respond effectively to the demands of an ever-changing world and new policy priorities, such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. (NZAID, 2007b:12)

Given the wide range of development goals identified within its education policy, and the considerable diversity of academic programmes completed by recipients, NZAID provides NZDS graduates with broad conditions relating to what they will be expected to do with their new qualification. The most significant is the requirement to:

[s]pend at least two years in their home country on completion of their scholarship to assist in the development of their country by applying the skills and knowledge that they have gained from their study. (NZAID2007d)

NZAID's scholarship programme also includes a strong commitment to gender equity. While women have traditionally been underrepresented within the programme, partner countries are now encouraged to ensure that an equal number of men and women get the opportunity to apply (NZAID, 2007e:9-3). In the 2006/7 scholarship intake, women made up 41% of those who received a bilateral NZDS (Public) grant (NZAID, 2007a:4), and 60% of those who received a non-bilateral NZDS (Open) grant (NZAID, 2006:4). The under-representation of girls at lower levels of the education system within Pacific countries is identified by NZAID as the most likely cause of the lower rates of women nominated by governments for participation in the NZDS (Public) scheme (NZAID, 2007a).

Conclusion

This chapter was provided an overview of previous empirical research that examines the experience of study life and returning home for female development scholars. It brings together research on the experiences of female international students; studies on the phenomenon of 'return' for international students who have attended New Zealand universities; and previous research on the lives of NZAID scholars. These three small bodies of literature provide important insights into the sorts of experiences associated with taking up a development scholarship to study within a New Zealand university. They also provide important observations on how women in particular experience study abroad. However, as I have argued, this body of research is very small, and is situated within a broader field of literature on the 'international student' that has significant limitations.

Considering the status of development scholarships as part of a wider international aid programme, the complex politics surrounding the impacts of these schemes is not well served by the narrow scope of traditional literature on international students. The overemphasis on personal mal/adjustment, and the tendency to neglect the role education plays in larger socio-cultural process, limits the scope and usefulness of this literature. Except for the limited (but important) liberal focus on equity and access

within research on the experience of female students, this literature does not tend to engage with broader questions over the wider meaning and impact of educational experience. Nor does it acknowledge the ‘contested’ nature of educational outcomes. Given these limitations, I believe that, within this study, there is considerable value associated with broadening the scope of this literature to include debates occurring within the wider field of ‘gender, education and development’ research.

The following chapter explores the potential of this latter body of thought to produce more holistic, vivid, and meaningful accounts of the experiences of women who participate in development scholarship schemes. While quantitative, instrumentalist accounts of experience have traditionally been hegemonic within this field of research, there is also considerable potential to expand its boundaries to include less acknowledged humanist, feminist and poststructuralist frameworks for exploring educational realities.

Broadening the theoretical and empirical base from which to conduct this research not only has the potential to produce more complex, multi-dimensional accounts of the ‘scholarship girl’ experience, but I argue (in Chapter Four) that it also responds to the call within development studies for post-positivist research projects which eschew linear accounts of theoretical or disciplinary ‘evolution’ in favour of methodologies which enable more tentative, collaborative, multi-disciplinary explorations of development realities.

Chapter Three - The ‘scholarship girl’ and the meaning of educational experience: Writing on gender, higher education and development.

Introduction

The following chapter provides an overview of five influential discourses on the relationship between gender, education and development. As discussed within Chapter Two, this overview is designed to identify the theoretical resources available for examining the wider ‘development’ impact of women’s overseas study experiences. This overview is by no means exhaustive, and is limited by my own ongoing inability to engage with political/theoretical works produced outside of the English language tradition¹⁴. While at times, these discourses ‘evolve’ in a linear fashion, I have tried to highlight the ways in which they are often coexistent and interdependent. All of these discourses (some more than others) retain a degree of currency within different sectors of the development community, and all contain the potential to shed light on different aspects of educational experience.

I have also sought to provide an overview that is multi-disciplinary. I have deliberately shied away from the traditional separation - some say ‘ghettoisation’ (Jolly, 2006:78) - of development topics, bringing together literature from fields of education, development, feminist, poststructuralist theory/practice, where it has made a contribution to this field. In this respect, I am particularly keen to avoid the standard association of anything related to ‘women’ in the development field with the theoretical evolution of a specialised ‘feminist development theory’, that has passed through specific stages (WID/WAD/GAD) on its way to a current version, which is the most useful and enlightened. This chapter examines the potential contribution that different genres of research on women, higher education and development can make to explorations of the experiences of female development scholars.

¹⁴ This is a major limitation, still largely glossed over within most Western academic writing, I feel. Despite the increasing globalisation of the English language, it is important to acknowledge that there exist vast reservoirs of experience/theory that we are not able to factor into our explorations of reality because we simple cannot access them across the language divide. The mono-lingualism encouraged within Western societies is particularly disabling for Western researchers, in this respect. Olivier de Sardan’s (2005) cogent treatise on the virtual parallel evolution of French-language and English-language development thought due to the language barrier, as well as my own experiences as a Spanish language learner have reinforced for me the importance of keeping this observation at the forefront of discussions about methodological veracity.

I have chosen to categorise the following five discourses according to their aims, rather than strictly by time period, as it is evident that there has been a certain degree of historical recycling of the particular philosophical concepts involved. I have labelled the major discourses: ‘education for reproduction’, ‘education for production’, ‘education for submission’, ‘education for empowerment’, and ‘education as experience’. It is important to note that writers within the field of gender, higher education and development do not necessarily maintain strict allegiance to one particular discourse. Indeed, given the political nature of the development planning process it is reasonably common to encounter writers calling upon more than one discourse in an effort to build a ‘consensus for action’ that is likely to appeal to the diverse political interests represented within the development community.

Education for reproduction

The first dawnings of reason, with the first development of fancy and affections, are in every country greatly subject to the control of the female mind and women thus everywhere exert a powerful influence on the character of after life (British and Foreign School Society Annual Report, 1829 in Goodman, 2000:16-17).

Education of women has a positive impact on the quality of life. The educated woman gives more attention to the health and nutrition of her family, has a higher life expectancy than her illiterate counterpart and sees to the education of her children. Deprivation can result in sickness, inadequate nutrition, large families, high infant mortality rates and low life expectancy (UNESCO, 1994:3).

As the two quotes, above - written more than 120 years apart - highlight, the reproductive roles of women, their lives as wives and mothers, have been the most powerful and enduring focus of discussions around the role of education for women in Third World societies (Moser, 1989:1807). This focus was established by early colonial educators who targeted women as the “angels of the hearth” (Rivers, 2006:6), or ‘moral guardians’ of the household. They encouraged women to emulate European models of household management that focused on improving family health and hygiene (Goodman, 2000:17; Leach, 1998:11; Rogers, 1980:39). This focus has been perpetuated by mainstream development organisations concerned with the potential of educating women to reduce fertility levels, and decrease infant and child mortality rates (Pong, 1999:155).

The establishment of educational institutions during the colonial era was dominated by the aims of two major institutions: the Church and the State. While these two institutions often had competing educational objectives, they both shared a belief in the inferiority of indigenous education beliefs, and a view that women were less suited for education than men. These views were strongly influenced by evolutionary arguments of the day that positioned both women and non-Western peoples as more ‘child-like’, with smaller brains, and lower levels of intelligence (Fox, 1997:51; Lyons, 1978:192). Both women and indigenous people were seen as barely educable, and indeed many cautioned against ‘over-education’ for fear that it would lead to ill health resulting from an overtaxed brain (Lyons, 1978:197).

As a result, women were more likely to be targeted for church-based ‘moral education’ than skills-based state education (Kelly, 1989). Church-based education tended to be more broad-based and inclusive, focused, as it was, on the wide-spread transmission of Christian values (Gould, 1993:22). Indeed, women, as the ‘moral guardians’ of the family, were often explicitly targeted by missionary educators hoping to accelerate cultural change within the family.

The colonial administrators, on the other hand, did not support the type of broad-based education favoured by the Church, fearing that it would lead to increased expectations and social unrest (Altbach, 1987:50). The colonial administrators saw education as a tool that could be used to ‘up-skill’ a small local male elite in order to enable them to take up lower-level administrative positions within the new colonial governments. As a result, state education tended to focus more on basic literacy and numeracy skills, and was available to a higher level to a small number of local men (Altbach & Kelly, 1978:2; Gould, 1993:22). Women were not considered suited to public office, and as a result, tended to be educated for ‘domesticity’ (Rogers, 1980:36). Gail Kelly (1989) summarises the typical differences between the curriculum for boys and girls in the colonial era; in this case focusing on French Vietnam:

Without a doubt, both the informal and formal curriculum of the schools emphasized woman’s roles as mother and housewife. In the French-language curriculum, the Ecole Brieux in Hanoi assigned essays on hygiene and health as well as on how mothers should discipline their children and the qualities of a good housewife. In boy’s schools, the French composition topics focused on

describing objects, on writing letters to the French local administrator, on occupations students might assume after graduation, on the work of the peasant, and on the benefits of France. (Kelly, 1989:196)

On the whole, education for both men and women in the colonial era was aimed at the primary level; and importantly, unlike the dominant discourse within Europe at the time, was not promoted as a means for social mobility. Indeed education tended to be as restricted as possible in order to fulfil the aims of Church and State, without encouraging demands for increased equality amongst the colonised (Altbach & Kelly, 1978:42). In addition, policies on post-primary education also tended to vary between colonies. Britain was relatively generous with the development of tertiary education in India, but actively avoided it in Africa due to fears about the cultivation of political unrest. The French, too, were more generous in Vietnam than West Africa. The Dutch and Belgians were particularly opposed to the development of universities in their colonies - Belgium going as far as banning the development of post-secondary schooling in its colonies (Altbach, 1987:49).

Education policy in the independence era continued to prioritise education as a tool for ‘modernising’ women’s domestic roles (Moser, 1989:1809). Development policy has tended to focus on the ways in which basic education and increases in literacy, in particular, can enable women to make more ‘informed’ decisions about family health and wellbeing. Educated women, it is argued, are more likely to use contraception and to produce fewer children, thus limiting population growth (Herz & Sperling, 2004:4; Hill & King, 1993:20). They are also considered to be more likely to make better decisions about child health (Hill & King, 1993:12; Schultz, 1993:70), and to value education for their own children (Herz & Sperling, 2004:4; Summers, 1993:vii). As this piece from Lawrence Summers (1993), then Vice-President of the World Bank, highlights, the ‘educated woman’ is considered to be the key player in ‘breaking the cycle’ of family deprivation. While the uneducated woman is stuck in the home, burdened by tradition and ignorance, the educated woman is positioned as modern, forward thinking, and proactive about taking advantage of modern medical facilities to protect the health of her family:

A poor family has three children. The mother went to school for five years and is able to read and do arithmetic well enough to teach school in the village. As her last birth was extremely difficult, she and her husband adopted family planning. She now has more time and resources to spend on her family.

Hoping for a better future for her children, she insists that they all go to school and practice their reading each night. When one of her daughters gets sick and does not seem to be getting better, she takes her to the medical clinic. The doctor gives the mother some ampicillin tablets and instructs her to give them to any of the children who fall ill. The daughter's strep infection is cured, as is the infection of the son, who is running a high fever by the time the mother returns home. (Summers, 1993:vi)

However, since the 1970s, feminist theorists have been increasingly critical of the tendency to focus on women's reproductive roles at the expense of recognition of the productive roles women play in Third World economies. This critique has prompted a widening of education and development discourse to include the impact of education on women's productive capacities.

Education for production

Education policy in the newly independent colonies was governed by a concern with the modernisation of the economy (Fagerlind & Saha, 1983:63). Relationships between the West and the Third World during this era were dominated by the ascent of modernisation theory. Modernisation theory, developed in the United States by sociologists within the structural-functional tradition, was developed as a tool to explain the perceived cultural and economic 'backwardness' of Third World societies. Modernisation theory was to become a prescription for Third World societies to enable them to achieve a Western state of 'modernity'. 'Modern values' such as secularisation, democracy, nationalism, urbanisation, technological development, and an increased division of labour were believed to create a dynamic and economically successful society (Brohman, 1995:125; Routledge, 1995:265).

Within this discourse 'traditional' societies were characterised as static and inward looking: handicapped by "the tendency to cling to imitative repetition, to obey blindly the ancestral burden of taboos and ancient customs" (Lucas, 1972:9). These traditional cultural systems were believed to promote conformity rather than the innovation required by industrial capitalism. Modernisation theory promoted the mass expansion of schooling in the Third World as a primary mechanism for achieving the cultural change required to facilitate industrialisation (Fagerlind & Saha, 1983:65; Fox, 1997:58). As Zachariah (1985) summarises:

Industrialization and the attendant processes of commerce and urban development required, in many instances, that most people have new values, attitudes, and behaviours towards other people, nature, time, and space. Formal educational agencies seemed to be appropriate places to inculcate these new attitudes, values and behaviours in students of all ages who would, it was hoped, diffuse these new worldviews to others. (Zachariah, 1985:5)

Unlike in the colonial era, where schooling was often restricted for fear that it would cultivate opposition; newly independent Third World countries were encouraged to borrow and invest heavily in education in general, and higher education in particular (Fox, 1997; Gould, 1993:23). Education was included as a fundamental human right under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and UNESCO held a number of important regional conferences in the 1960s aimed at encouraging newly independent colonies to expand their education systems (Gould, 1993:23; Zachariah, 1985:5).

Modernisation theory largely reproduced colonial attitudes to the education of women. Formal education, and post-primary education in particular, were largely targeted at men. Women were believed to benefit from the participation of their husbands in the industrial economy, which would increase household incomes. As Chowdry (1995:31) notes, modernisation theory “assumed that economic development in the public, largely elite male sphere, would naturally ‘trickle down’ to women in the private sphere”.

Tinker (1976), however, argues, that it is important to acknowledge that while women were largely prevented from taking advantage of the expansion of formal education that occurred during this period, the state of cultural flux and shortage of trained nationals in the late colonial period did provide an opportunity for a very small group of elite women to undertake higher education and secure employment in the public sector. She argues that this small, but important, group of elite women often played a prominent role in nationalist struggles in Asia and Africa, and were sometimes rewarded with government positions in the newly independent nations (Tinker, 1976:30).

However, on the whole, the productivist focus of modernisation theory, and the Western, patriarchal assumption that Third World women were confined to the home, tended to make them invisible within early education and development writing (Kelly, 1996:75). This invisibility was the focus of early feminist critiques of development that emerged in the 1970s. The feminist development theory that emerged during this

decade is widely labelled the ‘equity’ or ‘Women in Development’ (WID) approach to development, due to the fact that it was dominated by liberal feminist concerns with enabling women to achieve equality with men within the development process (Moser, 1989:1810). There were two important theoretical movements that contributed to WID education writing. The first was the revitalisation of the suffragist tradition of promoting women’s involvement in the public sphere that occurred with the rise of the women’s movement in the West, and the second was the critiques of modernisation theory produced by feminist development theorists such as Ester Boserup (1970), Irene Tinker (1976), and Mayra Buvinic (1976).

The first of these two perspectives, the Western liberal feminist movement was (at least initially) less interested in development than in promoting a woman’s right to take advantage of the economic and educational opportunities available to men (Tinker, 1997:33). Liberal feminist concerns with educational equality have a long and important heritage within Western feminism (Rivers, 2006:5). As Edwards (1993) argues, increasing women’s access to tertiary education was a central goal of nineteenth century suffragist campaigns aimed at enabling women to participate in public life:

For women in particular, education has been looked to by some as an escape route from domestic life and second-class citizenship into the public sphere. Many nineteenth century feminists, both white and black, focused on education, and entry to higher education in particular, as fulfilling a right to intellectual development and the need for better employment opportunities. Education, and particularly higher education, has been seen as central to promoting improvements in women’s status. (Edwards, 1993:1-2)

Kelly and Slaughter (1991) also comment on the centrality of higher education to early liberal feminist campaigns:

As was the case with suffrage and the ability to hold property, access to higher education was a right that was essential if women were to gain some independence vis a vis men. Indeed, higher education was often thought to be the mechanism that would prepare women, in an orderly and rational manner, for participation in the public sphere. Through qualifications and credentials secured through the higher learning, women would equip themselves for all manner of professional positions, entering the market place and political arena with the same advantages as men. (Kelly & Slaughter, 1991:3)

Liberal feminist ideas about educational equality form part of the larger liberal democratic tradition within Western societies. This political tradition has promoted education as a means to break down traditional systems of hereditary privilege and create more democratic societies. As Freebody (2003:vii) explains, in Western societies, “schooling has been seen as an instrument of meritocracy. It has been seen as standing against the proposition, hanging over from previous centuries, that intellectual and cultural privileges are properly inherited.”

The liberal view of education is strongly rooted within Western Enlightenment ideas about the power of reason and scientific knowledge to enable communities to master their environments and control their destinies (Fagerlind & Saha, 1983:9; Lucas, 1972:327). Liberal education theory provided the motivation for the inclusion of education as a fundamental human right under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

The revival of the feminist movement in the 1970s led to a new era of liberal feminist scholarship on women’s educational disadvantage. Feminist educationalists highlighted the ways in which the Western educational system prioritised male education, leading to lower achievement rates for girls, and resulting in restrictions on women’s earning ability and their contribution to public life. These theorists also pointed to the ways that this bias was reflected in the invisibility of women in educational research. Sandra Acker ‘s (1981:78) influential survey of major British educational sociology journals of the day concluded that:

We might anticipate the details to follow by imagining a Martian coming to Britain and deriving some impressions of its educational system from reading these articles. The martian would conclude that numerous boys but few girls go to secondary modern schools; that there are no girls’ public schools; that there are almost no adult women influentials of any sort; that most students in higher education study science and engineering; that women rarely make a ritual transition called ‘from school to work’ and never go into further education colleges. Although some women go to university, most probably enter directly into motherhood, where they are of some interest as transmitters of language codes to their children. And except for a small number of teachers, social workers and nurses, there are almost no adult women workers in the labour market.

During this era, liberal feminist scholarship on women's educational disadvantage also began to expand to consider the educational status of women within Third World societies. Early feminist education theorist Gail P. Kelly was particularly instrumental in establishing a new body of comparative research on the global educational status of women (Kelly, 1978, 1989, 1990; Kelly & Slaughter, 1991). Kelly's work highlighted the ways that the poor educational status of women within non-Western societies was being perpetuated by the development policies of the early independence era, which prioritised men's education.

Kelly's work prompted a new era of research on the causes of women's low educational achievement within Third World societies (Biraimah, 1997; Kelly, 1996). This research has identified domestic responsibilities (Fox, 1999); early marriage and early pregnancy (Bendera, 1999; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004; UNESCO, 1994, 1999; Wynd, 1999); the cultural premium placed on boys and men's education (Bunwaree, 1999); and religious restrictions on mobility (Bendera, 1999) as major causes of women's under-representation within educational institutions. Feminist researchers have also highlighted the ways aspects of the schooling environment such as biased curricula (Chung, 1994; Fox, 1999; Kelly, 1990); sexual harassment and violence (Dunne et al., 2006; Fox, 1999; Mlama, 1998:481); a lack of female teachers (Heward, 1999a; Pessate-Schubert, 2003); a lack toilet facilities (Bendera, 1999; Kirk, 2004); and, in many cases, a lack of childcare (Jayaweera, 1999); have prevented women from succeeding, even when they are able to access education.

The second important group of contributors to the WID education perspective was a group of feminist writers concerned with highlighting the detrimental impact of development on women's lives. Ester Boserup's *Women's role in economic development* (1970) was an important early contribution to this field. Boserup argued that modernisation theory contained a Eurocentric bias that ignored the productive roles of women. She contended that far from being confined to the home, Third World women often play key productive roles, particularly in agriculture, in their communities - roles that are largely ignored within mainstream accounts of development that assume a male breadwinner. In addition, Boserup asserted that development efforts had not only ignored but actively

undermined these productive roles. In particular, she highlighted the ways that agricultural technologies were marketed to men, undermining women's traditional agricultural work and leading to a decline in their status within their communities.

Writers such as Boserup were instrumental in documenting the need for development theorists to consider the productive roles of women (Tinker, 1997:37). In the education sector, this translated into an insistence that women received the appropriate education to ensure that they were able to strengthen their productive roles and participate in the modern economy (Leach, 1998:13; Makhubu, 1998:493). The recognition of the need to provide education to support women's productive roles was bolstered by the emphasis on poverty and basic needs within the development agenda during the 1970s. Feminist researchers pointed to the growing number of female-headed households amongst the poorest groups in society (Stromquist, 1999:18), and emphasised the urgent need to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills to support the earning potential of these households (UNESCO, 1994).

The WID focus on women's productive roles was also incorporated into the 'human capital' school of thought that gained popularity within the major development institutions in 1960s and 1970s. Human capital theory utilises classical liberal economic assumptions to build upon modernisation theory's concern with transforming the traditional economies of Third World nations through education. Human capital theorists argue that the modern economy increasingly requires a shift away from investment in physical capital, such as machines, towards 'investment' in human expertise (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985; Schultz, 1972). According to human capital theorists, women's productive capacity is a potential economic resource that Third World economies need to utilise in order to 'kick-start' their economies. This 'all hands on deck' philosophy prioritised the formal education of women as a key development goal:

[T]he problems of society are so great - *inter alia*, poverty, disease, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy, exclusion - that human capital cannot be wasted in the fight to combat these. Thus, women, who, due to cultural factors, cannot accede to higher education or benefit from their qualifications, are prevented from playing their full part in the development of their communities. (UNESCO, 1999:10)

Human capital theory advanced and popularised the notion that the education and employment of women leads to higher economic growth. Education for women was recast as an ‘investment’ in society. To a large extent, the human capital approach remains the central educational discourse within the major development institutions today (Müller, 2004:216). This approach has been strengthened by neo-liberal concerns with the ‘knowledge revolution’ and the increasing importance of developing a highly skilled, computer-literate workforce. The split between the Third World and the West is increasingly re-conceptualised within this new economy as a gap between the “information rich” and the “information poor” (Webb, 2004:135). Higher education is believed to play an increasingly central role in addressing this gap, as this World Bank (2000) document highlights:

Participation in the knowledge economy requires a new set of human skills. People need to have higher qualifications and to be capable of greater intellectual independence. They must be flexible and be able to continue learning well beyond the traditional age for schooling. Without improved human capital, countries will inevitably fall behind and experience intellectual and economic marginalization and isolation. The result will be continuing, if not rising, poverty. (World Bank, 2000:17-18)

The focus then shifts to ensuring that education prepares women to keep up with the rapidly changing economy. However, not all education theorists share the unbridled enthusiasm for the liberatory potential of Western education as expressed in the work of modernisation theorists, human capital theorists, and the contributions of some early WID writers. Since the 1970s, the ‘Western’ model of formal education has also come under sustained attack from a number of important quarters.

Education for submission

Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred million men, and one thousand five hundred million natives. The former had the Word; the others had the use of it. Between the two there were hired kinglets, overlords and a bourgeoisie, sham from beginning to end, which served as go-betweens. In the colonies the truth stood naked, but the citizens of the mother-country preferred it with clothes on: the native had to love them, something in the way mothers are loved. The European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of western culture; they stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words

that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, whitewashed. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers; they only echoed. From Paris, from London, from Amsterdam we would utter the words ‘Parthenon! Brotherhood!’ and somewhere in Africa or Asia lips would open ‘...thenon’therhood! It was the golden age.

...It came to an end; the mouths opened by themselves; the yellow and black voices still spoke of our humanism but only to reproach us with our inhumanity (Sartre, 1963:7).

Jean-Paul Sartre’s famous preface to Fanon’s (1963) *Wretched of the earth* embodies the powerful political critique of Western education systems that emerged within many newly independent colonies, as they struggled to establish their economic and cultural identity. This critique was buttressed by the emergence of Marxist, humanist, indigenous, and feminist criticisms of the role education systems play in the reproduction of the Western, patriarchal, capitalist order.

Also, while the heady days of early independence in the 1950s and early 1960s were marked by massive educational expansion in many areas of the Third World, by the late 1960s it became obvious that this expansion had not lived up to expectations to reduce illiteracy or promote economic growth (Bacchus, 1997; Zachariah, 1985). Access to education was often uneven, with local, urban elites using educational opportunities to cement their privilege within their societies, while poorer, rural populations missed out (King, 1991:242). Zachariah (1985) describes the state of ‘crisis’ that existed within many newly independent education systems in the 1970s:

In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the expansion of formal educational systems brought about several problems: irregular school attendance; high dropout (wastage) and failure (stagnation) rates; widespread relapse into illiteracy; severe regional imbalances in the progress of universalization, with rural areas lagging far behind urban areas; lower rates of school attendance and completion by girls; poorly trained and poorly paid teachers; badly constructed and inadequately equipped schools; and widespread unemployment among even certified school leavers and college or university graduates. (Zachariah, 1985:9-10)

Altbach (1987:28) argues that the heavy emphasis on the adoption of a ‘Western’ style humanities-centred university model was a major cause of graduate unemployment in the Third World during this era. He asserts that the commitment to the colonial model of university education actually stifled investment in the scientific and technical capacity that was necessary to promote economic growth.

This growing disillusionment was bolstered by a range of political critiques of the ways in which Western education was responsible for reproducing structural inequalities inherent in the capitalist mode of production. Marxist theorists such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) Ivan Illich (1971), Bowles and Gintis (1976), and Paulo Freire (1972) challenged the liberal association of education with egalitarianism by highlighting the ways in which capitalist education systems functioned to produce an obedient workforce. They argued that rather than promoting meritocracy, formal education systems were designed to cultivate particular types of personality traits and linguistic competencies which enabled individuals to slot into established class-related categories of workers. Education was reconceptualised as a type of “cultural capital” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990:11) which schools were responsible for distributing in ways that maintained existing class hierarchies.

Freire (1972), also argued that capitalist education systems with their hierarchical structures and emphasis on rote learning stifle the development of the creative, critical faculties required to stimulate revolution within Third World societies. Freire (1972) is harshly critical of the results of what he calls the passive ‘banking’ approach to learning within Western education, arguing that it is designed to destroy the creative capacities of students so that they will not have faith in their ability to create a different social order:

The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (Freire, 1972:47)

During this period, a number of indigenous writers also began to demonstrate the role that Western education systems were playing in undermining their traditional livelihoods. These writers pointed to the ways that formal Western-style education devalues traditional subsistence knowledge and denies indigenous people the opportunity to pass on important cultural and environmental knowledge. A fierce critic of the role that Western education systems have played in ‘de-skilling’ indigenous populations, Vandana Shiva (1993) argues that the expansion of this model of education has effectively led to

“monocultures of the mind”, or what Hobart (1993:22) labels the “growth of ignorance” within Third World societies. Aikman (1999) describes the ways in which Western-style education has led to the destruction of the knowledge systems of the indigenous Arakmut of Peru:

The loss of learning and knowledge is one of the consequences of formal schooling. Primary school follows a national curriculum designed for, in the main, urban Mestizo children living in the coastal towns of Peru. Although girls still accompany their mothers to tend gardens and harvest forest fruits and fish, their obligation to attend school diverts them away from the diversity of participatory learning, which contributes over time towards a woman’s intimate knowledge of the environment and its biodiversity. (Aikman, 1999:75)

Finally, the other important contribution to the education for submission school of thought has come from feminist research on the sexism within the ‘hidden curriculum’ of Western education. These theorists have critiqued the ways in which liberal histories of education have ignored the gendered nature of the curriculum. These writers argue that there is a need to move beyond questions of educational access for girls, to an examination of the ways that educational institutions actually create and reinforce rather than challenge oppressive gender relations (Jayaweera, 1999; Longwe, 1998; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004; Unterhalter, 1999).

These authors provide evidence that girls often receive a poorer education, with less qualified teachers, and a limited range of subjects aimed at promoting “domesticity as a skilled occupation” (O’Neill, 1996:25). Heward (1999b:7) argues that schooling for girls in the Third World has more often than not been concerned with “inculculating piety and deference” rather than empowering women. Unterhalter agrees (1999:58), maintaining that schools are often places “where female docility is learned as much as creativity and critique”. These writers contend that there is a need to move beyond the liberal feminist belief that access in itself is transformative:

Girls’ access to schooling in many developing countries is so low that the term empowerment has been used to mean mere participation in the formal system. This is problematic because it assumes that the experience and knowledge attained in schooling automatically prepare girls to assess their worth and envisage new possibilities. It ignores the reproductive function of formal schooling, particularly in more traditional societies. (Stromquist, 2002:85)

Feminist writers within this tradition point to the need for more consideration of the power relationships involved in education. They argue that education for women has the potential to challenge the ‘academic hegemony’ of men, and thus, presents a challenge to the status quo:

Education has the power to change people in fundamental ways.... power (it) is the clue. People with traditional backgrounds feel it unnatural that wives should be more independent, more capable, more educated than their husbands. It reverses long-accepted understandings of the proper place for each to occupy. This reversal becomes confusing and threatening. (Lawson in Edwards, 1993:1)

Feminist education theorists have highlighted the ways in which the advantages of education are often ‘mediated’ by patriarchal gender roles that restrict the opportunities for women to benefit from education. They point to the ways that education has often failed to translate into labour market advantages for women due to discriminatory employment practices and domestic responsibilities - both rooted in sexist assumptions about women’s reproductive roles (Jayaweera, 1997, 1999; Unterhalter, 1999). They also highlight the continuing failure of educational opportunities to increase women’s political participation in many areas of the world (Jayaweera, 1997:421; Longwe, 1998:24). As Jayaweera (1999) argues, education is not in itself empowering, unless a culture supports a women’s right to use it:

Education is an enabling factor in the development of capabilities, but it is not necessarily a facilitator unless women have control of resources. The unequal gender division of labour within the household continues, although professional dual earner families are seen to share tasks more equitably. Education, even higher education, does not appear to have motivated large numbers of women to challenge gender role assumptions and obscurantist social practices pertaining to marriage. (Jayaweera, 1999:186)

Theorists within the education for submission tradition argue that there is a need to move beyond the uncritical liberal focus on increasing educational access, to a more critical examination of the ways that education acts as a social institution embedded within larger historical relationships of privilege and domination. The writers within this tradition tend to be divided about the potential for education to contribute in positive ways to meeting development goals. While some, like Illich (1971), advocate a radical

“de-schooling” as the only way to undo the damage caused by the Western education model, others are more optimistic about the potential to reconstruct a more holistic educational experience that cultivates opportunities for oppressed groups to challenge their disadvantage. I have labelled this latter perspective ‘education for empowerment.’

Education for empowerment

The discourse of education for empowerment can be distinguished by its greater reliance on humanist ideas about education as a tool for the promotion of ‘human flourishing’. Zachariah (1985:14) argues that critiques of the instrumentalism of the liberal commitments underlying modernisation theory have led to an increase in the popularity of radical humanist ideas about the potential of education to meet ‘intrinsic’ human desires for freedom and creativity. He argues that while modernisation theory has a tendency to position individuals as “inanimate lumps of clay” to be “moulded”, radical humanist theorists have re-conceptualised the individual as a “growing plant” to be tended:

Plants will grow, indeed thrive, if they are placed in the right soil, receive the right amount of heat and light, and are provided the right nutrients. An ideal education would treat a child like a fragile plant and would create – through the curriculum, teaching styles, and learning atmosphere – opportunities for that child to realize his or her potential for growth. This can be done by encouraging a child’s natural curiosity and desire to learn new things. (Zachariah, 1985:14)

Freire (1972), is perhaps the most well-known promoter of the belief that new forms of humanist education can challenge the inequalities associated with capitalist development in the Third World. Humanist education is characterised by a commitment to a learner-centred pedagogy that prioritises the full development of an individual’s capabilities, rather than meeting the economic/social needs of a society (Zachariah, 1985:14).

Freire (1972) argued that by cultivating a new teaching style - “liberating education” designed to enable students to realise their creative potential and analyse their own position in the world - radical pedagogues would create the conditions under which people could have faith in their ability to take control of their destiny and transform unequal power structures. Freire (1972:90) labels this process “conscientization”: the educational experience which “prepares men (sic) for the struggle against the obstacles to their humanization”.

In addition to Freire's work, radical feminist writing, with its critiques of liberal feminist reformism and its emphasis on the value of 'consciousness-raising' groups, made an important contribution to the increasing popularity of humanist approaches to women's education. Feminist education researchers have become increasingly critical of the 'instrumentalist' approach of traditional liberal development theory; arguing that it has tended to focus on how the education of women can contribute to Western development goals, at the expense of a consideration of whether and how education can be of benefit to women themselves (Assié-Lumumba & Sutton, 2004; Biraimah, 1997; Kelly & Slaughter, 1991; Müller, 2004). As Unterhalter (2005b) explains, in her critique of the instrumentalism evident in discussions around the Millennium Development Goals relating to women's education:

By education what is meant is schooling, bringing girls into schools ensures they participate socially, politically and economically. This places the onus on women and not on the societies that discriminate against them and exclude them from this participation. The education of girls and women is advocated for their families, their countries, and our future, that is for everyone but the girls themselves. This view of women's education as an instrumental value for society pays little attention to the intrinsic value of education for women (Unterhalter, 2005b:112).

These 'intrinsic' benefits associated with educating women include increased confidence and greater psychological well-being (Kirk, 2004:52; Shavarini, 2006:52); improved status within the family and community (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004:177); increased opportunities for political participation (Kelly & Slaughter, 1991:3; Nussbaum, 2003:337); greater financial and emotional autonomy (Jayaweera, 1999:185); and improved awareness of gender inequalities and strategies for challenging them (Pessate-Schubert, 2003:290; Shavarini, 2006:52). Writers within this tradition argue that there is a need to move beyond questions of economic self-sufficiency, as prioritised by the WID tradition, to a focus on how to build education systems that promote personal and political autonomy for women.

Moser (1989:1804) argues that the shift to a focus on 'empowerment' within feminist development theory has been characterised by increased attention to the ways that development can be shaped to meet women's 'strategic' gender needs. Moser distinguishes between 'practical' gender needs (those things women (or men) need to

maintain their livelihoods within the established sexual division of labour) and ‘strategic’ gender needs (those needs arising from the desire to transform inequitable gender relationships between men and women).

Since the 1980s, many feminist development theorists have examined the ways that higher education can enable women to recognise their strategic gender interests¹⁵, and work to empower other women to recognise their own. Pessate-Schubert’s (2003) research on university educated Bedouin women highlights the potential for new forms of social solidarity born out of education experiences:

I have come back to my village. I went out, studied and worked; now I have to come back, to give back, and to help others in my village. I am the first academic woman from my village. The first from the girls, and if I do not come back and help and tell about the university how would they know? There is so much work to do. Believe me. My sisters finished studying and they work. I helped them. I showed them how to fill the forms. Now they work, make changes, earn money. (Pessate-Schubert, 2003:294)

A number of researchers have highlighted the ways in which educated women are often important role models in their communities. Fox (1999:38) argues that a lack of role models who can show that it is possible for women to contribute to public life is a major barrier to women’s participation in education. Thus, in their position as role models within their societies educated women are considered “pioneers within their communities” (Pessate-Schubert, 2003:289), who provide “visibility for female competence in society at large” (UNESCO, 1999:12).

Other feminist researchers have demonstrated the particularly important role that secondary and tertiary education play in promoting women’s autonomy. Heward (1999b) argues that research on the links between women’s education and fertility rates shows that a brief period of schooling is insufficient to increase women’s autonomy enough to impact on decisions about family size:

¹⁵ The term “strategic gender interests” was originally coined by Maxine Molyneux (1985). She defines these interests as those that arise “from the analysis of women’s subordination and the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory set of arrangements to those which exist” (Molyneux, 1985:232). Seeking to extend Molyneux’s work, Moser (1989) argues that these strategic interests, if recognised, are then operationalised as strategic gender needs. She argues that these needs will vary by culture, but may include things like the abolition of discriminatory laws, the elimination of the sexual division of labour, political equality, and reproductive freedom (Moser, 1989:1803).

In gender-stratified settings, where women's lives are characterized by seclusion and dependency, considerable education is required before women abandon their reliance on children, especially sons, for social status and security in old age. (Heward, 1999b:6)

While Okeke-Ihejirika (2004) contends that tertiary education is especially important because it provides alternative models of femininity that do not prioritise domestic roles as the only route to adulthood for women:

Many forms of formal training below the tertiary level can provide paid jobs for women, at a level that does not threaten the domestic balance of power. Access to higher education for women may not only upset this gender hierarchy in the family but may also overturn the larger social arrangement that restricts women's entrance into adulthood and citizenship mainly through marriage. (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004:40)

Pessate-Schubert (2003) argues that tertiary education is also especially important for promoting women's strategic interests, because it is often one of the unique areas where feminine identity can be explored and challenged within the education curriculum. Thus, writers within the education for empowerment tradition tend to place as much importance on the development of a gender-sensitive curriculum (including the inclusion of 'gender studies', and programmes designed to address the culture of sexism and violence on campuses) as they do on the right to educational access (Longwe, 1998; Robinson-Pant, 2004; Stromquist, 2002).

Finally, I have labelled the remaining important body of thought within this field 'education as experience'. I have given this label to the loose coalition of postmodern-inspired explorations of the role that education plays in people's lives. While there is not a specific body of postmodernist work exploring issues of women, higher education and development, this theoretical approach has become increasingly influential within feminist education research.

Education as experience

Postmodernist approaches to education, while very diverse, share a desire to move beyond what they perceive to be the 'modernist' tendency to view education as a tool (either for submission or empowerment), towards a concern with the ways in which education shapes individual identity. Writers within the 'education as experience' tradition tend to be highly critical of what they see as the over-determinist nature of

Marxist, liberal, humanist, and feminist approaches to education (Kenway, 1995; Lather, 1992; Smith, 1995). They argue that these theories, born within an era characterised by the search for ‘grand narratives’ to explain and direct social change, are inadequate for conceptualising the diversity of educational realities (Smith, 1995; Usher & Edwards, 1994).

Postmodernist theorists¹⁶, calling on the work of poststructuralist writers such as Foucault (1979; 1981; 1986) and Derrida, (1973) argue that social ‘structures’ are far more fluid and unstable than traditional modernist accounts of reality give them credit for. Postmodernist theorists reconceptualise the individual as less a determined product of the dominant ideas (or ideology) of the day, but as the site of competing ‘discourses’ or ‘truth systems’ (Weedon, 1987). Postmodernist educational theorists are interested in the ways in which discourses compete to define educational experience (Davies, 1989; Usher & Edwards, 1994). Thus, education becomes reconceptualised as a “contested site” (Freebody, 2003:21) in which different education discourses are played out in the individual experiences of people who participate in educational institutions.

These theorists reconceptualise education as a complex interplay of both ‘structure’ and ‘agency’, where individuals are both shaped by and shape education discourses (Davies, 1989; Lather, 1992; Walkerdine, 1989). Joseph (2005) conceptualises the schooling system in such terms:

The schooling system is a political site where the notion of power is located in the interplay of multiple and competing discourses. Students bring different histories to school, and these histories are embedded in ethnic and other social dimensions that shape their needs and behaviour, often in ways they do not

¹⁶ Postmodernism is notoriously difficult to define; a problem in part perpetuated by the desire on the part of many theorists associated with postmodernist ideas to avoid creating a new ‘totalising’ paradigm. Shilling and Mellor (2001:185) label postmodernism “one of the most flexible and imprecise concepts in the social sciences”. The epistemological critiques posed by postmodernism are well-rehearsed. They include critiques of key tenets of so called ‘modernist’ thought that originated in the European enlightenment, including the belief in an ‘objective’ social reality with underlying causal laws (realism) that can be ‘uncovered’ by following certain rules of scientific enquiry (positivism). They also include critiques of the modernist tendency to overemphasise the importance of social structure at the expense of considerations of human agency (structuralism), and its over-reliance on a view of human nature as rational and unified (humanism). Lather (1992:90) summarises postmodernism as “the code name for the crisis of confidence in western conceptual systems”. The postmodern turn within the social sciences can be characterised by a repositioning of science as a form of social power, and a greater interest in the individual as the key site for struggles over language, meaning and power. For further discussion of the challenges postmodernist thought poses to the traditional social science model, see Lather (1991), Harvey (1990) Seidman (1994) and Weedon (1987).

understand or that work against their own interests. ... They are located within these social processes where structure and agency come together. Students have agency through shifting and multiple forms of consciousness constructed through available discourses and practices. (Joseph, 2005:31)

Thus, postmodernist education theorists reject liberal/humanist ideas about coherent educational experience, in favour of a view of educated ‘subjectivities’ in flux (Davies, 1989:229; Griffiths, 1995:227; Walkerdine, 1989:272; Weiler, 1999:46). The writers within this field assert that accounts of educational outcomes that focus on the construction of ‘subjectivity’ provide increased opportunity for exploring individual agency - the complex ways in which people “take hold of” educational opportunities (Maddox, 2005:124). They argue that educational opportunities may be simultaneously liberating and constraining, and that it is important to explore the ways in which people negotiate their way through the gains and losses involved. These authors contend that educated subjectivities are best explored as a sort of opportunity for ‘hybridity’. Koehne’s (2005) work on international students and identity explores the potential of accounts of ‘hybridity subjectivities’ to provide insights into the ways that overseas education enables students to construct new stories about their lives:

A richer way of talking about subjectivity for international students is to talk about multiplicity of experiences, a hybridity that is developed as these experiences are sutured together. Sometimes contradictory storylines are sutured together in complex ways. Hybrid subjectivity is hard to stereotype as it is complex and fluid, changing and reinventing self. (Koehne, 2005:118)

Postmodernist ideas about the hybrid self are strongly influenced by psychoanalytic theories about identity. Psychoanalysts challenge the idea of the rational, unified self that underpins liberal and humanist social theory. Psychoanalysis, with its focus on unconscious drives, and the instability of identity development provides a theory of selfhood as necessarily chaotic. This view of the fractured self provides the foundation for a view of the individual as someone who is able to negotiate competing and often conflicting emotions and discourses (Minsky, 1998; Weedon, 1987, 2004).

A number of writers use the concept of hybridity to explore the ways in which individuals negotiate the tensions that new educational experiences bring. These authors argue that the dominance of liberal education theory with its unquestioned association between education and ‘progress’ has made it particularly difficult to explore the extent

to which educational opportunities may require losses as well as gains for women. Lucey et al.'s (2003) study of the educational experiences of young working-class women in Britain makes this point well:

Unquestioned in contemporary social and educational policy is the notion that upward social mobility is the desired outcome of social improvement. ... However, discourses of social mobility and social capital tend to hold denials: of the losses that are fundamental to and unavoidable in change, even when those changes are desired; of the enormous amount of psychological work involved in transformation; and of the costs of that work. However, these inherent tensions are not commented on in policy debates... This silence/absence in the discourse creates obstacles to exploring the ways in which the hybridisation of working-class feminine subjects through educational success, with its promise of social mobility, can provoke as many difficult feelings in families, such as anxiety and ambivalence, as it can positive ones, such as pride, excitement and love. By refusing to pay attention to them we are in danger of denying crucial aspects of our experience. (Lucey et al., 2003:286)

While there has not been a marked shift towards the use of postmodernist education theory within gender, higher education and development literature, it is evident that it is becoming more influential within the field of research. Tanja Müller's (2004) work on "contradictions in the lives of Eritrean women in higher education" is one useful exemplar of the growing influence of this type of approach to exploring educational experience.

Müller (2004) investigates the ways that a group of tertiary-educated Eritrean women seek to strategically negotiate their way between competing discourses about how they should use their education - in particular between the state discourse about the need for them to use their knowledge to contribute to 'national development' versus their own personal aspirations for self-realisation through increased incomes, further education, and motherhood. Müller's work focuses on the ways that women are able to actively manage these tensions, by simultaneously 'accepting' and 'resisting' different aspects of these discourses in order to build multiple identities that allow them to "make their higher education work for them personally and as Eritrean women" (Müller, 2004:226).

Kenway and Bullen's (2003) work on the "self-representations of international women postgraduate students", although not directly concerned with the 'development' process is another more explicitly postmodernist work that could also be seen to contribute to this emerging field of thought. Kenway and Bullen explore the ways in which female

international students (some from developing nations) build representations of their experiences by engaging with dominant Western discourses about their lives. In particular they explore “the way in which the students’ perceptions of host culture attitudes toward them as racial or gendered ‘other’ are incorporated or resisted in their “self-representations” (Kenway & Bullen, 2003:11). Both Müller’s (2004) and Kenway and Bullen’s (2003) work provide evidence of the growing popularity of the postmodernist focus on individual ‘subjectivity’ as the site of competition and negotiation over the meaning of educational experience.

Discussion and conclusion

There are distinct advantages associated with using the notion of ‘educated subjectivities’ to explore the outcomes associated with women’s participation in development scholarship schemes. The focus on hybridity and conflict between competing aspirations is particularly relevant to the exploration of women’s identities, because of the ways in which the tensions between their dual reproductive and productive roles so strongly shape their educational experiences. Walkerdine et al. (2001) argue that the notion of conflict and reinvention has long been central to the construction of feminine subjectivity:

It is women, of course, who have faced reinvention so obviously. The transition from mother to housewife in a long-term monogamous marriage to a working woman often bringing up children alone is a large one. If we also add that women have long been invited constantly to remake themselves as the changing object of male desire, then it becomes clear that women have long had to face the recognition that the unitary subject is a fraud and that constant and perpetual self-invention is necessary. (Walkerdine et al., 2001:9)

As noted in Chapter Two, existing research on the experiences of Third World women who undertake higher education overseas indicates that role tension, and the resultant anxiety, confusion and social stigma that accompany it, are integral parts of the development scholarship experience for many women. Thus, the decision to take up this type of educational opportunity is often experienced as both an opportunity and a loss for many women. Earlier models of educational change that focus on one aspect of women’s experience (reproduction or production), or one political outcome (submission or empowerment), tend to rely on a dualistic view of reality that makes it difficult to capture the complexity of women’s experiences.

Postmodernist social theory has many critics, however. While many fear the loss of explanatory power associated with a view of the world as ‘constant flux’, others fear the loss of political unity associated with the destruction of the idea of a coherent, rational identity. Certainly, the early detailed studies of the relationships between education and positive changes in women’s lives produced by feminists within the ‘education for production’ and the ‘education for empowerment’ traditions, the compelling Marxist and indigenous critiques of the cultural and economic destruction caused by colonial education systems, as well as the current push for global consensus around objectives for improving women’s educational access, all lose a significant amount of their force in the face of the political and epistemological relativism that characterises much postmodernist theorising.

Despite the many valid critiques of the limitations of liberal-humanist approaches to education, it is worth remembering that these ideas have acted as powerful motivators for the establishment of international consensus around the need to address social exclusion in all societies. Even in colonial times, for many education campaigners, the provision of equal educational opportunities in the Third World was conceived as a way to break down entrenched class hierarchies in the new world, in the same way that had broken down these barriers within Europe. And it was for this reason that, in the same manner that many resisted education for the working classes in Europe (Fagerlind & Saha, 1983:37), more conservative sectors of society also resisted the establishment of schools in the colonies for fear of that they would raise the expectations of the ‘natives’ and ferment dissent (Altbach, 1987:50).

This thesis explores the potential of a research approach that seeks to build upon the relative strengths and contributions of different approaches to understanding the relationships between gender, education and development. While the task of bringing together multiple-genres of scholarship is challenging, I believe that there are considerable benefits associated with efforts to do so. The five discourses discussed in this chapter have provided important contributions to our efforts to understand the impact of tertiary education opportunities on the lives of women within Third World societies.

Work within the ‘education for reproduction’ and ‘education for production’ traditions has contributed influential comparative statistical analyses of the relationships between higher education for women and the ability of societies to meet development goals related to health, education, and economic prosperity. This large-scale comparative work has played an important role in the establishment of collective development goals designed to increase women’s level of educational attainment. The ‘education for submission’ genre has highlighted the importance of paying attention to the ways that education functions to reproduce social inequalities. The ‘education for empowerment’ discourse has not only foregrounded the need for more holistic, people-centred approaches to understanding educational experience, it has also provided compelling explorations of the utopian potential of education to promote conditions of ‘hope’ within disadvantaged communities. While, finally, the ‘education as experience’ discourse contributes a powerful analytical tool for exploring the ways in which individuals experience and negotiate their way through competing ideas about the value of education in their lives and communities.

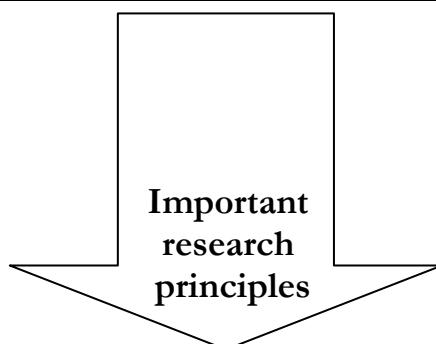
Table Two provides an overview of the five discourses and their strengths and limitations. At the end of the Table, I have sought to identify five guiding principles that could be seen to represent a potential synthesis of the strengths of these five approaches to educational experience. These principles include 1) the need to document women’s own perceptions of their educational experiences; 2) The need to produce ‘holistic’ explorations of women’s experience that examine all dimensions of their lives; 3) the need to explore both intrinsic and instrumental gains associated with higher education for women in developing countries; 4) the need to consider the role of education of as an institution responsible for reproducing social privilege; and, 5) the need to consider the individual losses and conflicts associated with higher education, and how individuals negotiate these challenges.

The first principle acknowledges the need to correct the exclusion of the voices of female development scholars from academic explorations of the impact of development scholarship schemes. Thus, it foregrounds the feminist commitment to treating women as experts on their own lives. This principle also offers an important corrective to the traditional over-reliance on quantitative explorations of women’s educational realities within the development research community, as discussed in Chapter One. Principle

Table 2. Discourses of women, higher education and development

Discourse	Strengths	Limitations
Education for reproduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlighted relationships between women's educational attainment and their ability to perform reproductive roles crucial for a country's ability to meet development goals in health and education. - Large-scale comparative statistical research produced within this tradition has been an important tool for establishing collective development goals related to increasing women's educational access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tendency to focus on only one dimension of women's experience – reproductive roles. - Tendency to focus on basic rather than higher education. - Eurocentric - based on educational experiences of Western women. - Strongly instrumentalist – focuses on outcomes for 'national' development rather than for individual women. - Lack of attention to women's own perceptions of experience. - Lack of attention to negative aspects, or 'losses', associated with educational experience.
Education for production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlighted the importance of women's productive roles within Third World societies, challenging the Western tendency to ignore this aspect of women's experience. - Highlighted relationships between women's educational attainment and their ability to perform important productive roles crucial for a country's ability to meet development goals in the economic sector - Comparative research on statistical relationships between women's educational attainment and their ability to achieve individual economic self-determination (WID) challenged the purely instrumentalist focus of the education for reproduction discourse. - Prioritised higher education, not just basic-education for women. - Large-scale comparative education research produced within this tradition has been an important tool for establishing collective development goals related to increasing women's educational access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tendency to focus on only one dimension of women's experience – productive roles. - Instrumentalist (human capital theory) – focuses on outcomes for 'national development' rather than for individual women. - Eurocentric - tendency to make assumptions based on educational experiences of Western women. - Lack of attention to women's own perceptions of educational experience. - Lack of attention to negative aspects, or 'losses' associated with educational experience. - Focus on access, rather than outcomes.

Education for submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraged increased attention to power relationships within the education. Highlighted ways in which Western education model can reproduce rather than challenge inequalities within women's lives. - Challenged instrumentalist focus of Western education and development planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overly structuralist. Not a lot of attention to individual agency, or to documenting women's individual education experience, - Heavily focused on losses associated with education.
Education for empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shift in attention away from instrumentalist discourse, to the ways in which education can meet 'intrinsic' needs. - Holistic emphasis on impact of women's educational experience on different areas of women's lives. - Focus on ways that education can increase women's personal and political autonomy. - Contributed concern with capturing women's perceptions of their educational experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be imprecise, and therefore challenging to operationalise as a policy programme. - Tendency to overly focused on potential gains associated with education.
Education as experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlighted ways in which education can be the site of a number of competing ideas about its value. - Highlighted ways in which individuals take an active role in constructing their educational experience. - Developed theory of subjectivity that explains how an individual can experience education as both loss and gain. - Focus on capturing women's perceptions of their educational experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on individual subjectivity limits generalisations about women's educational status. These generalisations have been historically useful in the establishment of and monitoring of progress towards collective development goals. - Not interested in entering development debate about effective intervention, therefore difficult to operationalise as a policy/programme.



Need to pay attention to:

- 1) Women's own perceptions of their educational experiences.
- 2) All dimensions of women's lives – not just their roles as mother and/or worker.
- 3) Both intrinsic and instrumental gains associated with higher education for women in developing countries.
- 4) The role of education as an institution responsible for reproducing social privilege.
- 5) The individual losses and conflicts associated with higher education and how individuals negotiate these challenges.

Two represents a commitment to bringing together bodies of theory that examine the impact of education on different dimensions of women's lives, including their experiences as mothers (as explored within the 'education for reproduction' discourse), their lives as workers (as examined within the 'education for production' discourse), as well as their role as 'self-realising' individuals (as explored within the 'education for empowerment' discourse). This principle responds to the call from humanist 'education for empowerment' writers for a more 'holistic' approach to women's experience that starts with lives in all their complexity.

Principle Three acknowledges the critiques 'education for empowerment' writers have provided of the 'instrumentalism' of approaches to women's educational experience that focus on their social roles as 'producer' and 'reproducer'. This principle seeks to provide a more balanced approach that also incorporates a focus on the 'intrinsic' benefits of education for women, as outlined by 'education for empowerment' writers. Principle Four represents a recognition of the need to balance explorations of the positive aspects of the scholarship experience with explorations of the 'reproductive' function of Western education systems, as outlined within the 'education for submission' body of thought. Finally, the fifth principle, the need to consider the losses and conflicts associated with higher education, and how individuals negotiate these challenges, acknowledges the valuable contribution that poststructuralist writers within the 'education as experience' tradition make to assisting us to identify how women resolve the conflicts associated with new educational opportunities.

These five principles form the basis of the flexible analytical 'framework' or guide that I will use to analyse the narratives of the female development scholars who I interviewed for this research. While not wishing to gloss over the potential areas of philosophical incommensurability between the different discourses that inform this framework, I remain convinced that there is considerable value associated with efforts at theoretical 'hybridity' or collaboration. These benefits include not only the potential to produce novel, more holistic explorations of my substantive research area, but also involve the potential to respond to new epistemological horizons within development studies. One of the most important and innovative of these is the emergence of feminist post-development perspectives.

Feminist post-development theory is one response to the vexed question of how to balance a political commitment to the planned social change that is at the heart of liberal, humanist, Marxist and feminist education and development theory with a recognition of the opportunities that postmodernist theory offers us to expand our understanding of the diversity of social reality. The following chapter explores the emergence of feminist post-development perspectives and the incentives they provide for the use of a flexible 'hybrid' or collaborative research framework for analysing the impact of development scholarships on women's lives.

Chapter Four - Feminist post-development thought and the challenges and promises of theoretical collaboration

Introduction

This chapter explores the potential of contemporary feminist post-development perspectives to provide a useful epistemological and methodological framework within which to situate my research. In particular, it examines the important possibilities these perspectives open up for new types of more flexible, creative and reflexive development research and writing.

As a new paradigm, feminist post-development is appealing for a number of important reasons. As a feminist political programme it inherits a long tradition of devotion to scholarship that strives to both illuminate and improve people's material existence. And as an effort to engage with and extend the best of postcolonial and postmodernist critiques of the development project, it also provides important new opportunities for theorising beyond the Western development imaginary. Feminist post-development perspectives represent an important response to the current challenge facing those within the development field who seek to respond to postmodernist challenges to the development enterprise in ways that enable them to reinvent rather than discard a very 'modernist' commitment to justice and social change.

Development studies and the representational 'impasse'

The normative nature of 'development' is both the strength and academic achilles heel of development studies. Like social work before it, efforts to create a critical academic discipline around what has amounted to a historically-specific programme of social intervention popular in the latter half of the twentieth century have proved problematic. This is never more so than in the era of deconstructionism or 'post-development', where development theorists are supposedly left with the task of theorising beyond that which they have specifically been called into existence to steward. Whilst notions of 'post-anthropology' or 'post-sociology' may appear as melodramatic overreactions to the epistemological challenges presented by postmodernism, development studies must face the very real fact that it may no longer have either an object or a mandate to study.

This representational crisis, labelled by some as the ‘impasse’ of development (Schuurman, 1993), has important consequences for our ability to respond to the ongoing need for reliable information on which to develop policy responses to the deprivation and inequality that motivate ‘development’ efforts. Despite the urgent political need to respond to this state of affairs, efforts to do so continue to fall down around the challenges associated with developing new praxis-orientated epistemologies that are capable of simultaneously providing an alternative to the imperialist “know-all history” (Sylvester, 1999:717) of the modernist research paradigm, whilst also retaining a commitment to the value of research or ‘evidence’-based development policy responses.

Efforts to utilise the epistemological critiques provided by ‘post-colonial’ theory¹⁷ have faltered over its inability to turn its attention away from literary analysis to livelihood issues, resulting in an ongoing tendency to “offer more in the way of new-fangled language than food” (Sylvester, 1999:718). Attempts to develop ‘participatory’ or ‘alternative’ development research approaches that valorise the voices of the ‘grassroots poor’ as an epistemological corrective to the arrogance of modernist development thought also have limited usefulness due to their reliance on a populism that undermines their methodological veracity (Batterbury et al., 1997:129; Lazreg, 2002:140). As Olivier de Sardan (2005) argues, the populist tendencies of ‘putting the last first’¹⁸ methodologies, characterised by their “exaltation of the cognitive, political, moral, cultural virtues of the people”, involve a degree of romanticism that is “less in line with methodology than with ideology proper” (Olivier de Sardan, 2005:117).

Finally, the other important theoretical response to the impasse, so called, ‘post-development’ theory, as represented by the work of authors such as Escobar (1995), Sachs (1992), and Ferguson (1990), also has major epistemological limitations. Post-development theory, with its reliance on Foucauldian ideas about development as a site

¹⁷ Postcolonial theory is the label given to a genre of literary criticism concerned with deconstructing the “profusion of thought and writing about the cultural and political identities of colonised subjects” (Gandhi, 1998:5). This tradition shares much of the same poststructuralist intellectual heritage as post-development thought; particularly in the use of Foucauldian ideas about discourse. Apart from a focus on ‘colonialism’ rather than ‘development’, postcolonial theory can be distinguished from post-development theory by its greater emphasis on literary analysis (particularly fiction, situated as it has been in the humanities rather than the social sciences) over examination of development practices; and much greater engagement with the psychoanalytic tradition within poststructuralist thought (eg. the works of theorists such as Fanon (1963) and Bhabha (1994)).

¹⁸ This phrase is taken from the title of two books by Robert Chambers (1984; 1997), the most well-known and popular proponent of populist methodologies within development studies.

of governmentality¹⁹, has tended to engage with postmodernist theory in ways that have largely reinforced rather than challenged modernist dualistic representations of reality. The conceptualisation of development as a modern form of ‘biopower’, tends to overemphasise its cohesiveness, positioning it as a monolithic juggernaut that is inherently and inescapably Western and coercive (Olivier de Sardan, 2005; Rapley, 2004:350). Not only do post-development writers tend to present an overly homogenist view of the diverse practices under the development rubric (Corbridge, 1998:139; Kiely, 1999:30; Lazreg, 2002:126); but, like alternative development perspectives, they provide an under-theorised view of the agency of development participants – once again advocating a sort of populism that simply reverses the Western/Third World dualism and makes the ‘Third World’ the new repository of hope and new ways of knowing (Corbridge, 1998:144; Papart, 2002:54; Rapley, 2004:352).

Thus, while these authors advocate for the need for a new critical ‘hybrid’ space between “deconstruction and reconstruction” (Escobar, 1995:16), they also tend, in the last instance, to abandon their deconstructionist impulse in order to privilege only one form of critique as capable of producing this: that created in the Third World, at the ‘local level’ by non-state actors or ‘popular groups’ (for example see Escobar, 1995:225-6; Ferguson, 1990: 287-288). Ferguson (1990:287) lists some of these groups (which he labels as “counter-hegemonic”) as “labor unions, opposition political parties and movements, cooperatives, peasants’ unions, churches and religious organizations.”

Both post-development and alternative development approaches suffer from a tendency to present an overly homogenous view of both Western development efforts and so-called Third World oppositional ‘popular groups’. They ignore the extent to which both these groups are united *and* divided along lines of age, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. This idealises ‘Third World’ existence in a way that reinforces rather than

¹⁹ Foucault argued that the modern era is characterised by a move away from more obvious forms of power based on the right of the sovereign to punish and execute subjects, towards a less visible form of power based on the surveillance and regulation of individuals and populations made possible by the institutionalisation of all aspects of modern life. The term ‘governmentality’ (Foucault, 1991) is used to describe this new mode of social control, which is based on the simultaneous surveillance of individuals through new institutions like prisons, schools, and hospitals (disciplinary power), and the surveillance of populations through the development of new sciences of health and population and wealth distribution (biopower) (Foucault, 1981:139). Foucault argued that both these forms of power function to regulate behaviour through the authority that is vested in them to define what is ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’. Foucault argues that the power to define and create knowledge about the individual (he labels these knowledge systems discourses) is the primary mechanism through which the individual is ‘produced’ and thus ‘controlled’ (Foucault, 1979).

challenges the very modernist, essentialist idea of an ‘other’ to which ‘we’ are in opposition (Nanda, 2002:215; Papart, 2002:52). Amin (1989:146-7) argues that this type of analysis effectively represents a sort of “inverted eurocentrism” in which the essentialist idea that only those within a group can know its ‘truth’ is extended beyond Europe to other cultures. He asserts that this mode of critique ultimately leads to a type of relativism that works against efforts to expand our understanding of issues facing each other.

Further, Olivier de Sardan (2005:119) argues that both perspectives reinforce what he calls the ‘miserabilism/populism’ dualism popular within leftist political narrative: the tendency to swing from one form of sweeping analysis cataloguing the resources of the resilient oppressed (populism), to another discursive strategy focusing primarily on the all pervasiveness and tenacity of structures of social inequality (miserabilism). Olivier de Sardan (2005:119) contends that much leftist social science is based on a perpetual swinging back and forth between these narratives, rather than on genuine attempts to face the difficult task of finding new ways to do justice to the complexity and ultimate moral ambiguity of real life development landscapes.

Pieterse (1998) is also critical of the dualistic tendencies of both these strategies, arguing that while the deconstructive efforts of post-development writers have proved another extremely useful means of highlighting the ways in which development fails the Third World, the fall back into a populist ‘anti-modernism’ has largely prevented the paradigm from proposing a meaningful alternative to this failure. As Pieterse (1998:345) summarises, “Post-development articulates meaningful sensibilities, but does not have a future programme. The core problem posed in post-development is the question of modernity: to be ‘for’ or ‘against’ modernity, however, is too simple a position.”

Despite the disappointing efforts to date to theorise beyond the impasse, these ongoing tensions within development theory contain considerable potential. The insecurity posed by the imminent dissolution of development studies’ epistemological mandate, coupled with the policy imperative to continue to theorise within it anyway, in many ways creates the perfect experimental conditions for the actualisations of the postmodern promise of new ways of thinking/being. Such conditions do not prevail within many of the traditional social science disciplines still preoccupied with disavowing or finding a

way around the liberal contradiction that is at the heart of attempts to undermine the ‘tyranny’ of ‘liberation’. The explicitly normative character of development studies makes this disavowal impossible. So it is in this moment that we can develop a sort of amnesia that propels us back towards positivism, or we can have faith that the current impasse provides the very resources required to theorise within and beyond it.

I believe that recent debates within feminist theory over the future of trans-national political and intellectual coalitions provide some of the most interesting and important signposts for the parameters of this new territory. Feminist theory provides an alternative genealogy of engagement with poststructuralist theory and black/Third World/indigenous critiques of the imperialism of Western thought that enables us to avoid both the esotericism of postcolonial theory and the populism of alternative development and post-development perspectives, and thus retain a commitment to the creation of meaningful knowledge about development realities. The strength of the movement lies in its ability to call upon four decades of feminist collaboration with and contribution to a postmodern ethic whilst retaining a commitment to a research programme that promotes social justice.

The potential of feminist theory to contribute to new development imaginaries

There has been a recent increase in interest within development circles in the potential of the feminist political tradition to provide resources for new critical theories of globalisation and development. Gibson-Graham (2006) argue that the feminist movement, with its focus on grassroots coalition building, ‘personal as political’ reflexivity, and commitment to global-local solidarities, provides a model for new ways of thinking/being beyond the homogenising force of global capital:

The achievements of second-wave feminism provide, for us, the impetus for theorizing a new global form of economic politics. Its remapping of political space and possibility suggest the ever-present opportunity for local transformation that does not require (though it does not preclude and indeed promotes) transformation at larger scales. Its focus on the subject prompts us to think about ways of cultivating economic subjects with different desires and capacities and greater openness to change and uncertainty. Its practice of seeing and speaking differently encourages us to make visible the hidden and alternative economic activities that *everywhere* abound, and to connect them through a language of economic difference. (Gibson-Graham, 2006:xxiv, emphasis in original)

Chandra Mohanty's (2003) recent work also looks to the contemporary feminist movement to provide the parameters for new critical, praxis-orientated enquiry into the impacts of globalisation. She argues that the considerable effort that the feminist movement has devoted to developing a "decolonized, cross-border feminist community", has enabled it to build "informed, self-reflexive solidarities" that allow it to successfully negotiate beyond the dualisms of local/global, self/other, theory/practice (Mohanty, 2003:251). Gibson-Graham (2006) argue that the broader contributions made by feminist conceptualisations of spatiality and interconnection provide the basis for new ways of thinking about subject and place:

A feminist spatiality embraces not only a politics of ubiquity (its global manifestation), but a politics of place (its localization in places created, strengthened, defended, augmented, and transformed by women. In this admittedly stylized rendering, feminist is not about the category "woman" or identity per se, but about subjects and places. It is a politics of becoming in place. (Gibson-Graham, 2006:xxiv)

The imperative to create this new critical "politics of becoming in place" has been motivated by the desire to retain a coherent platform for feminist action and research, whilst simultaneously seeking to transform this platform in order to respond to critiques of the homogenizing, imperialist tendencies of Western feminism's Enlightenment heritage. The political commitment to "organizational horizontalism" (Gibson-Graham, 2006:xxiv) within the second-wave feminist movement has provided an incentive to undertake an intensive, ongoing programme of theoretical/political interrogation aimed at increasing the inclusiveness of theory/practice. As Wolf (1992) summarises:

Before reflexivity was a trendy term, feminists were examining "process" in our dealings with one another – questioning the use of power and powerlessness to manipulate interactions in meetings, examining closely the politics of seemingly apolitical situations, evaluating the responsibilities we bore toward one another, and so on. The awareness developed in these small "consciousness-raising" sessions quickly spilled over into the work world of social scientists who recognized their double responsibility as feminists doing research on women. I do not mean to imply that *all* feminist social scientists are reflexive in their research and writing, but it is much more common to find a serious questioning of methodology and creative involvement of both researched and researchers among feminists than in the work of mainstream social science. (Wolf, 1992:132-3, emphasis in original)

It is this democratising imperative that has provided the impetus for engagement with postmodernist deconstructivist critiques of the epistemological ‘totalitarianism’ of Enlightenment thought. And it is this same imperative that has compelled many feminist writers to disavow the relativism within much postmodernist writing, for fear that it will undermine efforts to create more inclusive political practice. It is this political imperative to balance the deconstructive and ‘constructive’ – or as Snitow (in Rose 1993:12) describes it, “the need to build the identity ‘woman’ and give it solid political meaning and the need to tear down the category ‘Woman’ and dismantle its all-too-solid history” – that has given feminism what Rose (1993:13) calls a unique, and valuable “critical mobility”.

Rather than attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable, feminist theory has learnt to value the insecurity that characterises a new era dominated by these two competing strategies of political/theoretical critique. As a result, feminist theorists seek new styles of theorising that eschew traditional dualisms in favour of more complex analyses that draw upon the strengths of different eras and types of feminist critique. As Rose (1993) argues, the recognition that power is not monolithically stable opens up space for recognition that different forms of feminist critique are both valuable and necessary:

If masculinity is itself fluid and diverse, and intersects with class, race and sexuality in complex and unstable ways, one form of feminism cannot be adequate to the task of resistance. ... [T]he subversive potential of feminism lies as much in its form, in its critical mobility, as in what particular feminist positions argue. (Rose, 1993:13)

It is this critical mobility that enables much feminist thought to embrace rather than sublimate the conflict and contradiction that characterises attempts to bring poststructuralist insights to bear on the development project. This ‘hybridity’ has provided a fertile space for the evolution of new modes of anti-imperialist thought that seek to utilise multiple genres of development scholarship in ways that are constructively critical. Gibson-Graham (2006) argue for a new era of more inclusive, ‘weak’ development theorising that builds upon the successes of the era of inclusive, praxis-orientated coalition building within anti-imperialist feminist practice. They argue that this experience provides a constructive guide for ways to challenge the arrogance or “confident finality” of “strong” development theory in favour of a new era of “reparative” theorising:

The practice of doing weak theory requires acting as a beginner, refusing to know too much, allowing success to inspire and failure to educate, refusing to extend diagnoses too widely or deeply. ...Weak theory can be undertaken with a reparative motive that welcomes surprise, entertains hope, makes connection, tolerates coexistence and offers care for the new. (Gibson-Graham, 2006:8)

The next section of this chapter explores the evolution of this reparative potential or “critical mobility” within contemporary feminist post-development writing. I argue that this emerging body of thought is based on a creative synthesis of two important eras of feminist thinking – early Black feminist thought, and more recent Third World feminist poststructuralist theory. These two eras of critique represent two important feminist attempts to address the imperialist history of Western development thought – the first based on a desire to recognise diversity in an attempt to internationalise movements for social justice, and the second based on a poststructuralist suspicion of the role that ‘difference’ has played in internationalising Western economic and political dominance.

From Black feminism to deconstructionism

There are so many roots to the tree of anger
that sometimes the branches shatter
before they bear.

Sitting in Nedicks
the women rally before they march
discussing the problematic girls
they hire to make them free.
An almost white counterman passes
a waiting brother to serve them first
and the ladies neither notice nor reject
the slighter pleasures of their slavery.
But I who am bound by my mirror
as well as my bed
see causes in color
as well as sex
and sit here wondering
which me will survive
all these liberations.

Audre Lorde, (1997:92) *Who said it was simple.*

Feminist post-development thought has its roots in the powerful Black feminist critiques of the failure of Western feminism to excavate and acknowledge its historical alliances with imperialism. The early unity of the second wave feminist movement in Britain and the US began to unravel in the early 1980s with the publication of a number of important

critiques of racism within the ‘sisterhood’ (e.g. hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1983; Parmar, 1982). These writers challenged the eurocentric notions of family, work and personhood underlying White feminist theory; asserting that this theoretical tradition largely ignored the complex ways in which class and race structure women’s experiences (Carby, 1982; McEwan, 2001; Parmar, 1982; Yamada, 1983).

They also argued for an urgent recognition of the ways racism privileges White women at home and abroad. Hazel Carby’s (1982) *White woman listen!* asserted that Western feminist thought tended to theorise Imperialism as an aspect of an “all embracing patriarchy” rather than acknowledging it as an economic phenomenon which benefited White women due to their “race”:

White women in the British WLM [Women’s Liberation Movement] are extraordinarily reluctant to see themselves in the situations of being oppressors, as they feel that this will be at the expense of concentrating upon being oppressed. Consequently the involvement of British women in imperialism and colonialism is repressed and the benefits that they – as whites – gained from the oppression of black people are ignored. The benefits of white skin did not just apply to a handful of cotton, tea or sugar plantation mistresses; all women in Britain benefited – in varying degrees – from the economic exploitation of the colonies. The pro-imperialist attitudes of many nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century feminists and suffragists have yet to be acknowledged for their racist implications. (Carby, 1982:221-2)

Early influential writings within this tradition, and particularly contributors to the seminal anthology *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*, view their work as an effort to internationalise rather than dismantle the feminist project. As editors Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1983) explain:

The women writing here are committed feminists. We are challenging white feminists to be accountable for their racism because at the base we still want to believe that they really want freedom for all of us. ... It is an act of love to take someone at her word, to expect the most out of a woman who calls herself a feminist – to challenge her as you yourself wish to be challenged. (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1983:62, emphasis in original)

These women argued that a focus on ‘difference’ within the feminist movements can enliven the project by creating opportunities for theoretical cross-fertilisation within new non-hierarchical political spaces. Much loved and quoted queer, Black feminist poet Audre Lorde (1983) enthuses:

[D]ifference must not be merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways to actively ‘be’ in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters. (Lorde, 1983:99)

For these feminist writers, anti-racist critique could be a tool for building a “pluralistic feminism” that teaches women to “learn to love each other by learning to travel to each other’s ‘worlds’” (Lugones, 1987:3-4). The rise of poststructuralist theory²⁰ in the 1980s, however, began to shift the focus of feminist theory away from the potential of difference to the power of language and ‘representation’. Chandra Mohanty’s (1988) essay *Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses* was one of the most important early pieces of work within this tradition. Mohanty’s work focused on the ways that that White feminism as a dominant political movement uses representations of the less powerful, the ‘Other’, to construct a ‘superior’ self. She argues that this mode of representation is typical within Western feminist accounts of Third World women as ‘oppressed’:

[A] homogenous notion of the oppression of women as a group is assumed, which, in turn, produces the image of an ‘average third-world-woman’. This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being ‘third world’ (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-orientated, victimized, etc.). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the ‘freedom’ to make their own decisions. The distinction between western feminist re-presentation of women in the third world and western feminist self-presentation is a distinction of the same order as that made by some Marxists between the ‘maintenance’ function of the housewife and the real ‘productive’ role of wage-labour, or the characterization by developmentalists of the third world as being engaged in the lesser production of ‘raw materials’ in contrast to the real ‘productive’ activity of the first world. (Mohanty, 1988:65)

²⁰ Here I am referring primarily to the influence of Foucault (1979; 1981; 1986) and Derrida (1973; 1976) on development thought. Both theorists foreground the role that language and representation play in constituting subjectivity, and in creating and upholding systems of power and inequality. Foucault’s work on ‘discourse’ and ‘governmentality’ have been utilised by a number of authors to highlight the ways in which Western ideas have been responsible for defining and creating the realities of ‘Third World peoples’. Amongst the most popular of these works include Edward Said’s (1991) much quoted work on the discourse of the ‘Orient’, and later works by Escobar (1995), Ferguson (1990) and Sachs (1992) on the creation of the problem of the ‘Third World’ through development discourse. Not all authors utilising poststructuralist ideas refer to them as such, and it is very common in development literature for authors to refer more generally to ‘post-modernism’ or ‘post-colonialism’ or ‘post-development’ or to use all terms interchangeably.

Third World poststructuralist feminists, with their belief in the basic instability of identity, the inescapability of representation, and language as a site of struggle for power, tend to be far less optimistic and about the possibilities for creative dialogue through the recognition of difference. As Chow (2003) asserts, any claims to ‘know’ another are best recognised as illusory:

To the extent that it is our own limit that we encounter when we encounter another, all these [feminist] intellectuals can do is to render the other as the negative of what they are and what they do. ... Whether positive or negative, the construction of the native remains at the level of image-identification, a process in which ‘our’ own identity is measured in terms of the degrees in which we resemble her and to which she resembles us. (Chow, 2003:329)

Thus, any attempts to create a coherent feminist platform for change are dismissed, or at least heavily cautioned against, for fear that such a ‘grand narrative’ will inevitably represent the interests of the powerful. Ang (2003) unflatteringly projects the homogenizing tendencies of nationalism on to the feminist project:

Feminism must stop conceiving itself as a nation, a ‘natural’ political destination for all women, no matter how multicultural. Rather than adopting a politics of inclusion (which is always ultimately based on a notion of commonality and community), it will have to develop a self-conscious politics of partiality. (Ang, 2003:191)

The tension between the early optimism within Black feminist theory about the potential of difference to expand and strengthen the movement and the pessimism of later poststructuralist writings warning against the totalising tendencies of solidarity has been the source of considerable debate within feminist theory during the last two decades. The poststructuralist turn within feminist theory has not been embraced by all. Many feminist/development theorists have been critical of the ways in which the focus on diversity, or what Segal (1999:32) calls the “endlessly proliferating particularities of difference”, has reduced opportunities for the development of a politically intelligible feminist platform for action (Papart & Marchand, 1995:19; Segal, 1999; Udayagiri, 1995). Maria Nzomo (1995), for instance, argues that feminist postmodernism is politically ‘demoralizing’ in a context in which African feminists rely heavily on notions of universal ‘rights’ and ‘democracy’ to push for change within their societies:

For women particularly, their case for gender-sensitive democratization depends to a large extent upon their ability to convince male-dominated society that women's demands are well within the basic ideas of democracy and that these principles find support in the constitutions of democracies all over the world, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Covenant on Human Rights (1976) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). These are for the most part universally accepted legal standards of equality for women and men, which women in Kenya cherish as they struggle for equitable and effective participation and elimination of all forms of discrimination against them in the current democratization process. To remove the possibility for appealing to universal ideals would seriously diminish the strategies available to women for improving their position in society. (Nzomo, 1995:132)

Nzomo (1995) acknowledges that postmodernist theory has made an important contribution to critiques of modernisation theory and its imperialist foundations; however, she argues that it is equally paternalistic to assume that Third World theorists who utilise Western ideals like 'democracy' are somehow deluded. As she summarises, "[f]or while acknowledging that there are historical and socio-cultural differences that distinguish Kenyan society, it is difficult to justify a dismissal of the basic principles of democracy as irrelevant to Kenya, simply because they were developed in ancient Greece by political philosophers who knew nothing about Kenya" (Nzomo, 1995:134).

Ernesto Laclau (2002), in his critique of the dangers of embracing the kind of 'partiality' championed by theorists like Ang (2003) and Chow (2003), reinforces Nzomo's point about the possibility for 'extending' rather than rejecting 'universal' rights as a platform for collective political action:

It is one thing to say that the universalistic values of the West are the preserve of its traditional dominant groups; it is very different to assert that the historical link between the two is a contingent and unacceptable fact which can be modified through political and social struggles. When Mary Wollstonecraft, in the wake of the French Revolution, defended the rights of women, she did not present the exclusion of women from the declaration of rights of man and citizen as a proof that the latter are intrinsically male rights, but tried, on the contrary, to deepen the democratic revolution by showing the incoherence of establishing universal rights which were restricted to particular sectors of the population. (Laclau, 2002:130)

Other feminist/development theorists have also challenged the elitist ‘jargonism’ of feminist postmodernist theory and its overemphasis on ‘text’ and ‘language’ at the expense of people’s material realities (Abu-Lughod, 1993:28; Udayagiri, 1995:167; Wolf, 1992:119). Christine Sylvester (1999) argues that while postmodernist critique may have highlighted the ways in which the modernist tendencies of development studies have limited its ability to hear the minority voices of the ‘subaltern’²¹, this failing is mirrored in the unfortunate fact that postmodernist theory “does not tend to concern itself with whether the subaltern is eating” (Sylvester, 1999:703).

Despite the limitations of postmodernist theorising, however, there are very few who yearn for a return to the security of an unquestioned modernist faith in political and theoretical unity. Papart and Marchand (1995) argue that, within the development field, feminist theory has been one of the most successful at balancing the need to challenge the dominance of ‘universal’ Western development ideals, with the (modernist) recognition of the need to forge collective identities capable of supporting activism for change.

Papart and Marchand (1995:9) argue that feminist/development theory has engaged with postmodernist theory in two primary ways: firstly in an “alliance” aimed at deconstructing Enlightenment thought, and secondly as a “strategic engagement” aimed at transforming both theories. It is this former era of theorising that is associated with the work of Third World feminist poststructuralist or ‘feminist postcolonial’ authors such as Mohanty (1988), Ang (2003) and Chow (2003). I argue that this type of theorising shares some of the same limitations inherent to the relativist, populist tendencies of conventional post-development thought.

I contend that it is the second body of thought – that aimed at ‘strategic engagement’ with postmodernist theory - that has the most potential for realising the ‘critical mobility’ of a new era of feminist anti-imperialist research practice. It is this latter style of feminist critique that some have labelled ‘feminist post-development’ thought (Lind, 2003; Saunders, 2002). This new era of feminist/development writing represents a synthesis of the contributions of utopian Black feminist thought and the critical

²¹ Here Sylvester is referring to Spivak’s (1988) famous poststructuralist work on the ways in which the dominant ideas or discourses of the day derive their power by denying certain groups (the subaltern) a vocabulary with which to represent themselves.

perspectives of Third World feminist poststructuralist writers. It seeks to take advantage of the history of epistemological and methodological debates within feminism over ways to create a new critical social science.

The parameters of feminist post-development thought

Efforts to explore the potential parameters of feminist post-development theory are problematised by the diversity within this emergent body of thought. Like other theoretical traditions that seek to engage with postmodernist ideas, the paradigm is characterised by a desire to avoid the necessary ‘fixity’ and ‘exclusion’ that accompanies definition. Papart and Marchand (1995:vii) represent this new field of enquiry as Feminism/Postmodernism/Development, in an effort to capture the extent to which contributors eschew definition in favour of “dialogue” that “avoid[s] premature closure on the topic”.

Feminist post-development thought can first and foremost be characterised by its commitment to knowledge production as a valuable tool for promoting social justice. Thus, it seeks to distance itself from a ‘strong’ poststructuralist or Foucauldian preoccupation with the idea that all knowledge is power and is thus all equally oppressive and productive on some level. Along with other feminist engagements with Foucault (for example, see Ramazanoglu, 1993; Soper, 1993), it shares a suspicion that paying too much attention to ‘representation’ and the ‘discursive’ construction of reality has a tendency to promote a sort of idealism that deflects attention away from the underlying material causes of women’s oppression (Bulbeck, 1998:14; McEwan, 2001:104). A tendency that, Soper (1993:35) argues, has encouraged a “theoretical absorption in phenomenology of th[e] effects [of power] at the cost of any serious analysis of why women are at the mercy of this ‘power’ in the first place”. Bulbeck (1998) asserts that the focus on literary analysis, in particular, within postmodernist research is problematic, because it shifts attention away from the urgent need for more in-depth empirical investigation into the realities of women’s lives:

T]here are reasons why third world women resist the lure of postmodernism and poststructuralism. In their focus on words rather than things, the post-discourses focus at least as much attention on discussions of rape and poverty as the experiences of those raped or poor. (Bulbeck, 1998:14)

Stivens (1998) argues that the largely ‘materialist’ focus of ‘women-in-development’ writing has made it particularly unpopular within postmodernist theorising, leading to the further marginalisation of writing that explores the experiences of non-Western women. She contends that compared to writing on the lives of Western women, women-in-development writing has been “especially vulnerable to the moves away from the *social* to the *cultural*” that has characterised the turn to the postmodern within the social sciences (Stivens, 1998:12, emphasis in original). Stivens (1998) positions this disregard for the importance of materialist analyses within non-Western women’s writing as further evidence of the “Eurocentric disregard for the world beyond Euro-America” (Stivens, 1998:12).

A number of feminist post-development writers have also challenged the focus on development as ‘discourse’ (Lazreg, 2002; McEwan, 2001; Nanda, 2002:14). They argue that the theoretical cogency of this approach, grounded as it is in a view of development as a modern form of coercive ‘biopower’, necessitates a homogenizing of development aspirations and experiences. These authors argue that this movement has ushered in a regressive move away from a concern with knowledge production aimed at documenting and improving the conditions of people’s lives, to a concern with ‘proving’ that Western development is the all pervasive inescapable nightmare that Foucault’s visions of biopower predict. Here Marnia Lazreg (2002) challenges the idealism and over-determinism that results from analyses of development as discourse:

...the discursive analysis of development is not the same as the historical analysis of the ways in which societies can achieve or cannot achieve self-sufficiency in producing and reproducing their material and social lives. Imbuing discourse with an ontological existence that essentially determines people’s lives and thoughts is another form of objectifying them. Individual women and men in countries of the Third World do not live their lives in terms of the category of development. (2002:126)

These theorists argue for a renewed appreciation of the need for analysis at the material as well as the symbolic level, asserting that there is no evidence that the new focus on discourse and ‘difference’ has actually translated into challenges to material inequality at the local level (Nanda, 2002:214). Indeed, Nanda (2002) contends that the idea of development as a homogenous repressive Western discourse has, in many countries, led to the rise of reactionary ‘anti-modern’ discourses that actually act to reinforce rather than challenge local inequality. Nanda takes as one example the cooption of anti-modernist ‘post-development’ and ‘ecofeminist’ ideas by wealthy Indian farmers who seek to promote an anti-Western nationalism as a way of deflecting attention away from their own exploitation of landless ‘untouchable’, or *dalit*, farm workers. Nanda argues that the decline in the currency of ‘class’ or ‘caste’ as a focus of analysis in favour of Western/non-Western, and modern/anti-modern has reduced the opportunities this group have to challenge their oppression:

The partly willing and partly inadvertent co-option of ecofeminism by farmer’s movements is a good example of the problems of valorizing symbolic differences over class differences. While it *is* true that the symbolic and the material cannot be separated, it is *not* true that struggles over the terrain of symbols neatly translate into more equitable redistribution in the terrain of the material. ...[G]iven India’s balance of caste and class power, glued together by deeply inegalitarian Hindu norms, critiques pitched at the level of irreducible cultural differences with the West are strengthening the already formidable power of upper-caste, rich rural males, who are the most dubious ‘allies’ that feminist and other secular democrats could ever want. (Nanda, 2002:222, emphasis in original)

It is for these reasons that feminist post-development writers argue that there is a need for a more balanced engagement between the new focus on the discursive construction of reality and more traditional, structural analyses of the impact of class and gender on patterns of inequality. These theorists assert that rather than rejecting the progressive tendencies of liberal, socialist, and humanist traditions of development thought, such as the focus on equality, democracy, basic needs, that are also part of the Enlightenment tradition (as well as the political traditions within many non-Western social movements), we need to reclaim them as grounds for a new era of ‘reflexive’ emancipatory knowledge construction (Ray, 2003:118; Shayne, 2003:263).

These theorists are highly critical of the assumption that populism, a ‘handing over’ of knowledge production to a homogenous ‘non-Western’ other is capable of producing this shift (Lazreg, 2002:139; Staudt, 2002:58). Four decades of fierce debate within feminist theory about how to do justice to the multiplicity of women’s identity – the recognition that “everyone is someone else’s other” (Gentile, 1985:7) – have made the search for a more sophisticated framework beyond a romanticised populism essential (Lind, 2003:233). Staudt (2002) argues that the experience of sexism within leftist, environmentalist, and anti-racist groups has cured most feminist development writers of the illusion that ‘grassroots’ or ‘local’ means anti-hierarchy:

Those who privilege outsider strategies may be privileging yet another master’s house with its own compromising perils. How quickly those in the contemporary era have forgotten the hierarchy and male privilege in leftist and civil rights organizations of recent decades! ... [T]he ultimate goal of transformative institutions, the ‘revolutions’ of the twentieth century, had too few ‘insiders’ putting revolutionary policies (including gender equality) into practice. (Staudt, 2002:58-9)

What these authors provide is a move beyond the search for the perfect *subject* of new anti-imperialist knowledge production – what Haraway (1988:152) labels the “fetishized subject of oppositional history” - to a concern with the *conditions* for more emancipatory knowledge production. Feminist anthropologist Kirin Narayan’s essay *How native is a ‘native’ anthropologist* provides a number of useful contributions relating to this problematic. Narayan (2003) argues that the time has come for a rejection of the insider/outsider model of research and politics that many in the social sciences still cling to (see also Abu-Lughod, 1993:40). She argues that even when one shares a cultural identity with one’s participants, other differences such as education, class, gender, sexual orientation, and even sheer duration of contacts, can outweigh the similarities that shared cultural identity appears to provide (Narayan, 2003:286). Narayan (2003) argues that we need to move away from an obsession with who is most ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, and therefore most or least ‘authentic’, to a concern with what types of engagement with our participants are most likely to promote egalitarian exchanges:

what we must focus our attention on is the quality of relations with the people we seek to represent in our texts: are they viewed as mere fodder for professionally self-serving statements about a generalized Other, or are they accepted as subjects with voices, views, and dilemmas – people to whom we are bonded through ties of reciprocity and who may even be critical of our professional enterprise? (Narayan, 2003:286)

Like many other feminist theorists contributing to the feminist post-development tradition, Narayan (2003) promotes the use of ‘positioned’ or ‘situated’ knowledges as a way to cultivate respectful and emancipatory knowledge construction. The concept of ‘situated knowledges’, as developed and popularised by feminist scientist Donna Haraway (1988:575), is an important feminist response to the calls for the rejection of the notions of ‘scientific objectivity’ that underpin the traditional liberal, Marxist and humanist search for emancipatory knowledge.

Alongside many other feminist sociologists of science (e.g. see Bleier, 1984; Fox Keller, 1984; Harding, 1991; Wagner, 1994), Haraway (1998) is critical of the role that the Western notion of ‘value-free’ objectivity has played in perpetuating racist and sexist bias within science. However, she is also equally reluctant to dismiss the opportunities that science has provided to challenge dominant groups to produce less partial accounts of social reality (Haraway, 1988:580).

Haraway argues that in order to avoid the slide into relativism, it is necessary to develop a revised notion of ‘objectivity’. She asserts that objectivity, understood as the search for rational, critical, ‘translatable’ understandings of regularities and causal mechanisms shaping social and natural reality, is not achieved by eliminating values from research (which is impossible), but by attempting to create the best knowledge currently possible through maximizing our opportunities to consider all the possible explanations for these regularities (Haraway, 1988:585-7). Fellow feminist philosopher of science, Sandra Harding, labels this notion ‘strong objectivity’, as opposed to the ‘weak objectivity’ that she argues characterises positivist projects, which fail to examine the values underlying their work, and therefore fail to explore the ways that these values restrict their ability to see different aspects of reality (Harding, 1991:147-9). Harding contends that while it is never possible to consider all the possible causes of social reality, in attempting to do so, we maximize our opportunities to tell ‘less-false’ stories:

Research is socially situated, and it can be more objectively conducted without aiming for or claiming to be value-free. The requirements for achieving strong objectivity permit one to abandon notions of perfect, mirrorlike representations of the world, the self as a defended fortress, and the "truly scientific" as disinterested with regard to morals and politics, yet still apply rational standards

to sorting less from more partial and distorted belief. Indeed, my argument is that these standards are more rational and more effective at producing maximally objective results than the ones associated with what I have called weak objectivity. (Harding, 1991:159).

Both Haraway and Harding argue for a (social) science that is ‘situated’ in an acknowledgement of the values and experiences of the researcher. However, rather than advocating a ‘relativist’ approach to research, they argue that this situatedness must be accompanied by an effort to expand one’s knowledge of other’s reality by seeking the voices of those who are excluded from traditional scientific accounts (Haraway, 1988:585; Harding, 1991:152). Both assert that ‘situated knowledge’ seeks to avoid the populist urge to simply valorise and thus fetishise the other, in favour of a practical programme that promotes “power-sensitive … ‘conversation’” (Haraway, 1988:589) in search of translatable accounts of social and natural reality. As Harding asserts:

To enact or operationalize the directive of strong objectivity is to value the Other's perspective and to pass over in thought into the social condition that creates it - not in order to stay there, to "go native" or merge the self with the Other, but in order to look back at the self in all its cultural particularity from a more distant, critical, objectifying location. (Harding, 1991:151).

Thus, the feminist internationalism contained within the original vision of early Black utopian feminist thought re-emerges within feminist post-development writing as a reflexive, critical project committed to research that promotes “open, consultative and empathetic South-North theory building” (Papart, 2002:55). Feminist post-development writers advocate for an engagement with poststructuralist insights into the nature of power and subjectivity, but a recognition of the power of previous styles of feminist writing to produce coherent, meaningful critiques of systems of structural inequality (Bhavnani et al., 2003:2; Lind, 2003:230). Theoretical commitments are thus reconceptualised as ‘tactical’ or ‘strategic’ rather than absolute (Saunders, 2002:10). Feminist anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (1993:28), for instance, speaks of her commitment to a “tactical humanism”, that combines a recognition of the limits of humanism, with an acknowledgement that because “humanism continues to be in the West the language of human equality with the greatest moral force” it is a theoretical force that feminists shouldn’t abandon (1993:28).

One of the most exciting possibilities offered by feminist post-development writing is the encouragement to undertake more collaborative or ‘hybrid’ theoretical/research projects. Writers within this field challenge the disciplinary specialisation and the reliance on linear-progressivist accounts of development theory/reality that predominate within traditional development research. Feminist post-development writers challenge postmodernist writers, in particular, to acknowledge their debt of tradition to, and interdependency with other genres of development thought. Udayagiri (1995) makes this point well in her critique of the lack of credit that feminist poststructuralist authors Chandra Mohanty and Aihwa Ong give to the contributions made by early WID writers. Mohanty’s powerful critique of the ‘colonising’ tendencies of Western liberal feminism devotes just one sentence to the recognition that “at the very least, there is an evident interest in and commitment to improving the lives of women in ‘developing countries’” (Mohanty, 1988:71).

Udayagiri (1995) argues, convincingly, that this is inadequate. She, and others (Lazreg, 2002:125; Lind, 2003:231) contend that we need to recognise the important contribution that WID theorists have made and *continue to make* to highlighting global gender inequalities. She argues that postmodernist feminists need to ensure that they don’t repeat the tendency to see ‘their’ theory as the new universal²²:

In privileging postmodernism as social criticism par excellence, Ong and Mohanty do a disservice to feminist scholarship which has brought sweeping changes to social theory ... [They] imply that their genre of feminist scholarship is the best form of social criticism. They accuse WID and socialist feminism of reinforcing colonialist/neo-colonialist relationships and failing as a political practice. This is shortsighted. To steal a page from the postmodernist’s book, perhaps we need multiple genres of scholarship to enrich social criticism and make it meaningful in different contexts. (Udayagiri, 1995:173)

Mohanty (2003:226) herself, in response to these critiques, now acknowledges the need for an increased focus on commonality and collaboration within feminist practice/theory. She argues that while at the time she wrote *Under Western eyes* in 1986, it was important to focus her critique on the “false universality of Eurocentric discourses”,

²² Segal (1999:18) is also critical of the lack of reflexivity around this issue within poststructuralist writing, labelling poststructuralism or ‘postmodernity’: “that paradoxical twist of modernity, contrarily repudiating linear narratives while depending on one.”

she is now cognisant of the renewed need to “reemphasize the connections between local and universal” in ways that empower “women of different communities and identities to build coalitions and solidarities across borders” (Mohanty, 2003:227).

Conclusion

This emphasis on the value of utilising multiple genres of feminist/development theory provides a useful position from which to explore the linkages and strengths of different approaches to understanding the outcomes associated with women’s participation in development scholarship schemes. As I have argued in Chapter Three, Western higher education systems have a number of important and insightful critics, and yet they still occupy a certain place in the global imaginary. The (variable) benefits often associated with higher education, particularly increased incomes, and increased social mobility continue to make it an important development priority for many. The increasingly popular belief that enduring inequities in access to higher educational resources are also likely to leave poorer nations struggling to keep up with the ‘knowledge revolution’ transforming the global economy has made this priority even more urgent for many. Certainly, if we believe that there is any value in higher education at all, then it is difficult to argue that such inequities are desirable.

So how are we to respond to such inequities? Not necessarily as unqualified supporters of the push for other nations to ‘catch-up’ with ‘our’ model of higher education; but, also, hopefully, not as ones so committed to a notion of Western education as coercive ‘discourse’ that we are insensitive to the historical role education has played in realising many of the aspirations central to visions of human flourishing. There is considerable value associated with the use of a flexible analytical framework that is capable of acknowledging competing ideas about the value of higher education for women as a development goal. The increase in interest within development studies, and feminist post-development writing in particular, in the potential of new anti-imperialist ‘weak’ development research practices that prioritise the need for more modest, tentative, multi-disciplinary explorations of development realities provides important encouragement to utilise such an approach within this thesis. The following chapter examines what methods are most useful for this task.

Chapter Five - Methods

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods that I have used within this thesis. My choice of methods was shaped by my desire to operationalise the feminist post-development commitment to a new era of “weak” or “reparative” development theorising (Gibson-Graham, 2006:8) that engages with feminist and postmodernist theory in ways that produces more creative, collaborative, and ‘situated’ development research projects.

The first part of the chapter summarises the important methodological decisions I have made in pursuit of such a programme, including the decision to use open-ended qualitative research methods in preference to the programme evaluation frameworks popular within much development research. The second part of the chapter examines the data collection process in detail, addressing participant selection, the interview process, ethical issues, data analysis and writing up.

Interview research and the value of qualitative explorations of development reality

One of the most important decisions that I made about methods in the early stages of my research was that I wanted to conduct interview-based research. My academic training as a sociologist and my experience as a researcher have given me previous opportunities to experiment with effective interview technique, as well as to develop an appreciation for the strengths of this method of data collection. While qualitative research methods have a long history within the social sciences, they have always lacked the status of more quantitative research approaches (Brockington & Sullivan, 2003:59; Flick, 2006:35; Mason, 2002:1). However, the challenges to positivism posed by feminist, anti-racist, and poststructuralist critiques of modernist social science have led to increased interest in the potential of these methods to enable us to be more flexible, creative, and inclusive in our approach to data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b).

While there is considerable diversity within qualitative research approaches, with some more wedded to the positivist paradigm than others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b:14-15), the common commitment to ‘inductive’ reasoning, and the focus on capturing the

specificity of individual experience have provided useful opportunities for those researchers interested in resisting easy generalisation in favour of the construction of richer, more complex understandings of social life (Mason, 2002:1; Tolich & Davidson, 1999:34).

Methodologically, the strength of qualitative research lies in the opportunities it provides to produce more in-depth understandings of the complexity of people's lives. Qualitative research starts with the assumption that people are valuable sources of information about their own experiences, and that "much can be learned from direct, extended conversations with individuals whose thoughts and opinions are critical for understanding a topic" (Vaughn et al., 1996:17). Qualitative researchers begin with the daily existence of individuals, focusing on the ways that explorations of personal experience can enable us to build more comprehensive pictures of social reality. As Cole and Knowles (2001:11) sum up:

[C]lusters of individual lives make up communities, societies, and cultures. To understand some of the complexities, complications and confusions within the life of just one member of a community is to gain insights into the collective.

As well as having high methodological 'validity', qualitative methods also have distinct political and epistemological advantages. The emphasis on flexibility and the need to remain open to the "ambience of the exchange" (Rowles & Reinharz, 1988:6), provide increased opportunities for participants to have input into the direction of research. This flexibility can also promote greater transparency around the ways that data is actively 'constructed' by researcher and participant at a given time and place under specific material conditions. In this way, qualitative methods can make it easier to 'situate' our research efforts, as well as to "preserve the presence of the active and experiencing subject" (Smith, 1987:105).

Finally, the dialectical relationship between data collection and analysis within qualitative research is also useful for challenging the traditional over-determinism of theory within quantitative hypothesis testing approaches. Qualitative researchers argue against making a "parade of theory" (Firth in Wolcott, 2001:76); asserting, instead, that data collection and analysis should be intertwined and develop together according to the unique conditions experienced within a research project (Berg, 1998; Smith, 2002:27). As Smith

(1987:11) contends, the decision to adopt a more naturalistic approach to data collection involves “renouncing theoretical projects that seek full development and coherence prior to an encounter with the world”. Such an approach is consistent with Gibson-Graham’s (2006) argument in favour of more tentative ‘weak’ development theorising. Qualitative researchers seek to avoid the arrogance of positivist overgeneralisation. As Wolcott (2001) cautions:

By the very nature of the way we approach things – flatfooted observers with feet of clay – we tend at most to be theory borrowers (or theory poachers, as others may see us) rather than theory builders. Taking a model of theory-driven research derived from the so-called hard sciences doesn’t serve anything but our already heightened sense of physics envy. Unless you think one must wear a white lab coat to be a careful observer, forget that model and keep your theorizing modest and relevant. (Wolcott, 2001:77)

Despite the usefulness of qualitative research approaches, however, there are distinct challenges associated with the decision to use them within a development studies research project. A number of researchers have documented the ways in which the policy focus of development research – its emphasis on identifying mechanisms for inducing social change – continues to limit the scope, creativity, and methodological veracity of qualitative research projects (Hausner, 2006:323; Robinson-Pant, 2001:166). These authors assert that the focus on policy applicability has created a bias in favour of quantitative methods, because these methods provide numerical values that can be easily translated into policy goals (Hausner, 2006:323; Robinson-Pant, 2001:166). Amongst many within the development industry, Brockington and Sullivan (2003:59) argue, qualitative methods still have “a reputation for being anecdotal or associated with ideas that cannot be described with hard, secure facts”.

While the use of qualitative methods is slowly increasing in popularity in the development industry, due to the opportunities these methods offer to produce research on more egalitarian terms with participants, the bias in favour of quantitative methods remains. This is most evident in the continuing demands upon qualitative development researchers to meet the conditions of research reliability and validity established within the positivist quantitative tradition. An important example of this is the ongoing perception that ‘reflexivity’ should be avoided in development research reports because it can be seen to represent a lack of confidence in the validity of data (Robinson-Pant, 2001:167). Development researcher and ethnographer Sondra Hausner (2006:231),

commenting on this phenomenon, argues that while anthropology, as a critical social science, “insists that some self-revelation is critical to its method”, development studies, unfortunately, still often “requires that self-critique be an internal or private matter only”. Literacy researcher Anne Robinson-Pant (2001:167) contends that the other important evidence of the positivist, quantitative bias in development research is the restriction qualitative researchers face on changing research design/questions as research evolves for fear that flexibility is ‘unscientific’.

However, qualitative researchers from within traditional social science disciplines such as anthropology and sociology have become increasingly vocal in their opposition to the ways in which open-ended qualitative research is devalued within development practice. They argue that while outcomes, indicators, and questionnaires can be important tools within evaluation research, they are also problematic because “they presuppose the category. You know what you are looking for before you get there” (Hausner, 2006:337). There are considerable advantages associated with using open-ended research approaches. They can provide a necessary degree of flexibility that is “fundamental to the changing nature of human relationships” (Hausner, 2006:323) and, therefore, to efforts to capture the diversity and dynamism of social life. They can also provide greater opportunities to be responsive to the priorities of participants.

As Robinson Pant (2001), reflecting on her own experience as an ethnographer involved in evaluating a woman’s literacy project, asserts, ultimately the choice to use qualitative methods is not only about collecting better data, it is about taking a more creative approach that ensures all possible solutions to problems, not just those currently on offer, are considered. It implies, she argues, “a decision to take a more holistic approach to programming and possibly completely chang[ing] [the] overall direction” of a project (Robinson-Pant, 2001:166). Fellow anthropologist Hausner (2006) reinforces the power of qualitative research – in this case, ethnography - to lead to better, more effective, and more enduring development programmes:

Ethnography can tell programmers stories they did not know existed, demonstrate links and connections that no questionnaire could have dreamed up, and establish personal connections that can make the difference between a development project that everyone wants to milk and one that everyone wants to participate in. ... Ethnography allows you to open the field, and direct your first line of inquiry to those for whom you intend your project, not to the rule

book that governs program design. So you know what is working and what is not, in your informants' own language. The potential of open-ended research – ethnography – that does not presuppose the categories of inquiry is enormous. (Hausner, 2006:338-9)

French anthropologist Olivier de Sardan (2005) also extols the value of traditional anthropological or qualitative sociological research to increase the effectiveness of development programming. He asserts that in order to develop effective solutions to development problems we need to take advantage of the wealth of experience these disciplines have in designing methodologically rigorous research that ensures that we get a holistic picture of the social reality we seek to ‘amend’. Olivier de Sardan (2005:26) argues that social research requires “a level of competence that cannot be improvised”, and is increasingly being compromised by the policy imperative within development research:

The confrontation of varied social logics surrounding development projects constitutes a complex social phenomenon which economists, agronomists and decisions makers tend to ignore. In the face of the recurrent gap between expected behaviour and real behaviour, in the face of the deviations to which all development operations are subject, in consequence of the reactions of target groups, developers tend to resort to pseudo-sociological notions that bear a closer resemblance to clichés and stereotypes than to analytical tools. ... Lacksadaisical references to ‘cultural factors’ are more often than not oblivious not only of the existence of sub-cultures and internal cultural diversity within a given social group, but also of the influence of social cleavages (age, sex, social classes, among others) and of norms and behaviour. They lose sight of the fact that ‘culture’ is a construct subjected to continuous syncretic processes, and the object of symbolic struggles. (Olivier de Sardan, 2005:26)

Olivier de Sardan (2005) maintains that the future of effective development intervention will be dependent on our ability to eschew this “do-it-yourself sociology” (Olivier de Sardan, 2005:28) in favour of a return to a more rigorous qualitative research programme that starts with lives rather than projects. The following section explores the parameters of such a programme. Such a project could, optimistically attempt to build on the strengths of the more traditional conventions of research ‘rigour’ within the qualitative paradigm, as well as exploring the usefulness of some of the more recent feminist, anti-racist and postmodernist attempts to build more critical, reflexive qualitative methods.

Building a research framework

As I have noted in the previous chapter, feminist post-development researchers reject the notion of an ‘insider’ who is somehow ‘naturally’ able to access the richest data as a result of their privileged status within a community. Instead they argue that attention must be paid to the specific skills and commitments that are most likely to foster a sense of trust in our participants and to produce rich, useful data.

In their desire to produce useful, ‘translatable’ knowledge that takes seriously our responsibility as development researchers to produce “theories that resonate more with people’s lives” (Fraser, 2004:187) feminist post-development writers are also likely to reject the more extreme constructivist commitments of postmodernism/post-development in favour of some attention to research rigour. Here they share the concerns of other social researchers who reject the lack of attention to research training and competencies evident in some postmodernist notions of researcher as a sort of eclectic ‘jack of all trades’ or “*bricoleur*”²³. As qualitative education researcher Freebody (2003) sums up:

I take the view here that is unfashionable among some qualitative educational researchers. I do not regard research of any kind as a bricolage – to put it unkindly, as the innocent acquisitions of the disinterested curiosity collector, who encounters everyday cultural practices in the manner of a wide-eyed tourist in an airport craft emporium. Rather, I have taken the view that the doing of research is fundamentally the willing adoption of certain responsibilities, made evident as guiding disciplines or principles of method, which, in turn, accord the products of research a particular status as ways of knowing about cultural practice. (Freebody, 2003:69)

For feminist post-development writers, the preservation of the “particular status” of social research will be dependent on our ability to develop “a concern with appreciating the new horizons of postmodernism while simultaneously remaining conservatively committed to the empirical description of everyday life” (Fontana & Frey, 2003:94). Here I concur with Freebody (2003) that such a programme will be reliant on the use of some guiding principles or ‘responsibilities’ aimed at maximising research rigour.

²³ Denzin and Lincoln (2003a:6) describe the concept of *bricoleur* as a sort of “quilt-maker” who “uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand.” Eschewing the need to stick to any established conventions within qualitative research, they argue that within this model “if new tools or techniques have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this.”

Fontana and Frey (2003) argue that responsible qualitative research should be guided by the need to produce projects that are systematic, consistent and transparent. They argue that when well designed, critical qualitative research can meet all the conditions for research rigour, including the reliance on the use of specific skills and training, and a thorough knowledge of the range of potential methods available.

The types of skills most often identified by researchers as important within semi-structured and unstructured interviewing include a knowledge of the language and culture of your respondents, and good interpersonal communication skills, including the ability to establish rapport with individuals, to listen actively, and judge when and how to ask questions appropriately (Fontana & Frey, 2003; Opie, 2003:245; Parnwell, 1999). Life history researchers Goodson and Sikes (2001) summarise what they consider to be the qualities of an effective qualitative researcher:

Life history is an approach best suited to people who are able to listen attentively and beyond what is actually being said, and who can ask pertinent questions in a non-threatening manner. It demands the willingness to share one's own experiences, if this seems appropriate, and, of supreme importance, it requires the researcher to be the sort of person that people want to talk to.
(Goodson & Sikes, 2001:20)

Before collecting any data, I thought a lot about the types of communicative competencies that would be important in my interviews. Because I have previously worked in several community work and advocacy roles that required interviewing and micro-counselling skills, I felt that many of these skills were likely to translate well into a research interview setting. I have also had a number of opportunities to practice and refine my interviewing skills within my postgraduate programme in sociology, and during my employment as a researcher. As well as these generic communication skills, I also focused on what I felt was likely to be the other most important resource within the interview setting, an expansive and well-rounded background knowledge of my topic and the lives of the participants I would be interviewing.

Background preparation for research

In formulating my research and interview questions, I attempted to consult with a broad range of academic sources across multiple disciplines, including women's studies, education, development studies, sociology, and anthropology. I made an effort to eschew the reductive tendency to look for 'linear' narratives of theoretical and disciplinary progress, in favour of a process that sought out commonalities and convergences as well as conflicts. In an effort to prioritise cogency over contemporariness I also made a conscious effort to avoid the bias in favour of texts produced within the last ten years (Emihovich, 2005:307).

I also sought out a range of non-traditional sources relating to my research questions, including a number of historical novels and autobiographical works relating to the experiences of women from Third World and Western communities seeking access to increased educational opportunities (for example, Aidoo, 1979; Kartini, 1964; Smedley, 1977; Woolf, 1929/1981). In this decision, I was particularly influenced by Nash's (1997) thesis *A novel approach to education and development: Insights from African women writers*. Nash (1997:9) makes the case for the superior ability of novels to provide rich details about the intimate lives of people in ways that "evoke the emotions and empathy of the reader". Emihovich (2005) also makes the case for widening our theoretical net to include more non-traditional sources:

I would also urge graduate students to add to their reading list more literature and poetry, particularly from scholars and writers of color. Some of the most evocative and emotionally laden expressions of what it means to live in a world so very different from my own have come from reading autobiographical, narrative, or journalistic accounts from people who really do live in other "cultural worlds." These accounts allow me to enter that space for a brief moment in time to see that world through their eyes, whether imagined or real. (Emihovich, 2005:309)

Nash (1997) contends that the attention to the personal within novels can enable us to broaden our understanding of the complexity and diversity of human life, and thus, as researchers, ultimately build richer pictures of social existence:

[F]iction is ... full of personal experiences, and complex development issues are able to be treated in a holistic manner. This adds an important dimension to development literature which tends to reduce human experience to statistics and graphs. (Nash, 1997:9)

The trend towards treating important works of fiction, or ‘ethnographic novels’ as they are often called (Richardson, 2003:504) as sources of data is particularly relevant to development studies, as it is evident that many other cultures have not had/do not have access to academic forums/journals as a medium for writing about social reality; and thus, some of the best, ‘most faithful’ accounts of this reality are often produced within novels. Nash (1997:16) argues that many of these authors, living in politically repressive societies, often take considerable risks to produce works of fiction that document the conditions of social life within their communities.

Many postmodernist theorists have also become increasingly interested in the use of fiction to build a new field of ‘arts-based’ research that blurs the boundaries between the humanities and social sciences, and encourages more vivid, creative research writing (Cole & Knowles, 2001). While I appreciate the value of this endeavour, I am also cognisant of the need to acknowledge the epistemological issues associated with including this type of work in a research project, considering the complete ‘poetic license’ possessed by the author (Fontana & Frey, 2003:143; Narayan, 1999). There are good reasons to make a distinction between the two types of writing. Most importantly, as Ellis (1999:676) notes, involving the convention that social researchers “limit themselves, unlike fiction writers, to what they remember actually happened. Or at least they don’t tell something they know to be false”. However, as long as an effort is made to situate fiction/poetry, and make it clear where the boundaries between fiction and research lie, then I believe it can be an important resource for expanding our awareness of the contours of our participants’ lives.

Finally, my own experiences have been an important resource in the evolution of this project. In many ways this thesis evolved out of my own private passion for higher education. In this enthusiasm, I keep good company. A belief in the power of education to expand women’s horizons, and to enlarge the body of shared, reliable meaning within our societies has so long been a part of the Western feminist tradition that today it largely goes unquestioned. When I read Virginia Woolf’s (1929/1981:7-8) description of the

anger that rises up to meet the “guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown” who waves women away from the ‘Oxbridge’ library, it is with some pride that I reflect on our more recently enlightened legacy. Where women were for so long denied the right to education, we now promote, support, and enshrine in law a woman’s right to be here - to write, to think, and to expand the canon.

So, of course, it is personal. Despite my own intermittent frustrations with a style of learning characterised, in Geertz’s (1973:29) words, by a commitment to honing “the precision with which we vex each other” I am enamoured of my education – it fits, it suits. Somewhere along the way - class-based propensities aside - I became so enamoured of it that I decided to do a PhD. So, I am most obviously not a neutral bystander. When it comes to debates about education, politics, and human rights, I come as one who knows how hard we have fought to get here, and as one who rather enjoys having a room of her own.

In addition to the important role that higher education has played in shaping my own personal aspirations, it has also played an important role in my professional life. I have been employed in several roles within a university setting that have centred around the imperative to operationalise commitments to equal opportunities for underrepresented groups, particularly for women, and for students with disability. I have also previously worked as the primary researcher on a project aimed at identifying the academic and welfare support needs of NZAID students. So, I have obviously made important commitments at both a personal and professional level that influence my own views about the role of higher education as a social good.

However, I am not uncritical in this enthusiasm. Gloria Steinem’s (1992) work on the role that Western education plays in undermining the self-worth of women and peoples from non-Western cultures had a huge impact on me in the immediate period after I finished my first post-graduate degree. Despite being thoroughly cognisant of feminist and anti-racist critiques of the Western scientific model, it was Steinem’s very personal work on the ways in which the masculine bias within the culture and curriculum of tertiary education encourages women and people of colour to pursue an “A-plus in self-

denigration” (1992:119) that seriously challenged my underlying humanist commitment to education as a tool for the promotion of human flourishing. It was this critique that also opened me up to others provided by theorists/activists within the ‘education for submission’ tradition, such as Freire (1972), Illich (1971) and Bourdieu (1990).

The time I spent working in university disability support services also provided me with daily evidence of the uneven resources and resiliences that individuals bring to their education experiences, as well as the considerable challenges marginalised individuals often face attempting to translate education into much-sought-after increases in social mobility. My personal and professional experiences have acted variously as motivator, corrective, resource and impediment throughout the various stages of this research. They have certainly provided some of the most powerful incentives for me to seek out ways to capture the diversity of educational motivation, experience, and outcomes.

Selecting participants

In the early stages of my research I contacted the New Zealand Agency for International Development to discuss the possibility of interviewing former students for my research project. NZAID were enthusiastic, and I worked with them over a period of six months to build up a demographic profile of students who had completed a qualification through the New Zealand development scholarship scheme within the last five years. I originally decided to make five years the cut off period, as I felt that the further away from the educational experience, the less able participants would likely to be able to recall the details of their experience and therefore to adequately reflect on any changes that had occurred in their lives as a result of it.

The demographic data supplied by NZAID showed that the largest number of potential participants were from Thailand, Indonesia, and the Phillipines. Because there was one fairly recent research project (Inoncillo, 1997) on the impact of the NZAID scholarship scheme on the Phillipines available, I decided to focus on Thailand and Indonesia. NZAID agreed to send out letters of invitation to potential participants on my behalf, and I applied for research permission to conduct interviews in Indonesia. It took eight months to secure research permission to travel to Indonesia. Unfortunately, during that time, increased security alerts led to the imposition of a New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade travel warning against anything but essential travel to the area. In

response to this, I decided to revise my research plan and to focus only on Thailand. NZAID sent out letters of invitation for me, and after receiving six replies (out of fifty letters sent out), I applied for permission to conduct research in Thailand.

Prior to departure, amongst the chaos of decision-making about methods and participant selection, I also conducted six interviews with women from overseas who were currently studying in New Zealand. All the women were completing a PhD, and all had finished their data collection process. All but one were currently receiving an NZAID scholarship, and all had previously completed another postgraduate degree through a development scholarship scheme.

Even amongst the uncertainty about methodology and how I would deal with issues of reliability in relation to my sample selection, I felt certain that these initial interviews would be important. Five of the participants were personal acquaintances, and the last was a friend of one of these participants. At the time I suspected that the intimacy I had with these participants would be a useful methodological resource. Because previous research on female international students has highlighted tensions within and around familial relationships and duties as a primary area of concern for these students (Beaver & Tuck, 1998:172; Brabant et al., 1990:397; Wild & Scheyvens, 2000:65; Wright, 1997:100), I was convinced that the personal trust these participants had in me was highly likely to translate into greater ease in talking about these important, and very personal, areas of their lives. This was definitely borne out in the richness of the data that I collected during these encounters as opposed to the later period of data collection in Thailand where I did not have the same opportunity to build rapport. Therefore, for me, the methodological concerns that I had around reliability of sample selection were outweighed by the considerable increase in the depth of the data that I was able to collect during these encounters.

Of course there are real pros and cons associated with conducting research with people you know. Feminist researchers have traditionally seen intimacy and trust as important resources in fostering conditions under which participants feel safe to share intimate aspects of their lives with a researcher (Fontana & Frey, 2003:78; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1983). Feminist researchers also argue that intimacy is politically important as it promotes a degree of empathy that prevents the urge to objectify

participants as the ‘other’. Narayan (2003:293) asserts that building enduring relationships with our participants removes the “safe footing” Western researchers rely on to provide a distancing and objectifying “contemplative stance” within our research.

However, there are also potential risks associated with doing research with friends. Goodson and Sikes (2001:25) claim that intimacy can also act as a disincentive for participants to talk freely, as shared personal and or professional networks can give the researcher considerable power to disrupt the lives of participants should they behave unethically with data. I thought about this issue a lot before approaching these participants, as we did indeed have some shared relationships. To get around this problem, as well as maintaining strict confidentiality of personal details within the research process, and returning transcripts to participants to check, I also removed any identifying information relating to these third parties.

Of course, doing research with friends also raises the issue of researcher ‘bias’. However, alongside other qualitative researchers, I would argue that intimacy is not necessarily the ‘enemy’ of ‘objectivity’ as long as we are reflexive about the role that our relationships play in shaping our analysis. As Goodson and Sikes (2001:25) assert:

Researchers have to be reflexive in accounting for their own bias, and reflective and enquiring in identifying possible biases in their informants’ stories. Rather than seeking to pretend that any aspect of research can ever be bias free, our recommendation is to acknowledge bias and make every attempt to indicate where it may occur. (Goodson & Sikes, 2001:25)

At times I have definitely struggled to be reflexive about the bias that results from the loyalties I feel to these participants - especially when confronted by the strength of feeling some members of the development community have about the perceived ‘elitism’ and ‘individualism’ of higher education development scholarship recipients - however, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, I maintain a strong aversion to the methodological and ethical limitations of a ‘populist’ or strongly constructivist approach to research on development realities. I have argued instead for the usefulness of Haraway’s notion of ‘situated knowledge’, and Harding’s notion of ‘strong objectivity’ as guides for the production of knowledge that is reflexive and political inclusive, but also committed to a (critical) realist search for richer, more complex ways to understand social reality.

This programme is committed to the inclusion of the voices of the excluded as a tool for challenging the partiality of Western science's vision; however, it also contains critical tendencies that resist the populist urge to "elevate the experiential to the level of the authentic" (Silverman in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b:17). These methodological commitments have been crucial in enabling me to identify and productively manage the conflicts associated with doing research with people that I know.

Developing the interview guide/questions

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured. I developed an interview guide that contained an opening question designed to invite the participant to speak²⁴, and a number of key themes that I wanted to explore at some stage during the interview. I wanted to use the interview as an opportunity to elicit two types of data. The first of these was narrative, or stories, about different temporal phases of experience: in particular, study life, returning home, and life after study. Here I was strongly influenced by the case narrative researchers make for the value of this type of data. Narrative researchers argue that eliciting storytelling is particularly important because stories form such a central part of the process of interpreting how our experiences fit into larger social processes (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990:2; Fraser, 2004:180). As Fraser (2004) argues:

Part of being human involves narrating stories to ourselves and to others. Located in imaginary worlds, as well as those that are materially based, human beings use narratives to express emotions and convey beliefs about how 'things should be'. Through the retelling of stories, they represent their identities and societies. Storytelling is such an important activity because narratives help people to organize their experiences into meaningful episodes that call upon cultural modes of reasoning and representation. (Fraser, 2004:180)

Narrative researchers position 'storytelling' in opposition to the traditional 'question and answer' model of interview research (Elliot, 2005:21; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995:28), that they argue encourages participants to abstract and 'intellectualise' their experiences in a way that captures 'rational intention' but obfuscates the underlying affective dimensions

²⁴ I generally asked participants to tell me a little bit about why they had applied for a scholarship.

of experience that motivate behaviour (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000:35). They suggest that eliciting storytelling is a much better technique for accessing all the dimensions of experience, including those that “contain significances beyond the teller’s intentions” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000:37).

As well as constituting a useful tool for capturing more naturalistic, holistic data, a narrative approach is also useful because it produces the sort of data that engages readers. This is a really important consideration within research that involves a political commitment to producing development knowledge that makes an impact. Political ecologist Paul Robbins (2004) argues that traditional academic writing around environment and development issues has tended to be dry and uninspiring, and that this has contributed to the comparatively limited reach of this type of work:

Political ecologists don't write very well. For some reason, people at home in colonial forest archives or East African Millet fields can't seem to master simple phrasing and good anecdotes, nor convey to a broader audience the importance of the problems that they take so seriously. The implication of this failing is that political ecologists are not widely read, and when they are read, they are not well understood. (Robbins, 2004:136)

While the type of analytical writing common in academic books and journals can be informative, it can also be rather boring. Narayan contends that this is because we are encouraged to “read these articles with our minds more than our hearts, exhorting ideas and references from their pages” (Narayan, 2003:298). Narrative on the other hand can be “bewitching” (Abu-Lughod, 1993:31), making academic writing much more compelling and accessible, and, therefore, providing greater incentive for readers to open themselves up to new and different ways of seeing the world. As Narayan (2003:298) argues, stories can inspire us to “forget we are judgemental professionals, so swept along are we in the evocative flow of other people’s experiences.”

I felt, however, that there were also some limitations associated with taking a narrative approach to my research topic. Narrative researchers often take a very detailed line by line approach to analysing data, poring over the discursive significance of every word used (Fraser, 2004). In this way, narrative analysis can be seen as part of the broader linguistic tradition which “treats text as an object of analysis itself” as opposed to a more traditional qualitative approach “which treats text as a window into human experience” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:259). I thought that the former approach was likely to be a little

unfair to the participants within this study, whose choice of vocabulary was on some levels shaped not only by their intentions/emotions/experiences, but by the fact that English is their second language. Thus, while I have attempted to incorporate some of the conventions of narrative research - particularly the need to pay attention to the ways that the interviewer's communication style can act as a "facilitating catalyst" to story-making within an interview (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000:36) - I have also chosen to stick with some of the conventions of a broader 'thematic' rather than 'discursive' approach to interviewing and data analysis.

Thus, I not only sought to elicit stories, but I also asked some direct questions about participants 'perceptions' of certain aspects of their experience, where they had not covered these issues in their narratives. In particular, I sought reflection on the 'impact' of the experience on several key areas of their lives, including on their view of self, relationships, and work life. I also asked participants to comment on what they saw as the broader impact of these types of scholarships on women's lives, and on 'development'. In practice, because the New Zealand participants were in the midst of their study experience (although they had all previously studied abroad, and thus, experienced 'return'), their responses tended to focus more on 'study life' than the other participants. Because these participants had also all had more than one scholarship experience, they were also more likely to talk in broader terms about the impact of overseas education on their life choices/outlook, rather than providing specific examples of outcomes associated with one scholarship experience, in particular.

The interviews were informal and 'dialogical'. The choice to use a conversational interview style is in keeping with the feminist aversion to 'mining' participants, in favour of a more egalitarian commitment to knowledge exchange and mutual vulnerability in an interview setting (Cook, 1993; Lather, 1988, 1991, 1992; Oakley, 1981). As Tierney (2003) argues, it is only when we are willing to share our own stories that we are able to break down the power differential between ourselves and our participants that inhibits their willingness to share important stories about their lives. In taking this risk, he suggests, our "vulnerability is not a position of weakness, but one from which to attempt change and social fellowship" (Tierney, 2003:315).

Ethical issues arising out this research

Both the interviews in New Zealand and Thailand were guided by Massey University's 'Code of ethical conduct for research, teaching and evaluations involving human participants' (2006). Under this code, I was required to develop an information sheet (Appendix A and B) and a consent form (Appendix B); to submit a notification of my research topic to the Massey University Office of Ethics and Equity; and to undergo an ethics review within my academic department. This review was conducted by three members of academic staff within the Institute of Development Studies. Significant issues covered in this review included the need for informed and voluntary consent, respect for privacy and confidentiality, minimisation of harm to participants, researcher responsibilities to communities, avoidance of role conflicts, and social and cultural sensitivity.

In preparing for my interviews in Thailand, I read extensively about the cultural context that I would be conducting interviews in, including etiquette around interpersonal communication. I also learnt some basic Thai language, in order to ensure that I was able to be polite when communicating with participants as well as with the support staff that I would need to contact in order to keep in touch with participants. I offered all participants the opportunity to do the interview in English or Thai. All of the participants chose to do the interview in English. All had previously studied overseas at a postgraduate level in an English-speaking country, so they spoke a high standard of English, despite the fact that it is their second language. When I arrived in Thailand, I did seek out translation services in case I was going to need them, but I found that the participants themselves generally had a similar level of English to the translators. I decided therefore that, unless a translator was requested, adding another person to the mix was likely to reduce rather than increase the capacity of participants to express themselves.

I maintained strict confidentiality of the interview data, and attempted to remove all identifying information from participants' narratives. Where I was unsure whether a particular excerpt would identify a participant, I contacted them to check whether it was okay to include it. Where an extended piece of narrative is included in the thesis as one

of the opening ‘stories’, then participants were also asked to choose a pseudonym²⁵. I have also chosen not to include any of the details about country/culture of origin for the New Zealand participants, because I felt that this would make it possible to identify several of the participants. In many cases, NZAID may only fund one or two students from a particular country per year, thus, making identification likely.

There were also additional ethical issues that arose out of the research period in Thailand. The Thai interviews were conducted in the immediate period leading up to the military coup that occurred on the 19th of September, 2006. Because a number of the participants were government employees, I was conscious that there was a possibility that they may have said things in their interview that could now potentially put them at personal or professional risk. To get around this, as well as ensuring that the participants were not identifiable in the research report, I also returned the interview transcripts to participants for them to amend or remove any information that they felt could be harmful to them. One participant took up this opportunity to remove material.

There are significant pros and cons associated with the decision to protect the identity of participants. In choosing not to identify participants, I have limited the potential for situating their stories within more in-depth life histories, as well as reduced the opportunities available to explore the impact of the scholarship experience on their particular professional roles/spheres of influence. However, ultimately, I felt that confidentiality was likely to be essential if participants were to feel comfortable talking about the impact of their scholarship on all (including very personal) aspects of their life experience. Professional (employer or organisational) barriers to the use of new skills and knowledge, as well as the impact of the scholarship experience on personal relationships stand out as two important areas which I felt participants would be reluctant to discuss if they were identifiable. Further discussion of this issue and the implications for future research on NZAID scholars is provided in Chapter Nine.

²⁵ I was unable to contact one of these participants, therefore I assigned her a pseudonym.

Finally, as a researcher, I was also cognisant of the need to avoid any bias resulting from my funding arrangements. I received a small grant from NZAID that paid for my flights and my fieldwork expenses during my research in Thailand. This grant was allocated as part of NZAID's general Postgraduate Field Research Awards scheme, and the Agency did not request any input into my research approach or my research questions.

Research reliability and sampling adequacy

The sampling strategy used within this project was purposive rather than probability-based. In New Zealand, as noted earlier, I personally approached all but one of the participants. The last participant was included as a result of snowball sampling. In Thailand, the first stage of sampling was random. NZAID sent out letters to all potential participants inviting them to take part. After this initial contact I used snowball sampling to increase my sample size from six to fourteen. The use of purposive sampling is generally consistent with a qualitative research approach, which focuses more on “the deliberate selection of theoretically important units” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999:35), rather than random sampling, to ensure research reliability (Richie et al., 1997; Rowles & Reinhartz, 1988:8). Qualitative researchers argue that rather than focusing on sample size or sampling strategy, researchers need to aim to gather sufficient data to ensure that the richness of experience, including both commonalities and diversities within a community is adequately represented (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Qualitative researchers argue that sample adequacy is achieved when you start to see consistent repetition or “saturation” of interview themes (Rowles & Reinhartz, 1988:9), and you are also able to ensure that “variation is both accounted for and understood” (Morse, 1994:230). Thus, there is not necessarily any magic sample size that qualitative researchers agree on as adequate to ensure research reliability (Rowles & Reinhartz, 1988:8). Ryan and Bernard (2003:275) assert that in some cases a sample of one may be enough to “display something of substantive importance”. Morse (1994:25) argues that for studies where you are aiming to produce “indepth reflective description” of experience, it is useful to have at least six participants; while she recommends 30-50 for more conceptual methods, such as ethnography or grounded research, that seek to produce taxonomies or models. Ryan and Bernard (2003:275) contend that, as a rule of thumb, research that focuses on “finding themes and building theory may require fewer cases than comparing across groups and testing hypotheses of models”.

Within my own research, I found that after ten interviews, I was starting to see a degree of sample ‘saturation’. This is despite the fact that there was a degree of cultural diversity within the New Zealand participant group, and between the New Zealand and Thai participants. After completing twenty interviews I felt that I had enough data to reasonably confidently make some observations about both commonalities and diversity within the experiences of women who take up development scholarships. I also felt that space-wise, this sample size would enable me to do justice to the depth and breadth of stories that the individual participants shared with me.

There are obvious limitations associated with both my choice of methods and sample size. Like most qualitative research projects, these limitations centre around issues of reliability or representativeness. However, because, as I have previously stated, this research seeks to address a particular gap in the literature around in-depth personal perceptions of the women’s education experience, qualitative methods were the most obvious choice of method to meet this research objective.

Unterhalter (1999) reinforces the points I made earlier, in Chapter One, about the importance of attending to this gap by using research methods (in her case autobiography) that give women the opportunity to talk about their lives:

[A]utobiographies show the ambiguities, dilemmas and contradictions entailed in schooling for a group of women whom, according to the statistical data, we should count as successful and empowered. The narratives the women construct undermine the simplistic certainties of the numbers. These figures, like women's feelings, are each only part of the picture. But the significance of these stories and the process of telling life stories has, to date, been given less weight than the statistics in formulating strategies for gender equity in schooling and carrying out our research for policy (Unterhalter, 1999:62).

From a development policy perspective, this type of in-depth research can best be seen as complementary to, rather than a replacement of, or indeed in opposition to, other, equally valuable, quantitative explorations of this type of development phenomenon. In the spirit of a collaborative feminist research practice that emphasises the value of multiple genres of critique, I offer this research as simply one – valuable, but necessarily limited – contribution to theoretical/political debates around the future of this type of development assistance.

Finally, in choosing to work with a smaller sample size, I was also cognisant of the critique provided by Kenway and Bullen (2003) about the tendency of Western researchers to homogenise the experience of female international students, glossing over the diversity that exists within this category. They offer a feminist objection to this practice, arguing that to participate in it is to “collude in the reproduction of discourses of ‘othering’ and, thus, in the establishment and perpetuation of power differentials” (Kenway & Bullen, 2003:9). Working with a smaller sample size provides greater opportunity to acknowledge and do justice to the diversity of experience within the group of women I have interviewed.

Interview analysis

In preparation for interview analysis, I produced full transcripts of the interviews. In the interests of maximising the accessibility of the narrative to readers, I corrected small errors in English. These were most commonly errors of tense, or missing prepositions, and this editing process did not significantly alter the meaning of participants’ narratives. Where editing was likely to significantly alter the meaning of a sentence, I left it in its original state. I asked participants for permission to do this, and returned all the transcripts to them to check and amend.

Interview analysis was a two-step process. Firstly, I looked for themes within the interviews using the ‘thematic charting’ technique²⁶ suggested by Ritchie et al (2003). I decided to use this technique because it provides a slightly more sophisticated take on the traditional process of thematic interview coding. I originally started coding the interviews using a traditional system of ‘positive coding’ to identify common themes and discrepancies, and ‘negative coding’ to identify and correct weaknesses in interviewer technique/questions (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). The negative coding in particular was really useful in the early stages of interviewing, as it helped me to reflect on my interviewing style and the suitability of my questions. However, I found that as the study progressed, and the amount of data grew, this very simple coding system wasn’t producing the clarity of classification that felt I needed in order to produce meaningful

²⁶ To construct a thematic chart, data is coded or ‘indexed’, and codes are then grouped together into a smaller collection of themes. Each theme is then assigned a separate sheet of paper, with the coding categories or ‘subthemes’ across the top, and the participants down the side. Short descriptions of each coded extract (not verbatim quotes), and a page number, are then entered into the chart. Thus, when looking at the chart, by reading down you are able to get an overview by subtheme, and by reading across you are able to get an overview by participant (Ritchie et al., 2003:231).

analysis. I found Ritchie et al.'s (2003) thematic charting technique useful as it enables you to get a simultaneous overview of the data by theme *and* by participant. In this way, it enables you to identify commonalities between participants whilst also maintaining a holistic overview of each individual's story. Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight examine the themes identified within this first stage of interview analysis.

The second stage of analysis involved using the analytical framework outlined at the end of Chapter Three to examine the relevance of these interview themes to broader theoretical debates around the value of higher education for women within Third World societies. I used the five principles within this framework to act as 'prompts' to promote further discussion on the wider significance of the themes that arose within participants' narratives. This analysis forms the basis of Chapter Nine.

Data presentation

I decided to present the research data in two ways. Firstly, I have followed the traditional qualitative convention involving the use of excerpts of interview text as exemplars of interview themes. Secondly, I have attempted to present several individual 'stories' from participants. These stories perform two functions. Firstly, they provide an opportunity to get an holistic insight into the interactions and occurrences that make up the 'life cycle' of the scholarship experience. Secondly, I have presented these stories as a way of providing the reader with an engaging path into more analytical discussions around interview themes.

I have written up both the opening stories and the interview excerpts using a process called 'poetic representation'. Poetic representation or 'poetic transcription' (Glesne, 1997), as popularised by the work of feminist sociologist, Laurel Richardson (1992; 2003) is one approach to enlivening interview data by representing an interview as a poem. Richardson (2003) argues that representing speech as a poem is much more effective than using blocks of verbatim quotation, because it is better able to capture the rhythm and vitality of speech:

When people talk, ... whether as conversants, storytellers, informants, or interviewees, their speech is closer to poetry than it is to sociological prose. Writing up interviews as poems, honouring the speaker's pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms, and so on, may actually better

represent the speaker than the practice of quoting in prose snippets. Further, poetic devices – rhythms, silences, spaces, breath points, alliterations, meter, cadence, assonance, rhyme, and off-rhyme – engage the listener's body even if the mind resists and denies. (Richardson, 2003:516)

Richardson calls interviews written up this way 'narrative poems' (Richardson, 2003:516). I have instead chosen to call them 'poetic narratives', as I believe, in my own work at least, that the emphasis is more on the use of techniques designed to present narrative in a way that captures the vitality of the spoken word, rather than on the use of narrative data to create engaging poems. Glesne (1997) argues that rather than representing poetry proper, poetic transcription can be said to "approximate ... poetry through the concentrated language of interviewee, shaped by researcher to give pleasure and truth".

In order to construct the poetic narratives, the original words of participants were used, but not every word or sentence is included; and sentences are usually, but not always presented in the order that they appear in the interview (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1992, 2003). Thus, interviews were edited in order to provide a meaningful summary, rather than a verbatim account of a participants' entire story. In line with Glesne (1997), I also gave myself limited permission to drop or change word endings (eg. ing, s, ly), and occasionally change verb tenses where this would make a significant contribution to increasing the flow or clarity of a sentence.

Richardson (2003) argues that objections to the process of poetic transcription commonly centre around the belief that the researcher is effectively 'constructing' a story by using text selectively. However, as Wolcott (2001:36) argues "there is no such thing as pure description" within any genre of qualitative research, as the researcher is always actively involved in decisions about what interview material will be included and excluded, and what ideas it will be called upon to 'support' or 'refute'. Richardson (2003:507) argues that more positivist qualitative researchers are often simply not honest about their role in shaping their data:

...they write the body of the text as though the document and quotation snippets are naturally present, valid, reliable, and fully representative, rather than selected, pruned, and spruced up by the author for their textual appearance.

Ellis (1999:676) also problematises the lack of acknowledgement amongst many qualitative researchers about the role they play in ‘constructing’ their data through the practice of “selecting and editing verbatim prose out of context, and then surrounding it with their own constructed analytic contexts.” Richardson (2003) argues that as well as enlivening the interview data through capturing some of the techniques of speech, poetic representation is particularly useful, epistemologically, because it foregrounds the role of the researcher in the research process:

Writing sociological interviews as poetry, for example, displays the role of the *prose trope* in constituting knowledge. When we read or hear poetry, we are continually being nudged into recognizing that the text has been constructed. But all texts are constructed – prose ones, too; therefore, poetry helps problematize reliability, validity, transparency, and “truth”. (Richardson, 2003:515, emphasis in original).

This recognition is important, given the feminist commitment to the construction of ‘situated’ knowledge. The one disadvantage associated with presenting the data as consolidated ‘stories’ rather than verbatim transcripts is that it obscures the specific questions asked by the interviewer. Poetic narrative necessarily excludes the interviewer’s voice, as the inclusion of questions would appear nonsensical given the truncation and reordering of interview responses that occurs when constructing a narrative. In general, I felt that the loss associated with editing out the voice of the interviewer was more than made up for by the opportunities this form provided to preserve the lyrical flow and therefore overall narrative integrity of participants’ stories. Both the use of semi-structured interviewing, and the use of poetic transcription meet important demands within feminist post-development writing for empirical research that is more creative, more collaborative, and more accessible.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of my approach to data collection and analysis. I have outlined the key methodological commitments of this thesis, including the use of open-ended data collection methods, the use of a flexible analytical framework, and the presentation of empirical material in ways designed to capture the vitality of narrative.

This chapter has also discussed the strengths and weaknesses of this research approach, as well as provided an overview of the data collection process, including background preparation, participant selection, dealing with ethical issues, and analysing and presenting interview data.

The following three chapters present the results of the twenty interviews that I completed during this project. While, as I noted earlier in the chapter, I originally started out by contacting Thai women who had completed their study within the last five years, when I was in Thailand, by chance, I ended up meeting three women who had completed a Bachelors degree through an NZAID-funded scholarship programme nearly twenty years previously. When contrasted with the experiences of more recent Thai participants (who all completed Masters degrees), their stories provided useful historical insights into the operation and impact of development scholarship schemes, as well as insights into the impact that age and level of study have on the scholarship experience. Thus, I ended up with three distinct groups of participants, who had completed Bachelors, Masters and PhD programmes, respectively, through a development scholarship scheme. The following chapters examine their stories.

Stories: An introduction

This section of my thesis explores the stories of the three groups of women who participated in this research project. These stories, told by three diverse groups of participants, speak to different dimensions of the ‘scholarship girl’ experience, and thus provide important insights into both the diversity and commonality of experience attached to this type of educational opportunity.

Chapters Six and Seven both explore the experiences of a group of women from Thailand who have previously received development scholarships from the New Zealand government. Chapter Six examines the experiences of three of these women who participated in an NZAID-funded undergraduate scholarship programme nearly twenty years ago. Chapter Seven explores the stories of another group of Thai women who have completed a Masters degree through the NZAID development scholarship scheme within the last five years. Chapter Eight is based on interviews that I conducted in New Zealand with a group of women from a range of cultural backgrounds, who had previously received a development scholarship to complete a postgraduate degree. This latter group were all undertaking PhD research in New Zealand, and the majority were also taking up an NZAID development scholarship to fund their doctoral programme.

Each chapter follows a similar format. It opens with one or two extended ‘stories’ from participants. These stories are constructed in poetic narrative, as discussed in Chapter Four, and are offered in this extended form as both an introduction to the search for the ‘bigger picture’ of scholarship experience, as well as an early corrective to the temptation to leap too quickly to generalisation. These opening narratives are shaped by a number of important themes that reoccur within the stories of all the women who took part in this research. However, their stories are also unique, and they offer us an important opportunity to linger a little in the particular of individual experience before moving to the search for themes.

As well as providing an introduction to some of the important themes arising out of this research, these stories also highlight the importance of taking a ‘holistic’ approach to the scholarship experience. Their narratives challenge the notion that the scholarship experience should be considered to be strictly, or even primarily an ‘academic’

experience. Family, love, friendship, and self weave in and out amongst the academic and the professional within their narratives in a way that highlights the need to do justice to the multi-faceted nature of educational events.

Their narratives also contest the notion that the scholarship experience can be considered as a ‘discrete’ phenomenon that can be isolated from other important events/experiences within the life history of participants. Their stories show that the process of personal and professional growth often attributed to the development scholarship experience can often be seen as part of a longer-term career and education trajectory that has pushed the recipients to enlarge their understandings of self, culture and community.

In an effort to balance the desire to create richer portraits of ‘whole lives’ with the search for commonalities and shared experience, after opening with one or two stories, each chapter then moves to a discussion around themes. Briefer extracts from the stories of the remaining participants are provided as further exemplars of the sorts of themes identified within the opening stories.

Finally, it is important to note that despite the many differences that exist between the women within this research, they also share a number of common life experiences. Most importantly, all were chosen among thousands of professionals to take part in a scholarship scheme that tasked them with bringing home new skills to address the considerable development problems faced by their nations. These women represent this responsibility, and the opportunities it has provided, in a variety of different ways, and their narratives provide a useful place from which to begin to flesh out a picture of the impact of this type of educational aid.

Chapter Six - Research in Thailand, part 1

“New Zealand looked like an exotic place for Thai students to be”: Honour, adventure and autonomy.

Introduction

This chapter examines the experiences of three Thai women who completed a Bachelors degree through an NZAID scholarship programme almost 20 years ago. Their stories provide a number of valuable insights. Firstly, they explore the impact of development scholarship schemes on the lives of women in the late stages of adolescence. They also highlight some of the outcomes associated with scholarship programmes that provide broad undergraduate training. Finally, when compared with the experiences of the women in the following chapters, they also provide useful historical commentary on the changing shape of policy surrounding development scholarship schemes.

These women were in their late teens when they took up a scholarship, and they talked about the experience with the sort of wistful nostalgia often attached to events marked out as signalling our ‘passage to adulthood.’ They were, however, also quick to tease their younger selves, poking at their ‘naivety’ and the sense of the drama that pervaded their big ‘adventure’ away from home. Despite this, however, it was clear that all three felt that the scholarship experience has had an important impact on their work and personal lives. At this early stage of their lives, they argue, the hardship and adventure associated with the experience had a key impact of the formation of their ‘character’. And twenty years on, two of the women still make it a priority to keep in touch with former lecturers whose support they feel made the experience possible.

Fah’s story

Fah and I met by chance in Bangkok. She later introduced me to the other two women who feature in this chapter. Fah comes from a wealthy family where there were high expectations that she would study abroad. After completing her Bachelors degree through an NZAID scholarship scheme, she then went on to study for a Masters degree in the United States. All of her siblings have also studied overseas.

Fah talks about the 'honour' involved in being selected for a scholarship, as well as the difficulties that she faced adjusting to a new academic system. She also talks about the longer-term impact of the scholarship experience on her personal and work life. The experience, she relays, taught her to enjoy her own company more, gave her a greater sense of independence, and tempered her materialism. It also provided her with the English-language skills and cultural knowledge necessary for her to undertake the large amount of multi-national networking that is central to her job.

Finally, she raises the issue of the politics surrounding the cultural impact of international education. She offers her own experience as an exemplar of the possibility of negotiating between value systems without compromising cultural integrity. Her age and maturity (which she contrasted with the immaturity and vulnerability of her sibling's children who currently face going abroad for secondary education), as well as the fact that she comes from a 'good family' are identified as the key resources that enabled her to achieve this balancing act.

Beginnings

Just to prove that I'm a good student,
that's why I took the scholarship.

I took an exam because my friends went to take an exam, and I went along with them.
When I got the scholarship, I already had a seat at the top university in Thailand,
but for Thai people, especially for my parents, it was a kind of honour to take the scholarship.

We didn't know much about New Zealand and about the New Zealand education system.

We never thought of going there,
because, twenty something years ago, Thai people didn't know much about Australia and New Zealand.

But they speak English,
so I thought it should be good for my education.

I think fifty percent of the reason why I took it would be, it's a kind of an honour.

The first year was very difficult, because I got the scholarship and I went directly to the university.

We didn't have any time to adjust.

We went right at the beginning when the term was about to start.

And, at that time, I don't think Thai people had a lot of practice in speaking and listening to English.

So, first year, I flunked some subjects.

I had difficulties adjusting to the new system.

But I think we all flunked a lot.

Most of the Thai students, we flunked the first year, because our education system is quite different from New Zealand's.

Your education system was difficult for us.

We all did very badly in the first year, but we got enough credit to get the second year of our scholarship,

and after that we all adjusted.

We all completed our qualifications.

We stayed in the university dormitory for the first two years, and after that,

I rented an apartment with a friend.

I think I found that staying in the dormitory with full board was okay, but I have to say that I don't think I developed any connection with New Zealanders.

It's just sort of Thai culture that we are quite introverted,
so it's quite difficult to blend in.

And maybe because we had a scholarship,

we were so concentrated on studying, that we didn't mingle much with the New Zealanders.

But I think most of it, for myself, it's a cultural thing.

And, I was quite shy.

After many years of experience working in a multinational context, now, I think, if I could turn back time, it would be much easier for me to mingle.

But, I do think it gave me experience of how to live with foreigners,
because in New Zealand, there were a lot of foreign students at the University,

and you sort of learn a little bit about the culture of people from various countries.
So, it been easier for me to accept people the way they are.

I learnt a little bit about some habits of Westerners,
New Zealanders,
and also about people from Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Malaysia.
Not much, but you can recognise who they are, and a little bit about their lifestyles,
so it's easier to contact other people.

I don't know, because I didn't go to a Thai university,
it might be as helpful as well, but I am not able to compare.
I just feel that I'm better with the foreign clients that we have to contact,
and it makes it easier for me to do my job, because I can adjust more easily.
I think I can adjust to different working environments more easily.
I think it would have been more difficult to adjust in the workplace if I hadn't studied
overseas.

And it definitely provided me with good English, which has been quite important for my
career.

The career that I'm pursuing requires multi-national networking skills.
I work in the finance and banking area, and most of the investors that we contact, they
are English speaking.
We use English as a means of communication,
so it is a requirement that I can read and write,
and that I am fluent in English.
It is a requirement for me to do my job.

I think it will be different from person to person, but, for myself, I think I also became
more independent.

I like to do things by myself.
Compared to my sisters, even going shopping, they will ask whether I want to go with
them or not.
But for me, I like to go by myself to do certain things, exercising, shopping, things like
that.

But my sisters, they like to go together.

I will join them if I want to, but, usually, I prefer to do those things by myself.

I'm not too sure whether it's about New Zealand, or just because when you go to an overseas country you have to live by yourself for a certain period of time.

I know it has transformed me into a different person from, for example, my sister.

Because, my elder sister, she studied in the States,

both Bachelors and Masters degree,

and I can tell that we are quite different, because, in the States, they are more luxurious in terms of apartments and things like that.

But, in New Zealand, at that time, in the flat, I didn't have a shower, only a bath tub, and we had to walk a lot, because of the timing of the bus.

But in the States, everybody drives.

So I can see that, for me, to walk around, or take the sky train is okay, but my sister, she always takes a car, even for very short distances, or she takes a taxi.

And a lot of Thai people are like that.

They want to park and then shop.

Even just to cross the street, or things like that, they don't like it,

I also found that now I like to exercise more than the average Thai person.

In New Zealand you are more outdoorsy people, so it changed me a little bit in that area.

I became more outdoorsy, and I spent my free time exercising or walking more than average Thai people.

That's just a private part of my experience.

And my mother always says that I am more modest in my spending than my siblings.

It transformed me to be less materialistic, I would say.

I think that's because in New Zealand all the students live quite modestly.

You know, you have only two pairs of jeans, and then they have to last the whole year.

You don't need to have much.

In the United States they are more materialist.

So, I can tell that, my sister and me, we are a little bit different in this respect.

Coming home

But in many ways, also, I don't think I changed much, because I came home a lot.

I came back almost twice a year.

I didn't have the culture shock thing much, because my parents were doing business, so they could afford to fly me back twice a year,
so, I kept in quite close touch with my parents.

In terms of contact, I had quite a lot.

When I came home, after being by myself for awhile,

I had to come back and stay with my parents.

What they thought about me, I'm not quite sure, actually.

I lived at my parents house, but they moved to another house.

I stayed in the city, because I work in the city.

We meet up very often, but we don't live together, so it's kind of easy, because I have a lot of space, my own space.

Most people, they will still live with their parents until they are married, and, even after marriage, either you marry or you move out, or your husband moves in.

like, one of my brothers moved into his wife's house, but she still lives with her parents.

But they have an apartment,

same building but different units,

so they have their own space, but, practically, they still live among relatives.

It's the normal thing for Thai people to live with your relatives.

Even after you're married.

But I think most people will find that they become more independent after they study overseas.

They can do things on their own.

I like to have a lot of space, my own space.

I can do things by myself.

Encountering a different culture

When you're by yourself you can do a lot of things that your parents say not to do, right.

But, I think it depends on family connections, whether you have a very close connection.

It depends on how you are raised, actually.

Because my parents set a very high example, and you just follow them.
And, also, I was in a girl's school before high school, so I was in a very strict environment.
So, even though I studied by myself, because of how I was raised, I am sort of in control.
I am very in control.

And, I think, most of my friends who got the scholarship, because we were quite determined to complete our education,
and we were all raised by strict families,
we didn't stray off in a bad direction - much.

From my point of view, even in Thailand, if you want to do things you can always sneak behind your parents back, anyway, so it depends on you as an individual.
But my parents, although they are strict, they are quite modern, so they trust that I will always be a good girl.

They trusted me.

And I could choose whether I wanted to do things or not to do things.

I can see that foreigners are different from us.

Like, in New Zealand, sometimes the girls lived with the boys, because it was a co-ed dormitory.

For me, it was different from Thailand, but, as a young person, I think I could accept that more, and I didn't feel that it was a strange thing.

I would not do as they do, but I accept that it is just the way they are.

We accept things, and we also look at good things in other cultures, and we choose to do these things.

Like, New Zealanders are more independent, they can help themselves more, whereas, in Thailand, we always rely on relatives.

So, we choose that.

We want to be independent.

We want to be able to take care of ourselves.

We want to be more outgoing, more outdoorsy, play more sports, and things like that.

So, in my opinion, I look at different societies, and I choose to follow the good stuff. Because in every culture they have good and bad stuff, but you just follow different things.

I think that, for me, I can accept things more, different cultures, different things.

I don't see things as strange.

If you are in a foreign country when you are quite young, you accept things more, and it's helpful for me to be able to be with different kinds of people more.

I think that has helped.

I think I do find that I'm more Westernised.

But it's quite important when I work in a multinational context that I conduct myself professionally.

Because Thai, I have to say, even within the office, you can tell that, people who come from a Thai university, if they don't have any international exposure, they will have to take more time to develop themselves, to expose themselves to a multi-national context. They just have to take time, but we already did that when we completed our education.

So, yeah, in terms of working with foreigners, I think it is easier.

When foreigners work with us, they want to work with people who understand their culture.

And they will be more comfortable working with people who have a business culture close to theirs.

And we have to adjust, because we need foreign investment.

I think it helps people when you see different cultures, and study different laws, and rules and regulations, being in different societies.

That has helped us to transform our society to be more international, so that we can link more to international environments.

And that is quite important.

Cultural integrity

But I think it is easier for me, because I've been raised as a Thai person, so I can choose what I want from a Western culture.

Some people, now, they want to send their kids overseas, when they're quite young.
My niece and nephew go to an international school here in Bangkok,
and my brother and sister are worried about their accents.
But I told them that everybody has an accent,
I speak differently, you speak differently, in the UK they speak differently, the French,
the Italian, the Spanish, you know, they don't have better English than us.
But they're still afraid.

I would rather have my nephew and niece raised in Thai and do their Bachelor's degree
overseas.

But I think that my brother and sister will send them overseas when they are probably at
high school level.

I don't have any kids, but I don't prefer that.

But I cannot tell them.

I'm afraid that my nephew and niece are too young.

That will change them a lot.

University is not too young, but high school, it's too young, because it's the time that
they changing, and they follow their friends too much.

But after, if they go at university level, I think that they have already established who they
are, their identity.

But, I do think that it might help me more than the other people that you interview
because they are older.

Because when we go overseas when we are still quite young, we are still open to different
things.

Women's working lives

In the past, especially in Thailand, women, after they married, they stayed at home.
But now, you can see that in every office you work there are more women than men.
I think, in general, the life of the women has improved, because we can earn money to
support ourselves, and that's quite important for the society as a whole.
And Thailand, now, more and more women are becoming high ranking officers.
And also, in the private sector, they become head of banks.

Their status is becoming higher.

More women are also becoming heads of non-profit organisations, and politicians too.

I think in terms of respect for women, also, education helps.

Because we put a lot of emphasis on education.

So that is why you will see a lot of people trying to get their Masters education, or even a PhD.

All the staff in the Thai office, I think we must have a Masters degree to get a job there.

And when we go to the Australian office, there are not that many people who have finished their Masters degree.

But, in Thailand, if you have got only a Bachelors degree, you will not be able to get a good job.

If you have education you have to go all the way.

And now you can see a lot of people continue to the PhD level.

The young ones, now, they often go up to PhD level.

We have a lot of jobs that we have to do in Australia, and I recognise that when we have a meeting, there are more men than women.

But, in Thailand, there are more women than men.

Because, in Thailand, when we marry, when we have children, it is easier for us to get help.

Women can come back to work, because their parents will help look after the kids, or they will just hire a nanny.

I think it's easier for a Thai women to be a professional, because they can get help.

That's a benefit of being Thai,

of being in an Asian culture.

And I find that some expatriates, when they come to Thailand, some women, they marry, and they have children, and they don't move back, because if they are in Bangkok, they can still work, but if they go back home, they cannot get that help.

They like being here, because they can get a driver, they can get a nanny, they can get a cleaning lady, otherwise, they cannot work.

We were just wondering why ninety percent of the people we met from the overseas offices, all of them are men.

We were thinking that we have to find out more about why this is.

But I wonder if it is because, when they get married, they have children, and they cannot get the help that we can.

Discussion

Fah's story provides an introduction to some of the important themes that recur within the narratives of all the women who participated in this research, including: independence and personal autonomy, learning about culture and the politics of 'cultural integrity', and the impact of class on women's work and education opportunities. She also raises several issues that were more particular (although not exclusive) to the women in this chapter.

The issue of honour as a motivation for applying for the scholarship was more prominent within this group, primarily due to the form that the scholarship was offered in at the time. While in more recent times NZAID scholarships have been targeted at government employees who can tie postgraduate research projects to specific development objectives within their organisations, in this earlier period the scholarship offered broad degree programmes to young, high achieving students at several of Thailand's most prestigious universities. It is perhaps not surprising then that 'development' or 'the good of the nation' was not the primary focus of these young high-achieving students concerned with negotiating familial expectations of success. Indeed one of the other women noted that she had only gone along with the scholarship idea at the behest of her mother:

At the that time, I had actually got into the university that I wanted to go to, in the faculty that I wanted to study in.

I was studying at one of the top five universities in Thailand, so I was quite happy.

But, then it just happened that a person who is known to my family came to my family, and said, 'oh, I saw this scholarship. It looks interesting. It's a scholarship to go to New Zealand.'

At first, I wasn't really interested in it,
but it was my mother who wanted me to try for it.
And in the end, I thought well, why not? (Th 2)

The third participant noted that, like Fah, she had tagged along to the scholarship exam with a friend:

There was no particular reason why I applied for that particular scholarship.
It just happened that one of my friends saw an advertisement, and she said 'hey,
why don't we go and take this exam'.
We were taking an exam for another scholarship already, and this exam was
quite close, so we said, 'okay'.

I think there was no particular reason why we applied, except that we passed our
high school with quite good grades.
You know, not excellent, but passable enough to take many scholarship exams.
So I thought, 'oh, why not?',
because we were preparing for the King's scholarship already.
So we took this one too.

And, there was no particular reason why we wanted to go overseas, except just
to give it a try.
And New Zealand sounded like quite an exotic place for Thai students to be, so
we thought, okay, lets give it a shot. (Th3)

With only several weeks to prepare themselves, and very little knowledge of what they
were in for – As Fah noted 'twenty something years ago, Thai people didn't know much
about Australia and New Zealand' – the women packed to leave:

We were not informed of the results until about a month or so before we had to
go to New Zealand.
So we were like, 'Oh, okay, we have a scholarship, but what do we have to do.'
'We have to leave in two weeks time'
So it was quite hectic. (Th3)

Unsurprisingly, with two weeks to prepare, all the women reported feeling totally out of
their depth in their first year in New Zealand.

The first year was a very difficult experience for me.
First, studying English in Thailand is not the same as living amongst English
speaking people.
My English was only good enough to read and comprehend.
I couldn't write properly, because we didn't focus on that kind of training in
Thailand,
at least in high school.
I couldn't speak,
I didn't understand what the Kiwis were saying,
so, I had a lot of things to deal with.

And I failed.
I failed two courses in my first year.
And they were very important courses that everybody needs to pass before they
can go on to the next stage.
So, it was very difficult. (Th3)

Even though we had two weeks to prepare ourselves, the first time that we attended a class, we couldn't actually put down a single word of what the lecturer said.

It was just totally a mess for me.

When you go to class, and then, when the class has finished, you have got nothing out of it, you start panicking.

I graduated from a school that is considered a top ten school, which has the best English course in Thailand,
and it turned out that I didn't have any problems getting through an entrance exam in Thailand, with a very high score in English,
but in New Zealand, it was just,
it was totally a mess. (Th2)

On top of the difficulties these women had adjusting to their new academic environment and the level of English that was required of them, these two participants said they also felt a strong sense of culture shock (Fah noted that frequently trips home made this less of an issue for her). They argued that this feeling was particularly acute for them because, as Thai women, they had been 'protected' from previous opportunities to learn much about the world:

It was quite an experience.

The first six months were very tough.

We needed to adjust ourselves a lot.

It was my first time I'd actually been away from home, and an eighteen year old girl from Thailand is different from an eighteen year old girl in New Zealand, because, for Thai people, we don't actually go out for long.

And being protected by the family, you don't know much about the outside world.

We only go to school, and come back home.

That's it.

So, it was quite a big change for me. (Th2)

All the women were required to call upon huge reserves of courage to get them through this period. Considerable support from NZAID in the form of pastoral care and extra tutoring, and the kindness of several key lecturers helped them get their work under control, and a new sense of competence began to emerge. As one of the women noted, this additional support, on top of the fact that she was receiving a scholarship, made the pressure to succeed incredibly intense during this period. When I asked her about making new friends she replied:

I think that my mentality was, 'I have to overcome this studying thing.' That was the main priority.

And, it's not that I didn't want to go out and find something more exciting to

do,
but, I felt very guilty, because I had a scholarship, and I was supposed to do well.

My foreigner friends were all trying to help me,
and all my tutors were waiting to see whether I did well.
'Did she pass?
'What mark did you get?'
So, there was a lot of pressure to perform well,
rather than trying to make more friends. (Th3)

This pressure to succeed, and the huge amount of stress associated with failing two courses eventually translated into an immense sense of pride in her ability to take on and survive such a difficult task:

It was very challenging.
Initially it reduced my self-confidence, and then gradually it built it up.
I think my four years time in New Zealand was a very defining moment for me in terms of my character.

Before I went to New Zealand, I was in a good school,
I was a good student,
and I always got straight As.
When I entered university, I got quite a high mark, so I never expected things to be so difficult when I went overseas.
because I thought, 'okay, I can deal with it. I am a hardworking person'.
It was a very humbling experience, I think.
You know, just because you are good in Thailand, that doesn't mean that you will automatically be good somewhere else.

It was very difficult for me,
but I passed everything in my second year.
I had to be there for four years, because of repeating some courses, but I think by the end of the fourth year my English was quite good, and I could write.
In my last class, I got the highest mark, and I was very, very proud.

I chose to do my course because one person told me that if you are not a native speaker of English, you will never pass this degree.
I said 'I can. It's not so difficult. I can, but I will have to work harder'.
And I did.
So after four years there, I think I learnt a lot of things.
It was good.
It was very tough, and it was character building.
and I liked that. (Th3)

While it was initially difficult to find time for friendships, as their courses progressed, and they felt more confident about their academic abilities, new relationships started to assume a position of greater importance:

It was a mess when we started.
But we got used to things, and we became much happier.
And, the best part was that I was able to make lots of friends.
In my second year, I helped to organise an orientation for all the Asian students who came to study in New Zealand.
It was a great time for me, because, in my first year, I remembered how I had felt.
So I tried to help them as much as I could, because I didn't want them to feel as bad as I did.
And it was a good way to get to know other people, other Asian students. (Th2)

Friendships with other international students (as well as the odd Kiwi) were considered to be an important source of new cultural knowledge and understanding. Romantic relationships also played a significant role in pushing the women to broaden their understanding of other cultures, as well as their own:

I had a boyfriend who was a Pacific Islander.
It wasn't very serious,
but I learnt things, culturally.
What I found was that Pacific culture was very, very Asian, in my opinion.
They had certain roles for women.
They had ideas about what women can or cannot do.
I don't think it was like that in Western culture.
At least, that was my impression at that time.

I mean, in their culture women are well respected, but they have a certain role to play in that society, and it was expected that women would have to do this, and do that.
Whether its the same as in Thailand, I would say yes.
Even now, you know, Thai women are still expected to take care of babies to a certain extent, but of course, now they are also expected to work.
So, I don't know, but, I think in terms of culture, I found that, surprisingly, the Islanders are very, very Asian.
Women have to do what they are expected to do.

Sometimes it's repressive.
I couldn't say my opinion in front of my boyfriend's family.
I had to hide things.
But, you know, it wasn't a big issue, but I think it was kind of interesting for me.
(Th3)

This participant relayed that her time in New Zealand and a later study opportunity in Japan were both important chances to think and learn more about gender roles. While she positioned New Zealand as somewhat more progressive than Thailand in terms of the opportunities available to women, her time in Japan gave her a sense of the progress that Thai women have made:

Japan is very typically Asian.

I believe, even now, the highest aspiration of Japanese women is to get married and settle down, and spend your husband's money.

So I often got questions like 'why aren't you married?'

'Why do you want to study in university?'

'Why do you work for the government?'

I said, 'I don't know'.

I mean, at that time, I was in my mid twenties and in Thailand, you are just starting to work.

You're not expected to get married.

So, you get frowned upon by traditional Japanese people, because, like I said, at a certain point in life, women, we have to get married.

You also see that in the media, in Japan, on TV, the women are trying to look like dolls.

They have no strong role for women.

There were women in history, if you see Japanese historical soaps, you see strong women characters,

but they are mothers of the future children, and their purpose is to raise this boy to become a shogun, and that kind of role.

Not for herself.

So, women are expected to be doing something for the men in the family.

And, so, I often got these sorts of questions.

I enjoyed it very much, but by my second year, I felt like, 'I can't stand this culture, anymore'.

In New Zealand, I felt that you are a person, regardless of whether you are a man or a woman. (Th3)

The other participant also emphasised the value of learning about what she saw to be more liberal gender roles in New Zealand. She felt that the study experience had encouraged her to become more independent:

In New Zealand, all women help themselves.

They don't wait for men to help them.

I don't know, maybe because of personal experience, as far as I could see, there's no difference between men and women in New Zealand.

What men can do, women also can do.

Like, in New Zealand, you have soccer, women's soccer, women's rugby, you do everything the same.

There we are equal, so it tends to make you a more independent woman.

You are able to do lots of things on your own without having to wait for help.

Being independent is good in a sense that you know that you are not waiting for someone to help you all the time, and it makes you proud of yourself. (Th2)

As well as feeling like the experience had given them more pride in themselves and made them feel more independent, they also believed that the hardship and hard work involved had made them more disciplined and determined:

My experience was, don't be complacent about your ability.
You have to work hard.
If you really put effort into doing something, you can overcome it.
Maybe you can't be so excellent at everything,
but at least you can achieve what you set out to do. (Th3)

The thing that I think that we received from this scholarship after we finished is that you didn't have much loitering time,
because most of the time we were either studying or we were doing activities.
So, it made us feel that if you are sitting there doing nothing, you are a useless person.
I mean, there's not even a single day that passed by without contributing something, doing something.
After I got back, it became my habit that I'm not wasting my time doing nothing.
If you are just sitting there doing nothing, then what a waste of time. (Th2)

All felt that this new sense of discipline had helped them 'grow up':

It's like being a teenager is a turning point,
because when I came back and I compared myself with other people who didn't do a Bachelors degree abroad, their perceptions towards the world were different.
Even though they graduated from a university in Thailand, they didn't actually grow up.
They were still reading comics,
they were still playing computer games,
and wasting time. (Th2)

All three also reported that these new personal resources have been useful in their working lives. As Fah noted, earlier, greater cultural awareness is seen as particularly useful when attempting to establish and maintain good multi-lateral working relationships. Another participant also commented on this:

I think it broadened my view of the world.
Because, if you're not exposed to different cultures, you tend to have a narrow perception of the world.
When you get to know more people, you can be a more understanding person when things happen with certain people from different nations, and you think, okay, maybe their background is different.
Countries perceive things differently, so you can try and be a reasonable person, not just jump to conclusions right away.
If you know what their background is, then you know why they act the way they do,
whether it is justified or not justified,
whether it is acceptable in their culture.
Because sometimes they don't mean to offend you in a certain way, but, if you know the reason behind it, then this will not create a misunderstanding between people. (Th2)

This participant noted that as well as making her a more flexible and a more competent negotiator, the cultural knowledge she had gained from her friendships with other international students in New Zealand had been a crucial asset when she was given a role as an advisor to other ASEAN²⁷ countries. This new knowledge was the source of new solidarities, and a greater commitment to the benefits of cross-cultural dialogue:

When I worked with negotiators from the ASEAN countries, they didn't actually get close enough to you to tell you lots of things, but because I already knew from my friends [that I met in New Zealand] what the reasons were behind their actions, I already understood why they proposed to do things this way and not that way.

So it actually helps a lot.

The ASEAN countries have different levels of development, and sometimes we have personal conflicts because of this situation.

But what I am glad about is that I am able to give them some recommendations about their projects and what they want to do for their country, what it would bring to their country.

It's a personal conversation between me and my colleagues, but I am able to help them, and later we became friends.

Those differences that we feel the first time we met, they are already gone, because you are actually willing to help people, genuinely.

It breaks down all the barriers to the relationships between different countries.

In negotiations, sometimes people say you can't really tell the truth, you have to be diplomatic, and you say whatever you need to conclude a negotiation.

But, I don't believe that is the right thing to do.

The right thing to do is just to tell them what your difficulties are, and then ask them to tell you what their difficulties are, and then try to bridge the two. (Th2)

As well as a greater sense of internationalism, an enhanced commitment to the environment also came through as an important new motivation arising out of their time in New Zealand:

When you are in New Zealand, people tend to preserve the environment.

When you go for a picnic, you don't litter things around, you always collect every single piece of your garbage.

So when people are educated there, they come back and they see the world differently.

You are more sensible.

You treasure the environment,

and you try to do whatever you can to make the world a better place.

²⁷ Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

You become a supporter of the environment.
That was a personal interest that I think came out of those three and a half years. (Th2)

For this participant, this new interest had translated into a powerful incentive to get involved in environmental issues such as the Kyoto protocol negotiation process, as well as giving her a personal commitment to 'living simply':

I cherish nature more than before I went there,
and I learnt to live simply.
You know, you don't need many fancy things in life,
just to live with nature. (Th2)

Coming from Bangkok, it was her perception that twenty years ago the 'simple' New Zealand lifestyle acted as an antidote to the tendency of those who study abroad to develop a taste for status and wealth, and to lose touch with 'reality':

Thai people's perception towards people who graduate from abroad is that they become a snobbish person.
You're not touching the ground,
you are merely a theory person.
You're not able to do ordinary things,
you don't really understand how poor people feel,
or what their life is like.
But, of the time that I spent in New Zealand, people are always touching the ground.
They go to the park,
and they don't really go for fancy things.
They spend life with nature. (Th2)

In addition to gaining new personal skills, and important new motivations, the scholarship experience was also the source of some tension and 'losses' for the three women. As well as having to negotiate their new-found autonomy with parents, fitting back into the work environment also presented some challenges. Like all the Thai women who participated in this research, the women were contractually required to return to work for the Thai government.

The difficult thing was to come back to stay with your parents, after being away for four years.
That was the first difficult thing.
The second difficult thing was that at that time, the environment was still very bureaucratic, and many people of my generation who graduated from overseas felt the same thing.

I had a friend, he was in the States since junior high, and he came back to work in the same department, and he said, ‘oh, god. The system is so binding! So boring!’ (Th3)

Negotiating romantic relationships was also an issue for all three. As one woman noted, she felt studying abroad had made her too independent for Thai men:

You know, it’s not that we’re fussy, but it’s just that guys say that we are too sensible.

It’s because we were overseas since we were eighteen, and we had to take care of ourselves.

We had to make some sense out of everything that happened to us.

Even Kiwi guys, they said that it would be difficult for us to find a Thai man to marry us, because, for a Thai man, we are too outspoken, and we don’t tolerate things that are not supposed to be tolerated,

and we are sensible, trying to make reasons out of everything.

Those Thai guys wouldn’t be able to stand that.

We have to marry somebody else, you know, Western.

That’s why we’re open to going overseas to many nations.

It’s just that the guy has to be very open-minded.

It’s not that we are too picky, it’s just that it’s hard to find.

Some guys get scared when women feel that they’re independent. (Th2)

The issue of new cultural learning and the ways that it impacted on their ability to renegotiate relationships back home was an interesting one. As Fah noted, because of their class position within Thai society, and their ability to hire domestic support, in some ways they faced fewer career barriers than New Zealand women. However, they all struggled with the issue of emotional autonomy and its impact on their prospects for romantic relationships. In addition, one woman said that because she was single, over the years she has had to deal with expectations that she would work longer hours and be prepared to sacrifice her personal life:

We are expected to perform more, because we are single.

We are expected to be here at like six or seven if we have work to do, and we have to be available up to ten o’clock at night.

If the boss wants something, then, ‘hey, did you do that? Can you get me somebody here?’

This is something that I think is quite unfair.

I mean, I have my own life.

Maybe it’s not the same thing as my married colleagues, but I want to go out and watch movies and eat with my friends. (Th3)

This participant noted that despite these expectations, she felt that generally women no longer face barriers to promotion within her area of the state sector (although she identified several other departments where she believes women are finding it much more difficult to secure leadership positions). Although she noted that it is widely recognised that women's high levels of participation within the state sector in Thailand have in part resulted from the fact that men have sought out higher pay within the private sector:

I'm lucky to be working here,
because you will see that we have so many women here.
When we go overseas for negotiations, all the negotiators are women.
Only the head, and maybe some secretaries are men.
Especially my generation, we have so many women.
For my generation, the Thai economy was booming when I started working, so most of my male friends who were in university or high school, they went into the private sector.
Not many men went into government.
So that's why, at this level, they are so many women.
So, women are very powerful in the Thai government, I can tell you.
And, it will continue to be that way for one or two generations. (Th3)

Finally, like Fah, the other two participants tended to think that the age that they went abroad was significant in enabling them to cultivate new personal motivations whilst maintaining their core Thai values. Any younger, one woman stated, and you are too open to cultural dislocation, while any older and you are too fixed in your ways and unlikely to be open to new ideas:

If they send people abroad when they are doing a Masters, nobody can change them.
How could they be independent from their family since they have already accumulated certain perceptions for twenty five years.
They're not at that turning point anymore,
they only want further education,
but they don't want to change their perceptions.
Before people are eighteen, they don't really form a perception towards the world, yet, because they are just starting their life.
So, everything is interesting.
But if you don't have a strong background, you tend to collapse.

I think the Bachelors scholarship is good.
People that they select to receive a scholarship to do their Bachelors degree, they can change their position easier than when you offer them a Masters.
Because at Masters level, people tend to be older, and then, sometimes they have certain mindsets already.
But for a Bachelors degree, since they are young, they are open to all sorts of things.
If you give them good things, the right position, the right attitude, it will help a lot in shaping the rest of their lives.

All three of us, we have been very outstanding in our work, in different areas. And I think the education that we got in New Zealand has made a big contribution to all that.

Because otherwise we wouldn't be so patient, diligent or outspoken, or have different perceptions towards anything.

It made us understand the world better in different ways.

And it actually became a very important part of our lives. (Th2)

Also like Fah, this participant felt that coming from a 'good family' was an important part of maintaining cultural integrity:

People who studied for a Bachelor's degree, they start at a very young age, and sometimes you tend to get emotional at the beginning.

But, if the person has a solid family background, then they will be able to adapt.

If they don't have a solid family background, then they either give up, or when they are away they will do bad things.

Because you have a lot of freedom in deciding what you should do in life. And there is lots of temptation.

But if you have a solid family background, no matter how much exposure you receive, the solid background always tells you what is good, what is right, and what is wrong. (Th2)

For these women, coming from a 'good family' meant one in which study abroad was encouraged, and even expected:

My parents both graduated from a university in the States, so, I think good education is something my mother always placed high priority on.

And in the same year, my eldest sister got a scholarship to study for a Masters overseas, and I got a scholarship to go to New Zealand.

My parents were, like, god, suddenly the house became so quiet.

But, I think, somehow, deep down they always expected that we had to go away, because my mother would say, 'ah, you guys will have to go study overseas at some stage.'

So, it wasn't that difficult for them.

They were quite happy that we went to good universities, and we were doing well. (Th3)

Conclusion

In their late adolescence when they went abroad, adventure rather than 'development objectives' or even work featured as the most significant motivator amongst this group of Thai participants. However, all three participants believe that experience has had a significant impact on their work and personal lives. They attribute the intensity of this impact to the early age that they went abroad. While at the time, they may not have been focusing on what, when and how the experience could contribute to wider development

goals within their country, they argue that the timing of the experience had a critical influence on the formation of their personal and professional values.

As high-achieving students used to defining themselves in terms of their successes, the first immensely challenging year of their scholarship experience was characterised as extremely “humbling” and “character building”. All reported struggling with language, as well as the intense pressure on them to meet the academic performance requirements of their scholarship contract. Two of the three participants failed courses in their first year in New Zealand. This experience of ‘failure’ was positioned as an initially devastating but ultimately extremely valuable opportunity to cultivate greater tenacity, and self-discipline. All the participants reported feeling an immense sense of self-pride associated with having mastered the challenges of living away from home and studying in another language and another academic culture.

They also argued that the experience provided a valued opportunity for them to become more independent, and more “outspoken”. They attribute this to getting the chance to live within a culture that places greater emphasis on female autonomy. This value shift is experienced as both positive and negative: contributing to a greater sense of self-pride and self-efficacy, but also making it more challenging to negotiate romantic relationships with men. They also characterised their time in New Zealand as a period when they came to challenge commitments to materialism, and place greater value on environmental protection. Finally, their scholarship experience is positioned as a particularly valuable opportunity to find out more about other cultures, and to become more “open-minded”. They credit the scholarship experience with providing the chance to mix with people from a wide range of cultures, increasing their interest in and commitment to the value of cross-cultural collaboration, as well as providing opportunities to reflect on their own cultural values.

The following chapter explores the experiences of another group of Thai women who participated in a development scholarship scheme at a slightly later stage of their lives. As well as exploring the impact of age on the ‘scholarship girl’ experience, this chapter provides an opportunity to examine the outcomes associated with participation in a

postgraduate rather than an undergraduate scholarship programme. It also examines the impact that studying abroad at a later stage of a woman's career cycle can have on the types of outcomes women attribute to this kind of educational experience.

Chapter Seven - Research in Thailand, part 2

“Like a frog in a coconut shell”: Adventure, acceptance, and resilience.

Introduction

This chapter explores the experiences of a group of women from Thailand who took up an NZAID scholarship to study for a Masters degree in New Zealand. There were twelve women in this group²⁸, and all had returned home within the last five years. Their experiences are interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, these women were more likely to be in their late twenties or thirties, and to be well established within their careers when they went abroad, thus, their stories provide insights into the impact of the scholarship experience on woman at a later stage of their career and personal lifecycle. Secondly, their experiences highlight the potential differences that research-focused programmes rather than general degree study make to the experience of female development scholars. And, finally, because the differences between these women in part results from a shift in scholarships policy away from targeting undergraduates with the highest grades towards providing professional development for established practitioners, the contrasts between them provide a picture of the changing face of educational aid.

These women were older when they went abroad, thus, unsurprisingly, their motivations and expectations varied from those who were fresh out of high school. Rather than family honour or proving their academic worth, promotion and ‘acceptance’ in the workplace as well as professional ‘up-skilling’ were more likely to be the prime motivators for applying for a scholarship. Like the previous group, however, emotional autonomy and independence (from parents, but now additionally within romantic relationships) remain central themes. Other outcomes were also fairly consistent across both groups, including greater sensitivity to cultural issues, increased interest in and opportunity for multinational collaboration, and an improved sense of personal and professional efficacy.

²⁸ Two of the interviews within this group were conducted without a tape recorder. Therefore, the comments of these participants are included within general discussions of the themes arising out of these interviews, however, no direct quotations from these participants is included in this chapter.

Nok's story

Nok and I arranged to meet in Starbucks in Central Chitlom, one of Bangkok's more upmarket department stores. It was a venue that was to provide a talking point for the discussion that arose later in the interview about the ways that education abroad had challenged her to rethink some of her political ideals. Nok's partner also attended the interview and his comments are included in the narrative.

She starts by talking about the reason she applied for the scholarship: boredom, and the desire to 'up-skill'. She also talks about the ways in which she used the experience as a test of her personal autonomy, and how her study provided an opportunity to push herself to become braver, and to 'speak out'.

The comments made by her partner about the impact of her study experience on the balance of power within their relationship provides a gentle counterpoint to the comments made by earlier participants about the difficulties of negotiating new found autonomy within romantic relationships.

Both Nok and her partner then turn to what was to become a recurring theme within the narratives of the Thai participants – the scholarship experience as an opportunity to reflect on the model of development occurring within Thailand. Finally, they then both discuss their own perceptions of the value of the NZAID scholarship programme, including the belief that the scheme was terminated because Thailand is now too 'developed'.

Beginnings

I used to travel around the country,
then they moved me to another section.
And at that time I was just sitting at a table and trying to do something useful.
And it was kind of boring.

My boss came along and said 'there's a scholarship',
and I thought, good, why not?
Because I had kind of changed my working area from my first degree,
and I needed something more, if they wanted me to do more.

And I thought, if I have a chance to study in an English-speaking country, I'm sure that my English will get better.

Rather than staying here, because I don't have any chances to talk to anyone.

Also, it's a bit personal.

We plan to get married,
actually, by the end of this year,
and, I felt like, before I get married, I better do something that I want.
Before I get into another kind of life, sharing my life with another person,
I wanted to see if I could handle anything by myself,
living by myself.

At the beginning it was a little bit hard for me.

I used to feel like, yah, I'm strong, I'm mature enough, because of being in Bangkok for how many years.

Actually, it's different, because here I speak the same language.

But over there, 'pardon me?'

They don't understand me, what should I do?

I didn't know what to say.

I wondered, is it correct to speak like this?

It was just a kind of hesitation for me, like, half a minute, or something,
'should I, shouldn't I?'

And then, I realised, I need to speak out, otherwise I can't do anything.

I decided to stay in the Halls of Residence, and luckily, there were no Thai students, only me, so I needed to survive,

and I needed to speak out, with those young kids.

Before I went to New Zealand, I was not a good public speaker.

I knew that I knew things,
but how can I convey what I know to other people?

Going there, and living by myself, I needed to speak out.

The first time, oh my god, oh my god, oh my god.

And then I did it.

It was not that difficult.

The second time, oh, this is what I know.

And its getting better and better.

And it has also made a difference to the way I deal with problems.

Being there on my own, I needed to think again and again before I decided what to do.

I would say, ‘no, no, no’, and then take one more minute,

and then, ‘oh yeah. This would be better’.

Before I went to New Zealand, I normally spent most of my time with him,

so, doing something on my own, at the beginning, it was sort of,

oh, it was awkward.

And then, all of my friends, one by one they left New Zealand,

and the last year it was just only me.

I thought, it’s time!

Oh, my god, oh my god, no one here knows me, so just do it!

I've gained a lot.

Yeah, I told him many times that my reading has improved heaps.

And he was surprised, too.

Because sometimes we are together, and I am, like, flip (*she gestures turning the page of a book*), and he is like ‘hang on, hang on, I’m still here?’.

And it’s like, ‘oops, sorry’.

Somehow her English is now better than mine, and now she can take a lead sometimes. It's okay for me. (*Nok looks worried*) Don't worry! (*He touches her arm*)

He came to New Zealand

Yeah, it's peaceful, and I like the way that it's not like in Thailand.

Somehow we have decided to go the same way as Japan or the US.

We don't try to focus on our strengths,
we just follow the big countries.

And maybe we will get in trouble.

I think we try to follow everything,

even the school system.

They keep telling us that this is good.

Hello? Are you talking about Thai kids?

We are different!

That's what we like about New Zealand,
you try to keep what you have
and promote your strengths,
not just become like us.

Because, I think that people forget where we come from.
I think it is very important to keep in mind where we are from.

Actually, we have everything,
but, we try to get bigger, like the industrial countries.
But we don't have knowledge for our people.
So, you go five steps, they go ten steps.
But look back to your strengths.
With Thailand, maybe, rice is number one, and any other products from Thailand.

I mean, education is important, but what kind of education are you going to give your people?

What do you want them to learn?

It's not just only going further or getting higher – as high as you can.

As I told you, we need to know where we come from.

And we need to know what are our strengths and follow those.

I think we forget this point.

I don't know where we are headed, Thai people.

It's too fast for me.

It's too fast, and I don't know,
sometimes I feel like I can't catch it up.

It's kind of like, oh my god, I'm here, I try to run and catch it, and it just keeps moving.

And sometimes, I know that I'm a pessimistic person,
and sometimes I feel like I don't want to have my own kids.

I don't want to raise my own kids in this type of environment.

Because, as I told you, we forget where we are going, and what we are heading towards.
I don't know.

It's too fast.

Sometimes I ask him, shall we go to New Zealand?

The King tried to tell us about a middle way²⁹. But, you can see everybody says 'we will follow the King, we will do what he suggested to us', but they just keep on doing things the other way.

Yeah, I think that it is a little bit late, because we have gotten used to this other way of being more Westernised.

It's very hard to follow what the King suggested.

We need to step back, step backward, and re-start again, somehow.

No one wants to step backwards,

no one.

Actually, we will, after the next economic collapse in a few years (*she laughs*).

Actually, I think we can do it, like, we can say, 'Okay, I spend money on Starbucks. I will not do it everyday'. I have a car, but, I don't have to buy ...

... a luxury car, just a city car, a normal one.

The value of the scheme

I always told myself, I'm on a scholarship, I need to do my best.

I need to study.

Everything needs to be the best.

This is something that was pushing me all the time.

And, being that way, when I graduated it was, like, yes, I can do it, yes, I've made it.

Whenever I studied, I was thinking, when I get back to work, will this be useful?

Can I apply this to my job?

While I was working on my thesis,

I started to compare what my teacher was doing, to what I am doing now.

Is it going to be good and useful?

And the answer is yes.

²⁹ The middle way Nok's partner is referring to here is Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej's concept of the 'sufficiency economy'. This concept is discussed further in Chapter Nine, page 238.

So, I'm lucky to get this scholarship, and the knowledge that I got is useful.
I can do something more.
And I'm sure that I'm going to do it properly.

One thing that I liked about the scholarship was NZAID told her that after you finish your scholarship study, you will have to go back to your country and work for your country.

This is very good for developing countries.

Because, when I was in the US, I saw a lot of Indian people, Indian guys who, after they finish their study, they apply for work in the US.

And a lot of the mainland Chinese, they try to get a job in the US.

Yeah, I think it was good for NZAID to tell us beforehand,
'You got this scholarship, because, you will go back to your country and do something for your country'.

Yeah, and this was a kind of mission for me.

I need to go back, and I'm going to do something with what I've learnt.

It's such a good idea to keep telling yourself why you are here,
and why you are doing this.

So, I just want to thank you, NZAID, for giving me this opportunity to go to New Zealand to learn a lot.

And I hope that in the near future they are going to provide this kind of scholarship to Thai people again.

We are not yet a developed country.

Discussion

Nok talks about a number of challenges familiar to almost all international students: the difficulties of adapting to a different academic culture, and mastering a new language. She also raises a number of other important issues, including the use of the scholarship experience as a 'test' of her emotional autonomy, and the immense pressure to perform that development scholarship students face:

Everything needs to be the best.
This was something that was pushing me all the time.

Her discussion around the ways that the scholarship experience encouraged her to question her country's model of development was a recurrent one within interviews with Thai participants. This was possibly partially influenced by the intense debate around the 'direction' of the country that was occurring in the period that interviews were conducted, several months prior to the September 2006 military coup in Thailand.

Interestingly, she represents her scholarship experience as not so much a chance to experience life in a more 'developed' nation, but as a chance to experience life in a country that has chosen to "not just become like us", who "tr[ies] to get bigger, like the industrial countries", but has chosen to "keep what you have". Both her and her partner represent their time in New Zealand as a catalyst for reflecting on "where we have come from", and the need to "look back to your strengths".

It is also interesting to note the tension that comes through in her narrative around the place of education in development. Education is variously positioned as a good – as personally useful and important for her to do her job well – and as the cause of the perceived cultural breakdown that is occurring in Thailand. She asks, 'what kind of education are you going to give your people? It's not just going further or getting higher. We need to know where we come from."

Jom's story

Jom's story comes from an interview that I conducted with a woman from Thailand who had returned home briefly after completing her Masters degree in New Zealand. Frustrated with the lengthy bureaucratic process she was required to negotiate in order to implement her research findings, she has since taken up further study opportunities overseas.

She talks about how her research experience has given her new insights into the structural constraints that community workers face when trying to implement change in their communities. She also discusses her own renewed appreciation of the importance of taking a participatory approach to social change. People are an important resource, she argues, "let them join the party".

Finally, she provides one of the most in-depth discussions of the relationship between the scholarship experience and the development of confidence and emotional autonomy. Before I went away, she says, “I was like a frog in a coconut shell: never opened up to anything”.

I struggled with the decision about which chapter to include her story in. As she is now undertaking PhD research, her story rightfully belongs in both Chapters Seven and Eight. However, her detailed discussion of the issues surrounding personal autonomy were so strongly representative of the issues facing the women within this group, that I decided to include her story in this section. Her reflections on the increased knowledge of socio-political processes that resulted from her fieldwork experience is more representative of the experiences of the women undertaking PhD research, however. For this reason, I will return again to these comments in Chapter Eight.

Beginnings

I felt like I didn’t really have freedom in my job.

I wanted more freedom, and I thought that I could do more than that, because I felt like I did everything according to orders,

and I felt like my brain didn’t have any chance to work.

I don’t really like routine work, with someone telling me to do this and do that.

I quite like doing research.

Before I came to New Zealand, I studied in Thailand,

but I didn’t like the hierarchy.

They think that I’m a problem if I say too much or speak too much.

And, I’m not saying that the educational system in Thailand is of a lower standard, but everything is just on such a tight schedule, and they put a lot in your brain.

You just feel like you are a parrot.

My brain didn’t really have any chance to work.

You try to memorise everything and do the exam the best you can, but at the end of the exam, it just feels like everything is just gone.

At the end, you don’t learn anything.

Also, I wanted to know about life overseas.

I personally wanted to have an experience of living overseas

Being a Thai kid, your parents and society always make a frame for you.

my family, my dad always made us a frame - what we could do and where we could go.

And we couldn't cross that line.

So, I think I've been very dependent on my parents.

Partly, I wanted to be independent.

But I couldn't really develop the skills to be independent if I was still around that environment all the time.

When I arrived in New Zealand in late October the weather was really bad, raining all the time.

We learnt English in Thailand, starting from primary school, but we didn't talk, we didn't speak, so everything just changed.

It was very shocking.

I didn't speak for a month.

I have some Thai friends who came at the same time;

we made friends, but, you know, it was lonely because I'd never been far away from home.

I mean, at home, I live far away from my parents,

but I still keep coming back to my parents.

We know that they are there.

I found that the first time overseas I felt blue all the time,

especially when it was raining.

You feel like you're cut off from the world.

And you think, 'oh, why am I here?'

I cried in the mornings for a month.

I got up at five am in the morning and cried for a month.

Oh, I couldn't live this life any longer.

Then I asked myself 'why did I come here?'

'Why?'

You just can't ask that question anymore,

so, I told myself that it was better that I do something.

So I started to make friends with people from overseas.
And it was good because I moved up to a hostel where there are lots of international students.
I made friends and I started to go out and to feel better.
I have great friends from all over the world.
And although we are not from the same country, the bond is quite strong.
You know that you can rely on them, and they can rely on me.

I can't explain how much I appreciated that experience.
My life was just so narrow when I was in Thailand.
I was being controlled by the family, and by the society.
From this bit of the world that I had – like, in Thailand we would say, 'like a frog in a coconut shell': never opened up to anything – here the world just opened up.
It's a great feeling when you know that you can do more than you thought.

The experience that I most appreciate is that my brain could work more,
and I developed a kind of critical thinking.
I like the way they teach students here.
All the lecturers here are open to all kinds of ideas and they are open for the students to show their opinions.
Open discussion helps us to develop critical thinking and to learn how to manage our study, and manage our time.
That is the great thing that I learnt from here when I went back to work after the Masters.
I felt the difference.
I felt that I could manage myself more, could manage time.
And I knew where to go and get information without anyone telling me what should I do.

Research topic

My research is around the gap between lay people and professionals in community development.
Because there is always a huge gap between them.

Honestly, I feel hopeless sometimes.

Powerless.

I kind of knew, I had some information about why people don't do what they should do.

It's just, it's always a bigger picture than you think.

The problem is not just at the grassroots.

The bigger picture, the policy, is really important, too.

Sometimes there are just a limited number of workers, so they just don't have enough time.

And I think the professionals, sometimes, they don't listen to the lay people.

I think when we're trying to do something with the people, it's good to let them join the party,

not just let them be there to receive.

Just let the people join in.

See what they think.

From my experience, they might have lower education,

but they have excellent ideas, about what to do for themselves.

Just give them a chance to come and join the party from the beginning.

Right there from the beginning

I think, basically, what I am doing now, is just trying to create a picture of what is happening,

and from there, I hope that people will see the problem.

The local people can't really do anything.

So, by having information, I think the higher authorities will see the picture.

But I am not quite sure yet how I could present that.

I might get myself in trouble.

People have been doing research about this all the time,

but the outcomes of the work that they do for the lay people is sometimes not enough.

The research stays there on the shelf

There are lots of ideas, but at the same time for me to intervene, I need a team,

because I am alone,

and I couldn't do it.

It's just, always, it's forever a problem in Thailand, honestly, everything is just so hierarchical.

Policy is always top-down.

If you look at the policy it looks nice, the ideas,
but when it comes to practice, it is different.

When I went back after my Masters, I was developing some projects and starting to apply for funding.

It's just,
the process is painful.

They sent it back to me and they said I should add this, I should add that, I should cut this out.

So, I hadn't got the funding yet when I went away for further study.

Before you get the funding you move to other stuff.

At home, in Thailand, before you can develop something, it takes ages.

Not that they aren't interested in doing good things for the people,
but it's ages before you get funding for a research proposal.

It just takes ages.

And some people just give up.

It's a long process before we can contribute things.

Standing up for yourself

I am a girl from Thailand, and basically, maybe not now, or still now, Thai males can't really stand women with strong opinions who stand up for themselves.

This is my experience.

And recently a guy was interested in me,
he was really interested in me, and he said, 'but I can't stand you'
because I say what I like and I stand up for myself, and I'm not going to do things just to please.

That's partly because I came to New Zealand, and I knew that I could say what I like,
and what I think it is right to do.

That's because of the culture, I quite like it.

Not only, not only that guy couldn't stand me, because I learned that I could stand up for myself if I thought that was right,
but when I work, also, I stand up for myself.

The education gave me more confidence,
more confidence in myself and my ability.
I now know more what I can do.
Confidence is really important before we can stand up for ourselves.

In our personal lives, being a girl overseas, you know, in Thailand, most girls are very overprotected by their family.

Like, my dad, he never let us go out alone at night.

We still had to ask permission to do things.

And coming here, being alone, far away from parents, I mean, someone else told me that when he first met me, he was very worried about me, because I looked too naïve, and believed everyone,
especially guys who became interested in me.

I mean, he was older than me,
and he looked at me and this other girl who came from the same culture - from another country, from Indonesia - where we are overprotected by the family,
and he thought we just looked so naïve.

I think that is the main difference between male and female students:
men are less vulnerable.

Girls from this kind of culture like me are quite vulnerable to the outside world, you know.

And, because we're from a culture where physical touch in public is not acceptable, or being with someone before marriage is not acceptable, if we want to experience having a relationship with a guy from a different culture, we need to learn to tell them what our culture is about and what is acceptable or what's not.

It just makes us stronger.

We don't need to be submissive.

Discussion

Jom provides one of the strongest commentaries on the restrictions Thai women experience within their family lives, and the ways that the scholarship experience can carve out the space for a new sense of autonomy. The desire to have greater personal autonomy was still a significant concern for this group of participants, the majority of whom were still living with their parents prior to going abroad. The scholarship period is seen as a time to become more confident at making decisions, and to learn to trust in your ability to ‘survive’ hardship on your own.

The scholarship experience is also identified as offering an opportunity for much sought after change and growth in their professional lives. For some, like Jom, this was linked to a sense of restriction in the workplace, while for others this experience was seen as an antidote to a degree of workplace boredom:

To be honest, I had worked for my company for many, many years.
More than ten years.
And I thought maybe it's time for me to change,
to do something new,
and make my life more colourful. (Th4)

Study abroad is positioned as an opportunity for adventure and personal expansion:

I wanted to grow, to become wiser. (Th13)

My dream was to go to a native English-speaking country,
to study their culture and their way of life,
to open my mind about that. (Th7)

I decided that it would be a challenge to study abroad.
I thought that I would like to know about life abroad,
what is it like? (Th5)

As well as seeking out the personal expansion made possible by travel, the study experience was also identified as an important opportunity to revitalise professional practice through mixing with different groups of professionals and gaining access to new sources of expertise and advice:

I needed to gain more knowledge, more experience,
And I wanted to share some perspectives with others.
I think, it's not always enough to just mix with Thai colleagues.
I think I needed more input.

Because, sometimes we discuss issues, like, for example, we were discussing poverty alleviation, and at that time, we needed to talk with some experts to get some technical input.

We just never think outside the square.

So, I thought, if I go to other places, other continents, other countries, perhaps, I can broaden my view.

So, I thought I should apply for a foreign scholarship. (Th13)

It was also seen as a useful opportunity for advanced English-language training. Most of the participants argued that globalisation is resulting in a need for improved English-language skills:

English language is an important thing for working internationally.

It's very important now.

I think because of the impact of globalisation, such as the increase in international trade and the rapid movement of capital and integration of financial markets, English language is one of the key things you need to get involved. (Th8)

Finally, the desire to develop a picture of oneself as stronger and more competent was often accompanied by a desire to increase the level of respect or 'acceptance' they received in their work and personal lives. Many of the participants had previously witnessed the increase in social status experienced by those who had studied abroad:

It seems that people who graduate from overseas can get more acceptance from their boss and their coworkers. (Th8)

Everyone thinks that people who study abroad, when they come back, they get a promotion, they can get good things, and more acceptance from other people.

It is better than studying in Thailand for a Masters.

It's totally different, the level of acceptance.

It's a positive thing, to study abroad. (Th12)

Most of these women saw the issue of 'acceptance' as a gendered one. They asserted that Thai women currently experience lower status in the workplace, and have difficulty gaining respect for their ideas, or support for promotion:

I want to be promoted, to be at a higher level in my work.

And I wanted to be accepted more.

In Thailand, right now, men and women are still not equal when I compare to other countries.

Even if you work very, very hard, better than some men, you are still looked at

like you are a woman.

So, I wanted to be more accepted by people.

I mean, women can work as equals to men. (Th11)

A degree from abroad is seen as a tool women can use to increase the amount of respect they receive in the workplace, as well as improve their chance of gaining a promotion:

In our culture, I think that the men, they get ahead of the women, a little bit.
Not much, but a little bit.

And, in the past, the executive positions were for men more than women.
Women can be an executive, now, I think, because they can get a degree from a foreign country.

If they don't get that type of degree, it's hard for women to get a chance to prove that they can be a good executive. (Th8)

I think higher education makes women more accepted.
Women are more highly regarded as a result of their education.

It makes women more independent and believe in themselves and their capabilities more. (Th4)

This group of women, having considerably greater access to pre-departure information about New Zealand, were markedly less naïve about what they were in for. Despite this greater awareness, however, as Jom and Nok point out, for many it was still their first time living away from home, and the initial adjustment period was still extremely stressful. Another participant reflected on her first month in New Zealand:

It was a big change.
In the first month, I cried every day.
I was not used to the food or the weather.
It was very cold, and everything changed.
I couldn't sleep, or anything.
I was always worrying about everything:
about my lectures,
about how to communicate with my classmates.
At that time, I had to see a doctor,
because I went to talk to the university counselling,
and they said that my stress levels were higher than normal, and I needed to take some medicine. (Th11)

With varying degrees of English competency, most also struggled with communication in the first few months. They also reported that their status as scholarship students added an extra source of pressure during the settling-in period:

Because I was a scholarship student, I had to be serious about study,
otherwise they would have sent me back without any degree,
without anything.
And that is not good!

So, for scholarship students, it is more serious than for other students who use their own money.

It is very difficult. (Th11)

However, it is interesting to note that one participant said she felt that her status as a scholarship student actually relieved one of the major sources of worry experienced by other international students: finding a job on return. This is due to the fact that these participants were all 'bonded'³⁰ to return to a government job for up to six years after the completion of their study.

Nevertheless, it would not generally be an overstatement to say that most of these women perceived the initial adjustment period as one of the most challenging and difficult experiences of their life. And as a result, all reported feeling an increased sense of confidence and self-pride associated with their ability to 'survive' this experience:

Now, when I face a tough problem, I can get through it.

I think I can live anywhere outside of Thailand, now.

I think that I would dare to go outside Thailand more than in the past.

Yeah, sometimes I think that, if I have the opportunity, I would like to live in a foreign country for five years, after I quit my job, or something.

I think that people in Thailand who have not experienced a foreign country, they do not dare to go and live alone. (Th8)

I'm stronger.

Before I went to New Zealand,

I couldn't go places on my own.

But there, I had to.

Travelling in Thailand,

I could not do that by myself.

But now I feel comfortable and I feel very safe to go overseas.

Like, last year when I went overseas, I travelled alone.

So, it's made me stronger.

I can make decisions.

Because, here, I feel a young girl all the time in my family.

But when I was there, I had to do things on my own and make decisions. (Th6)

For all the women who participated in this research, the scholarship experience was also represented as the catalyst for an intense exploration of their personal and cultural values. One of the most important sources of new cultural information was friendships with

³⁰ Employment bonding is a common condition attached to participation in development scholarship schemes. In this case, these women had continued to receive their salary whilst overseas, so they had signed a contract stating that on their return they would work for their organisation for either two or three times the duration of their scholarship course.

other international students. Almost all the participants identified these friendships as an important source of support, as well as the catalyst for new types of intimacy within their lives. Many felt that their friendships were more intense during this period due to the fact that they were used to living and spending much of their time with their parents:

I would say that it was one of my greatest experiences, living in New Zealand, because I think that I could experience things that I never experience in my country, like living with people from other countries, and getting to know them, and observing them from my point of view.
And at the same time, I was trying to observe them from a new angle.

I went there with another two Thai students
Before we went there we hadn't known each other.
and if I was living in Thailand, maybe I would have taken two years to learn about these people.
But there it's like you're living together,
and thrown in together,
and you're the only Thai people around, so you're spending heaps of time together.

I spent most of my free time with them.
We went shopping,
we cooked together,
ate together, and,
because of the environment, we had a lot of time together.
So we had the chance to learn more about each other.
But, if I was living in Thailand, I wouldn't have had that chance,
because I have more people to interact with.
Maybe I don't usually learn as much about people. (Th4)

As well as experiencing a greater intensity of friendship, several participants also valued the opportunity to mix with a range of people they wouldn't normally mix with, including young people:

I understand that they are young, and they are crazy,
they are wild, right?
And I think that probably Thai youngsters are even more crazy,
But, in Thailand, I live in a different life, in a different society - working people.
I graduated, like, almost twenty years ago.
So, there's a big gap.
They could be my children, right?
And I tried to be young, at the time, sometimes, to be in that group.
But if they had known that I was that age, it would be like, 'oh my god, this aunty, what is she doing here?' (Th4)

I'd been away from class for more than ten years before I did my Masters in New Zealand.

So, I just started to get back to student life, again.

But I couldn't find many Kiwi friends, because at my university there are many Chinese, and most of my friends were from South America, but, it was a very good experience to be with these young people.

I was nearly the oldest in the group, and this was quite an experience for me. (Th13)

Being pushed outside their normal social networks, mixing with a range of people from different cultures, and living in a culture with quite different values from their own, meant that this was a time in which the participants spent a lot of time reflecting on values and morals – their own and those of others. The majority of the participants felt it was a time in which they were able to enlarge their understanding of culture and human nature, and that this process had given them an expanded sense of solidarity with people from other cultures:

I think it has opened my mind and broadened my ideas. (Th13)

It was good, because when we talked, we learnt about each other's cultures, including things that were funny for me, and things that I did, that made them laugh.

That was the way we came to understand each other.

There were people from Indonesia, and people from the Pacific Islands.

It was great.

Someone, a friend of mine that came from somewhere, I thought, 'what is the name of your Island?'

I had never heard of it before.

I was wondering, this country is in the world?

I had not known about it before. (Th5)

Education is not only about academic knowledge.

It's about the way you look at life,

the way you look at people,

the way you interact with people.

So I think that if people get to learn more about other people, and try to learn something from other people, that is a great development.

You expand your thinking, and expand your views. (Th4)

For the majority of the women this increased interest in socio-cultural dynamics, combined with the experience of a more critical academic climate associated with postgraduate study, had given them an increased commitment to the contribution that debate and collaboration can make to improved outcomes in the workplace:

When I was in New Zealand, I had many friends from other places around the world.

And I learned about their cultures.

And I had new experiences.

Especially cultural ones.

I learned how Kiwis are, how Arabs are, or South Americans are, but overall, what I learnt in New Zealand was about working with people.

I learnt that, when we discuss some topics, we can have arguments, anytime.

We can have our say.

But in Thailand, it's sometimes difficult, you know.

It's difficult, because you have seniority.

We cannot say anything much.

Because we have to respect the seniority of our people.

But, in New Zealand, I learned that, oh, it's good to have more debate, or have more discussion, so we can get better results. (Th12)

If I have done a project and someone criticises my project, I am open minded and I listen to them and I can discuss it.

I am more open-minded, when I compare myself to before I went to New Zealand.

Because, Thai people, some people cannot listen to others.

But when I studied in New Zealand and I got the experience from studying abroad and overseas, now, I am more open-minded, and I can listen.

Even people who are in a lower position than me, if his comments are good, that is good.

Because nobody knows everything, right?

That has been good for me. (Th11)

As well as a greater commitment to collaboration within their workplaces, most of the women have also become a lot more interested in the benefits of international collaboration - working with external consultants, as well as networking with professionals in other nations working in similar areas. Almost all felt that their greater cultural awareness combined with improved English were crucial facilitating factors in enabling them to increase the amount of contact they have with these two groups:

When you have to deal with foreigners, you have to know their culture.

There are so many foreigners that come to our place to meet with us, so I have learnt more about how to deal with them, what is polite and what is not.

It's good to be able to communicate with foreigners who come here, including representatives.

And, also, you can participate in international meetings.

You will be nominated or assigned to attend conferences to gain more knowledge.

If I could not speak English well, I could not participate, and I could not understand what they say.

And learning about different cultures has been important, too, because we know that what is polite in Thai culture is not always polite in another culture.

So we have to learn that, when we meet people, it is not polite to say this, or do that.

So, it's good that I don't create any misunderstandings with people. (Th6)

I was chosen to be a participant in a seminar abroad in India.

Since I came home I have been abroad much more than normal.

I was chosen to be a participant in that seminar, because, they believed that when I came back, I could use the knowledge on my own.

So I was chosen. (Th12)

Sometimes my boss sends me to attend seminars in Singapore, because I have got more contacts.

Also, when my boss wants to contact other similar organisations to ours overseas, he just asks me, 'can you email them about that?'

It's easier for me than for someone who finished her Masters in Thailand. (Th7)

This increased desire to work internationally was almost always accompanied by improved opportunities to do so. Many of the participants reported being given new opportunities to attend overseas conferences and to represent their organisation in international forums. A significant number also stated that they have been given increased responsibility for liaising with external consultants. They relayed that they were given these opportunities because their employer has greater confidence in their ability to work with people from other cultures, as well as to work independently.

As well as seeking out new overseas contacts, the women were also keen to maintain relationship with lecturers and friends that they had met in New Zealand. These relationships are an important source of ongoing professional support and advice:

I still have connections with international friends.

I have Sri Lankan friends, Kiwi friends, and Australian friends, and we help each other.

Whenever we have academic conferences this is useful for me.

We can exchange information.

I have very good friends in Malaysia, as well, who work in a similar area to me.

It's relevant to my office to work together in terms of sharing knowledge and ideas about practice. (Th12)

Importantly, several of the Thai women mentioned that study abroad has also given them the confidence that they can travel alone safely. They noted that it is still not common or generally considered acceptable for women to travel by themselves, and that study abroad has given them the confidence to challenge this.

As well as gaining increased opportunities to travel, two of the women mentioned getting private consulting and/or lecturing work as a result of their study abroad. As one woman noted, having international experience means that you have more status as a lecturer:

I know that when I give a lecture, I can tell them what other countries have done and how they live life.

And Thai people are happy to listen, and they are more interested to hear about other countries.

It makes more people attend my lectures. (Th11)

For the three women who were able to negotiate to do consulting and/or lecturing work in their own time outside of work, this employment could often be a significant source of additional income. One woman relayed that while her monthly income as a government employee was the equivalent of around \$NZ 580 per month, she was now able to earn an additional \$NZ 350 a day for speaking engagements, and an additional \$NZ 2000 per month teaching one day a week at a private university.

Other work-related outcomes varied widely amongst participants. There was considerable variation in the types of academic programmes the women participated in, and there was also a lot of variation in the amount of freedom they had to choose their research topic. Interestingly, three of the participants actually chose to study a New Zealand-related research topic for their Masters research. One of these women, who was not particularly excited about her job, explained her reasons for doing this:

I wanted to do something different from my work.

I didn't want to do something about my organisation.

I just wanted to do something different,

because my adviser told me that I should do something that attracted me, and that would keep me interested and motivated. (Th4)

One of the other women who studied a New Zealand topic stated that she had done so because it was too commercially sensitive to use data from her own organisation within her research, and the third listed personal interest as the reason for her decision. The rest of the participants had developed a quite specific research topic with superiors within their organisation before applying for their scholarship.

Your government gave this scholarship to my office directly,
so it was quite clear when my boss sent someone to study in New Zealand,
she had a specific target in mind.

The purpose was quite clear what she would like me to study. (Th5)

It is interesting to note that despite the diversity in the degree of freedom participants had to choose their topic and the level of New Zealand content within their research programme, all the participants reported similar levels of work-related benefits associated with their study experience. It is difficult to generalise about specific skills gained, as there are such a diverse range of professions involved, but some important and recurring ‘generic’ work-related skills gained included improved public speaking skills; being able to think and write more critically; improved ability to write long reports; greater knowledge of information technology; and better research skills. Many also felt that their greater English-language fluency in particular, had shifted the power in their dealings with consultants:

In the next two decades,
we will have to talk with foreigners,
with experts,
or consultants from abroad.
I expect that I should do some kind of negotiating,
not just listen to what they say.
I like to negotiate.
I like to talk or indicate that that is right, and that is wrong.
I don’t want to follow their ideas. (Th5)

Most felt that they had developed a number of new motivations resulting from their time in New Zealand. In the same manner as the participants in Chapter Six, protecting the environment and ‘living simply’ were some of the most significant:

I liked the way they save a lot of money, they save a lot of things in New Zealand.
I think the way of life is so simple, but that is good.
For instance, a friend of mine who studied with me, his t-shirt, his clothes were quite torn.
For Thai men, we would have to throw it away.
But, I think I liked his way.
In New Zealand, they don’t do that.
I think it’s good.

Also, my supervisor, he took me to his house, and his wife, she cooked for me.
What she did is, she got, like, a carrot,
she pulled out the carrot in the backyard.
And I thought, this is good.

In Bangkok, now, we have to buy everything, and we don't have that kind of life, and I like it.
I think I love it. (Th5)

Similarly, their study experience had also challenged some of their 'positive' stereotypes about New Zealand life. One Thai woman talked extensively about how she was shocked to discover that there is poverty in New Zealand:

I think that is why my thinking is quite mixed up about whether New Zealand is a rich country.

Probably, most of the houses around the campus were for the university students, so that's why they don't have money.

But the people from places like The Warehouse, I mean they actually didn't look like they were wealthy.

I mean maybe because I looked at them through my glasses, because for me, rich people, they have to look just like this, just like in Thailand, just like people here in Central Chitlom³¹.

I mean, maybe their living standards are high, but maybe they like simple things. So maybe I just judged them from my point of view.

I just thought that because New Zealand is regarded as a rich country, the people should be dressed like rich people here.

I don't know,

I just wondered why this was so. (Th4)

In challenging some of their own stereotypes about Western 'difference', most returned with a greater sense of the similarities between Thai culture and New Zealand culture:

Most New Zealanders that I met were kind of like Thai people.

Many of the people that I met, they were very kind.

I had heard that most foreigners were very confident people, and they were not interested in Asian people.

I got that from TV or something,

because I didn't have many opportunities to talk with them. (Th8)

Positive personal and work outcomes were also balanced by a range of not so welcome negative consequences of the scholarship experience. Some reported experiencing a number of new unwanted responsibilities in their workplace. Increased responsibility for translating and producing English language materials was a particular area of contention:

During the first three or four months after I came back I was assigned to write many, many technical papers.

I felt like I was trained to do a translation job.

³¹ An upmarket department store in Bangkok

I felt like this is not what I've studied,
and it's not what I want to do here.

When I first got back, I was also expected to receive any new foreigners in my office.

And all the English stuff came to me.

Actually, everybody in my division knows English, but all the English stuff came to me.

And I thought, oh, I am supposed to be doing other jobs, not only this.

I don't like to work with paper.

I like meeting people and going here and there,
and this had changed.

I missed people, and I didn't like just working with paper, and searching for information on the internet. (Th13)

Like Jom, some also experienced problems coping with returning to a more hierarchical work environment:

I try to do things like in New Zealand,
but with the senior staff, I can't do it so easily, as I feel like I am just a normal staff member.

I don't have a position that allows me to have my say.

Actually, I can have my say,
everyone can have their say,
but it's not going to pass my boss,
right?

It's our culture.

So, sometimes it's difficult for me to express my knowledge or my ideas,
or to give suggestions to the people in higher positions, senior people. (Th12)

Restructuring during their absence was also an issue for several participants. One woman was actually demoted while she was away:

Actually, before I went to New Zealand, I was promoted to be chief of the section.

But when I came back they had changed the regulations in my office,
so when I came back, I couldn't get my position back.

So, now I'm just a normal officer.

It shouldn't be like that, because I have knowledge from abroad,
but, I left my office for three years.

Sometimes it's a difficult thing to think about this,
because many colleagues they have to work hard in the office, and they have to be promoted, right.

And I think that is fair.

But for two years after I have graduated, nothing has changed in relation to my position. (Th12)

Worrying about keeping up English was also a significant issue. Many expressed the view that their boss now has very high expectations of them and that English fluency is a particular source of pressure and worry:

I think that I'm going to have difficulties soon, because coming back from overseas, they expect you to speak English fluently,
In my company, I'm going to get into trouble soon. (Th15)

In addition, two of the women remarked that the bonding associated with the scholarship scheme has frustrated their desires to do a PhD:

It's quite hard to go to New Zealand, again.
Since I got a promotion to be an executive, it's now quite hard to go again, because, when I was studying in New Zealand, my professor said 'you have potential to study for a doctoral degree.'
And I said, yeah, I am interested in that, but I signed a contract with my organisation, so I have to get back.
And the human resources department said I think you should go back home first. My professor said, once you go back to your country it's quite hard when you get a promotion to do a PhD. (Th7)

I am supposed to do a PhD if my Ministry allows me to do so, because, when I graduated, when I got my Masters, I talked to some of the lecturers, and they said that I could apply for a PhD, and I could get a scholarship, but when I talked to my Ministry, they said, oh, you have been there for three years, so you have to come back and work.
So, they didn't allow me to do my PhD. (Th13)

Several of these women were also critical about the value of the scholarship scheme. One relayed feeling uncomfortable that the scheme was made available to established professionals who already had an income, whilst undergraduate students with no income were missing out:

Because these people, people like me, they have worked already, and, after five years, or ten years, they can collect some money.
They could pay for their education by themselves.
So that's why, sometimes I just think that I want the money to go to people who are fresh from university and don't have money or don't have a chance to study abroad by themselves.
Actually, these people need it more, but they haven't had much chance to get it. (Th4)

Another said that she felt that the scheme was open to abuse as a number of students from other countries, who didn't experience such restrictive bonding, were more focused on migration than returning to contribute to development back home:

It has been very helpful in my case, but for other people, I'm not sure. Because, I have friends, Indonesian friends, they are women, and when they got scholarships in New Zealand, they tried to get pregnant, and they tried to stay in New Zealand.

Many of my friends, even friends from Vietnam, many developing countries, they tried to settle down in New Zealand.

Yeah, so, I would like to say thank you, that I'm very grateful that there is a Zealand scholarship that lets students from developing countries study in New Zealand.

But, they may need to have more conditions, some conditions to make sure that those students will come back to their country. (Th12)

Conclusion

The women within this chapter experienced many of the same challenges and benefits as those who participated in the undergraduate scheme twenty years previously. The desire for greater personal autonomy, in particular, continued to be an important motivator for applying for a scholarship. More established in their careers, these women also talked about a number of professional motivations, including a degree of workplace boredom, the need to 'up-skill' to take on new work challenges, and the desire to challenge the lower status of women within their organisations. This group were more likely than the previous group to talk about workplace challenges, including the lack of professional 'acceptance' experienced by women, and the desire to create more collaborative, less hierarchical working environments.

These participants, like the women in Chapter Six, reported that their overseas study experience provided important opportunities to become more emotionally resilient, to feel more confident about their ability to take on difficult tasks, to feel safe travelling, and to become more competent working within different cultural environments. Like the previous group they also reported that improved English-language fluency, and new values such as a commitment to environmental protection and female independence were also especially valued outcomes of their scholarship experience.

For this group, an increase in status in their workplace was positioned as a particularly important result of their time abroad for this group. They also reported that the new skills and personal competencies gained from their scholarship experience combined with this increased status has opened up a number of new important work opportunities, including greater opportunities to liaise with external consultants, to attend overseas conferences, and to take up consultancy work. Being slightly older, and thus having

carved out a particular career niche before they went away, they were also more likely to talk about the value of the professional networks they made while overseas.

This group reported some similar and some different losses associated with their scholarship experience compared to the participants in the previous chapter. They reported more intense feelings of dissatisfaction with returning to hierarchical working environments compared to the younger participants. They also faced additional difficulties associated with job restructuring during their absence, and were more vocal about the downsides associated with signing up to long employment bonds. Finally, because they were more mature, and therefore possibly more politically conscious when they went abroad, they also talked more about the politics surrounding the relationship between overseas education and national development, raising issues such as the ‘brain drain’, the need for education to be culturally relevant, and the inequities perpetuated by granting scholarships to middle-class, financially established professionals.

The following chapter examines the experiences of the third group of women who I interviewed for this research. These women, still immersed within their study experience at the time that I interviewed them, provide rich accounts of the concrete ways that their more extended research experience associated with a PhD scholarship has impacted on their personal lives and their professional aspirations. For most of these women, this was the second or third time they had participated in a development scholarship scheme. Thus, their narratives provide a number of additional insights into the diverse opportunities provided by these types of schemes.

Chapter Eight - Research in New Zealand

“These people belong to me, and I belong to them”: Courage, community, and internationalism.

Introduction

This chapter explores the experiences of the third group of women who I interviewed for this research. These five women were all completing PhD research in New Zealand when we met. They had all previously participated in a development scholarship scheme, and four of the five were now taking up an NZAID scholarship.

Older, and with more professional experience than the Thai participants, these women tended to position the scholarship experience less as a ‘discrete’ educational event and more as a part of their longer-term career and education trajectory. With considerably more multi-lateral experience, these women also tended to talk less about adjustment and culture shock and more about the challenges and rewards of undertaking a large research project. Finally, having previously participated in a development scholarship scheme, they were also the most likely to frame their motivations and the outcomes of their experience within a discourse of ‘development’.

Despite these points of difference, however, there are also a number of important similarities between the three groups. Promotion, acceptance, and confidence still come through as important motivators and rewards of participation in a development scholarship scheme. An expanded knowledge of culture and social dynamics still consistently emerges as one of the most important outcomes for participants – although in this case arising at least as much, if not more, from their research and fieldwork experience within their own country of origin as from their time spent living abroad. Finally, the familiar challenge of reconciling romantic expectations with academic and professional goals comes through as an important theme; although, for these women, at a slightly later stage of their reproductive lifecycle, the issue of negotiating responsibilities to children and husbands is now a significant additional preoccupation.

Amal's story

Amal was the only participant who had not participated in an NZAID scholarship scheme. However, she had previously taken up another kind of development scholarship to complete a postgraduate diploma in Europe. She comes from a country classified by the United Nations as one of the world's 'least developed' nations. Rates of female participation in higher education within her country, although now rising rapidly, have traditionally been very low. She was the first woman in her village to go to university.

Amal's story charts her transition from forestry scientist to development practitioner. She talks about the ways in which the opportunities she got early in her career to travel and meet with people led to a shift in interest away from "watching the plants grow" towards a concern with the social and economic needs of communities. She recalls her first postgraduate degree, completed locally, as an opportunity to learn more about how history and culture shape the resource management priorities of a community. She recalls her second postgraduate degree, this time completed abroad, as another time in which she was pushed to enlarge her understandings of community – this time by experiencing first-hand the commonalities that exist between diverse cultures on a global scale.

Gender weaves in and out of her narrative; most often as a treatise on the importance and the rewards of bravery in women's lives. It also emerges later in her discussion about life in New Zealand, and the tiredness and frustration that result from her efforts to adjust to the increased domestic responsibilities that have accompanied her decision to undertake PhD study overseas. Finally, in our second interview we talked a little bit about the perceptions people have about the impact of development scholarship schemes. She shared her thoughts on the reception that those who participate in these schemes receive when they return home, and why she thinks the scholarship experience can be useful.

Beginnings

I am one of the first three women foresters.

Many people were supporting us, you know.

Some people they were, not suspicious, but they were scared, because the men, normally, the foresters, they go and camp beside the forest, and they travel long distances, and spend a long time in the camp, whatever the conditions.

You have to accept hard conditions.

So they found it hard.

It is not a matter of not accepting women within the sector, it's about worry.

They were worried that we might not cope with these conditions.

This was before I did my Masters.

But it shaped my life later.

Because the two of us, we struggled a lot to be part of the team that could travel around and visit all the forests, and make a revision plan for all the forests.

And, as a result, the directors, the senior staff within the department, they felt that we were capable.

So me and my colleague, the other female, we actually got a chance to go before the other men within the department,

just because we were challenging the situation.

But my main experience was that that was the best time in my life.

Travelling for month after month after month;

sleeping in the villages;

living in the forest, inside the forest;

doing measurements;

mixing with people.

Because, you know, studying in forestry, you feel that you are sticking to a kind of science.

It's different to mixing with people.

But when I travelled there I found an opportunity to live in the villages.

You spend from the morning till the evening in the forest, working in the forest.

And when I got a chance to mix with communities in the villages,
I started to think that I needed to do something different.
It's not just about forests and plants and things like that.
You have to involve these people.
So, I did my Masters on socio-economic aspects of forestry and agriculture together.
And I did it within a community that had been transferred from the north,
far away from their homeland.
You can feel the people struggling,
and I learnt a lot from them.
They have a different culture.
They have different views.
They have not accepted what has happened to them.
Although they have been living there for maybe thirty years, they are not happy with
being transferred from their homeland where they used to live for thousands of years.
And they don't want to change.

I finished my Masters in a short time, one and a half years, and I got high, high grades.
So I was given a scholarship to complete an international diploma abroad.
The people were from twenty countries or more, and we travelled a lot.
We met people from different cultures.
It was all about mixing with people, and learning from their experiences.
And I started to feel that I was learning similar things from people when they reflected
on their own experiences, as I had learnt mixing with local people within my country.
Actually, I started to lose the sense that I only belonged to my country.
You lose the feeling that you should stick to one culture, one country.
You get the feeling that there is something bigger.
You are connected with anyone,
with any place.
You get my idea?

I remember, when I travelled overseas to work, I would always get the feeling that this
area belongs to me, and I belong to them.
You get that sense of a link between you and the people.

I felt all the time that I should give to them, as if I was in my home village.
Even when you are sleeping,
you start to dream or think about what we can do, together, to do something good for
them.

Coming home

I guess my study was good because it integrated many different things.
I think that if I stuck to forestry only, and I stuck to working in a nursery, watching the
plants grow - the temperature is this, the soils are mixed sand or clay or clay and sand or
measurements, or whatever - I don't think I would have developed that kind of thinking.
I developed because I mixed with people from different cultures,
with different opinions.
It challenged my mind,
my experience,
my thinking,
my views about people.

So when I returned back from my study, I initiated - me and a group of people - we
started a forestry extension project.

We tried to develop a kind of relationship between the communities and forest,
to encourage the people to start their own forests.

We introduced this community concept.

I guess from there, I feel that my life started to change.

I wasn't dealing only with a forestry plantation,
I was dealing with a community's needs, priorities, and involving them with these
resources.

Sometimes I would go to a community, and I would find myself talking about forestry
plantations, certification, and the people were suffering.

They didn't have health services;
they didn't have water,
they had problems with education.

So, I found myself, even if the project was watershed management, for example, or tree planting activities, I would find myself doing many, many other things in a community, rather than what had been planned on paper.

I think, within the community, the most important thing is just to have an open mind, not to go in with a fixed idea.

Like, 'I'm going to do this for you, and I'm am not going to let you be part of it, or change it, or adjust it.'

I think you feel satisfied.

You feel happy about what you did

Because, as a result of your intentions, and your efforts, many positive things can happen,

and in a very short time.

You will always feel that you are part of their lives.

I think that when you start to communicate with people, the people will feel that you are sincere, if you have good intentions and you are willing to help them.

I feel, always, I end with having something positive coming out from any programme I am involved in.

I always feel that at the end of the day,

or the end of the week,

or the end of the month,

something positive has come out of it.

Women and courage

Yeah, my father, actually, he used to think a lot about getting higher degrees, or becoming something special.

You have to be someone who is special.

I remember the people in our community, they preferred the males, the boys, more than the girls, definitely.

But, I was the eldest in my family, and I was always supported by him and told that, I am one who is special,
even amongst my brothers.

So, although we lived in a small village, and I was the first to enter the university in my village, all the time I got support, and I was told that I was someone who is supposed to do something special.

So, I think that helped me to feel brave.

I think, especially in developing countries, the women, they are not brave enough to face reality.

They don't trust themselves much.

And I think this can also influence what topic they select to study.

Some women they select a topic that will be easy, or will not challenge any situation.

Because, I remember, when we were three ladies, and we joined the forestry department, one of us decided to go to the easiest department within the corporation.

She just chose a job that involved doing work in the office, and staying in the capital and never, ever travelling around.

I think some women choose research that is easy, too.

For example, when I did my Masters degree, I choose to go to this community.

I did a lot of reading, and I felt excited about going to this community and seeing what was going on.

But, I don't remember any other women choosing to go to the rural areas, far away.

Very few.

Most of them they went to the factories to see the waste discharge from the factories into the river, or something else in the capital.

And I think that influences their work in the future, too.

Because if they know that you just hide in your office, then they will not put you in a challenging situation.

Sometimes this is the difference with women.

Sometimes you feel the women, they don't present themselves as capable.

Either they are very scared or very protective of themselves, or traditions.

I think sometimes it is an internal feeling.

And that will be reflected in their performance.

And later on they will say, 'she is not capable, she is not working seriously, I am not going to propose her for a scholarship'.

I guess that is fair enough.

When you come and see, and say ‘oh, those people they sent males only for this scholarship’,

or ‘they gave it for males only’,

I think that could be the reason.

Because I met many, many women in my country, and I notice that they don’t send them because they are not capable.

And even if they finish their study, they might not be very useful when they come back.

Who is going to benefit from them if they are stuck inside the office, and the capital?

In my own experience, I didn’t face anyone who tried to stop me, because I am a woman, no.

Sometimes you even get support because you are a woman and you are a pioneer in your profession

Sometimes, you find yourself travelling abroad,

or inside your country you get to represent your corporation alongside those who are higher up than you and twenty years older than you.

But you have to be very brave,

and you have to be capable.

Thesis life in New Zealand

I find, actually, that life here is very tiring.

I feel that, although I am not working, the time is just running.

You spend a lot of time doing work at home,

and shopping,

and helping the kids.

And you don’t feel very productive.

The bad thing is that if you come from a career where you are used to working, and being involved with people, and making some achievements, you are used to having something you can really see.

And then you come here,

and you find yourself isolated in the house,

cooking, and doing the same thing today,

and tomorrow,

and the day after tomorrow.

You feel very frustrated,

and it's depressing.

I think that the traditions we have in a society are very important.

Because, in each community,

in most communities, actually,

they have this problem of the division of labour between men and women, and their different obligations.

Even in my country, you find,

even for me,

I find that for myself, I have a lot of obligations.

For example, my husband, although we are comparatively open or free in terms of understanding this kind of gender stuff, but, still,

women, they have a lot of obligations, a lot more responsibilities than men.

Even if you are a Minister - you are a woman, and you are a Minister - you still have obligations inside the house.

Housework is women's stuff.

It is her responsibility,

even if you are a Minister.

So, you find yourself under a lot of pressure.

You have to do a lot of work.

I think in my country, the people, now, they don't have problems at the community level, but they still have problems at the household level, in terms of women's responsibilities.

Within the community, it depends on your own career, and your personality.

The people they appreciate that their girls are on top,

that their girls achieve high scores during the exams for the universities.

But, at the family level, or the household level, you will find the same obligations or responsibilities.

The men never make any kind of contribution.

The other thing is, in most developing countries, either you have extended family or you have your neighbourhood or friendships.

The people are very close to each other.

So, there is a lot of voluntary stuff between people.

People, I think that they share helping each other.

And because of poverty, also, you can find many people who can work in your home for a reasonable payment.

So women, they can overcome these difficulties.

Not like here.

Education and expectation

I did my study in Europe, and many people in my country talk about, you know, 'those people, we sent them to Europe, and they didn't benefit from it'

'Yeah, they didn't change their ideas'.

'They are supposed to go there, and learn from them how they developed their countries, and how they interact'.

For example, the people in my country like the titles very much.

Like, if you have a PhD, you can't bear to call someone their name and not to put this 'Dr' in front of it.

You can't do that.

That is the hardest thing in developing countries,

if you have status, you like to be treated like a king.

Which is bad.

You can never feel at ease.

People will not be able to exchange ideas, or be brave enough to propose something or do something without giving something back to those who have higher status.

But if the people who go to study abroad, if they are able to get rid of this kind of belief or behaviour or practice, it could be good.

The people will like it.

Are you willing to pick up the good things, or do you want to stick to the old bad things, which the people don't like?

So, this is why, when you go back, they feel that, oh, he is the same,

he didn't change,

she didn't change.

'You went there, but you didn't learn anything.'

'You didn't change'.

They want them to change.

And, actually, people, sometimes, they joke about this.

For example, in my country, people, they say, 'oh, we always give the name John to someone who is European.'

Any European is called John.

So for them, when someone comes back from overseas, he becomes 'Mr John'.

'Mr John is ready for you.'

'Mr John is coming to visit our office'.

They gave him the name because they believe he has become like white people, so, now he is Mr John.

It's funny.

But they don't mean it.

Actually the people, they admire it very much, if you change to become something good.

Filling the gap

For someone who is going to work in the field of development as a planner or a fieldworker, or whatever, I think a higher degree is very important.

Higher education, it will fill the gap - the gap between theory and practice.

Because always with development you have problems.

The theories are very wonderful, they are ideals, but the practice is far behind.

So, to fill that gap, you need to come and do this part, which is a missing part in your career.

You need to find a way to think about how you are going to do this by yourself, when you go and practice.

And you have to relate what you are going to do in the field with what you study and analyse.

I found this very useful.

Now, if I go back to do fieldwork with people or communities, I will have different perspectives.

You need to fill the gap between the theory and practice.

You need to fill this gap in your mind.

Discussion

Amal talks at length about the importance and rewards of being intrepid. She discusses her early battles to gain acceptance as a forester – as a woman who travels and works within a male dominated field – and how these battles opened up a new world to her. She describes these career adventures as the ‘best time in my life’. From a life of science - ‘the temperature is this, the soils are mixed sand, or clay and sand, or whatever’ – she describes the opening up of a new world of culture, community, and expanded professional solidarities:

Even when you are sleeping,
You start to dream about what we can do, together, to do something good for
them.

She talks about her scholarship experience in similar terms: as another opportunity for personal and professional growth made possible by contact with new people and ideas. Amal argues that women must be brave – must overcome their fear and their tendency to be “protective of themselves and traditions” – in order to seek out the sorts of work and education opportunities that will enable them to contribute to their communities and to feel proud of themselves. She urges women not to “hide in your office” or “stay in the capital”, but to take on new work and education adventures that enable them to travel, form new relationships, and to learn about the world. If women are often not chosen for development scholarship schemes, she argues, it is because they are not intrepid enough.

Amal enthuses about the philosophical expansion that is made possible by this scholarship experience, but is also candid about some of the conflicts that educational opportunities can bring about: at the individual level in terms of the acquisition of unwanted new gender responsibilities, and at the societal level in terms of the mixed feelings people have about the responsibilities returning scholars have to their communities. The second story within this chapter echoes many of Amal’s sentiments.

Kriti's story

Kriti's story comes from an interview that I conducted with a woman who was undertaking PhD research through NZAID's development scholarship programme. Her story has many parallels with Amal's. They both started off as scientists, and they both struggled to establish themselves in male-dominated professions that required them to challenge cultural restrictions on women's ability to travel and work outside the office.

Like Amal, Kriti talks about the excitement associated with the early opportunities her career gave her to travel and mix with different communities. She credits her PhD research with giving her the chance to devote an extended period of time to learning about socio-cultural life in one of these communities. It is this opportunity, she relays, that has provided her with much needed insights into the types of dynamics that underpin the change-making processes within a community. Like Amal, and Jom in Chapter Seven, her research experience has also given her an enthusiasm for translating this new understanding of culture and community into positive changes in her participants' lives. She talks at length about her own efforts to find ways to enable her participants to benefit from her research.

Finally, Kriti also talks about the personal difficulties she has had attempting to marry her own expectations of career advancement with expectations that she would start a family. An earlier attempt to complete a PhD faltered when she was unable to negotiate time off to care for her new baby. She is philosophical about the opportunities that may be associated with having to start over, a little older, and with a little more of the clarity of purpose and critical impulse associated with maturity.

Beginnings

I have to begin from my childhood.

We have ten years schooling,

and during that time, actually, my parents they did not care that I should study hard,
so I would just study and play.

But at the end of my schooling, I got the highest mark in the school, and my parents thought, oh, she can do well,
so, then they paid attention to me.

After that they always encouraged me,

both of my parents,
my mother and father.

So I studied science,
and I got a scholarship to go overseas to study for a Bachelor of Science.
Then when I came back I worked in the remote hills in a research centre.
It was very remote, actually.
It takes about sixteen hours in the bus,
and then you have to walk about one hour into the hills.

And at that time, I was the only woman officer.
There were a few women technicians at the lower levels,
but only one woman officer.
I had to go out with this team of people from different disciplines.
We went together to the farm areas, and talked with the farmers.
and then, we would sit down together,
and jointly plan what we should do.
And that was really a challenge for me, you know.

I had to be very positive,
because of the society.
Like, when you go to a village,
it's not that you get the good room.
It's not like that.
You have to stay in whatever place the village people offer you.

I was just learning at that time, and that was my first job,
but, that was a golden experience for me,
because I got to go to the hilly areas, and work with the rural people.
I learnt a lot, because I had that opportunity to observe.
And it was exciting.

And, then, after one year, I got another scholarship to study overseas for a Masters degree.

I did my research on gender roles.

And it was really very, very interesting, because that kind of research had not been done before, so that was really interesting for me.

And because there had not been much research done on this before, they used my research as reference material at the university.

And that was really motivating, encouraging.

But, actually I was never satisfied with what I was doing.

I wanted to do much more.

I wanted to go up.

But sometimes the culture will question you if you want to do this.

It's not only about education, you know, you have your own life.

You have to marry.

It was not my parents who were saying that,

but my female friends and my other relatives.

My parents, they never said those things to me.

My father actually said, 'you are just like my son, so you can do whatever you like. So if you want to wait to do further study, you can do that, but I feel that you should do a PhD.'

He encouraged me.

But he passed away.

So, I had to get married,

I got married.

But I also applied for this scholarship to do a PhD.

I got the scholarship.

And I went away for one year to study some courses,

and then I came back for my field research.

Research and pregnancy

I was doing field research and I became pregnant.

For about six months, I was pregnant, but I was still going to collect material for my field research.

And my supervisor he came to the field area, and he was happy at that time, and he went back, and I was still continuing my field research.

Then I made a request for some leave,
for about five months,
because when I gave birth,
I would need to take a rest,
and I couldn't bring my child back with me,
and take care of him.

So I requested that, but he said no, he couldn't give me that.

So that was the end.

If you can't give me some leave, then I can't finish it.
I can't leave my child here and come there and study.
I felt very unhappy at that time.

It was not only my case.

After, I came to hear from some of my friends that there were two other ladies,
they also left like me, in the same way.

Two other ladies, and the same supervisor.

It was ten years ago, so maybe the situation is different now.

But, you know, I am very positive, because, I thought, maybe God did a very good thing
for me.

At that time, he said, 'No, this is not the time for you. You shouldn't do it'.

And now I have a lot more experience,
and, when you have experience and knowledge,
you are more excited to do something.

But when I was doing it at that time, I didn't have so much experience.

So, maybe, if I had finished it at that time, I would not have learnt so much.

I am more critical now.

I go into detail more.

Second time around

So, then, I worked on a number of different projects, before I came to New Zealand.

And, at that time, I was applying for scholarships because I thought I should get a PhD, so I could go up to a higher level in my organisation.

Because, in my country there are not many women who are highly educated and who are in management positions.

There are more women in education, teaching jobs, but in this kind of development field, it's technical, you know, and there are not many.

And I feel like we need more women.

And I thought that if I go higher up, I felt, maybe, I could promote the issues of women.

It's not easy, because most of the people at management level, they are men, so you always have to go to them.

It's a patriarchal society,

so men want to be on top.

They don't want to be dominated, or led by women.

So, in that kind of environment, it's really difficult to be

in a leadership position.

I always have to try my best.

So, I felt one way was to get a higher degree.

That would be one way, they would feel that, 'oh, she has done a PhD', and that is just one criteria they might use to make themselves feel that

I could move up to management level.

So, before I came here I was working with farmers.

And at that time, actually, there were lots of people who were poor, who only have a small piece of land, or they don't have land.

So, I was worried, how can we help them?

How can they benefit from our programme?

I used to put that question to my team members, in the office.
So, I thought maybe I should do research in that area.

And it's been interesting,
particularly, the social and cultural issues, and how they can really influence
institutions.

Okay, the government has put some policies and laws in place, but when you go to the
area, they have not been implemented properly.

They implement something different.

There are different rules there than these government rules.

They have their own rules.

It is so much influenced by their society, their cultural norms, their customs,
and that has not been considered in the literature.

When I was doing participatory discussions with women in one settlement,
I was very surprised;
one five year old boy was there,
he was accompanying his mother,
and he asked his mother whether, ah, 'mummy, can I go and play with the children in
that house?'

The same house where we were doing the discussion.

I was so surprised,
even from that young age,
they were so conscious that they are lower caste,
and whether they were allowed to go to the house, to another house.
So, you see?

Inferiority is there from a very young age.

I was also from that same community,
so I have my own observations from my childhood,
but it was a surprise that,
even after so many years,
it was still like that, you know.

So, I felt that providing opportunities for income generation is not enough.

It has to be linked with social and cultural aspects, otherwise income generation opportunities will just benefit the rich people, not the poor.

And I was thinking, too, about what can be changed, and what may take a long time to change, you know.

I do not want to create conflict and tension,
but I want to have more discussions with them, and work with the advocates, and discuss these things with the community, with the rich people and the poor people.

First, we have to motivate the rich people that, look, you are also part of the community.
And if the lives of the poor people or lower caste people are not better, then your community is not better.

So, we have to think about how we can convince them.

And, at the same time, we have to develop the capacity of the poor people and lower caste people, so that they can voice their rights in front of the people in the community by themselves.

So, we have to work with both of them, equally, so that they can come together, and they can say, 'I haven't done justice to you',
and the other can say, 'oh, I haven't got rights from you.'

So, both of them have to find a common point where they can agree with each other, and compromise.

If the community is better, then, it's good for them.

They will be a happier community.

I want to try for that.

Actually, when I was doing my field research, you know, one of the communities, they asked me, 'look, you are doing your research, you will get your degree, but what will we get from this research, you know?'

They asked me, and I thought to myself, you are right, so what can we do?

Let's discuss this.

So, we discussed things together, and then, we agreed that, okay, we will prepare a report that they can use for revising their operational plan.

They said maybe this might be a good opportunity for us,

maybe we don't know enough about our community.

They don't have enough people and enough money to organise discussions.

So, I went to these different small settlements, and we talked about their problems,

how they could improve their livelihoods,

what their problems were,

what rules they are not satisfied with,

what rules they should change.

I put all this together in one report,

and the people were happy.

They said, 'Oh, we have never had everything written down in a document like that.'

'Now we have a written document'.

'That means that we can show it to other people, from other organisations, government organisations, we can show it to them, that, this is the data that we have, and we need support in these areas, you know.'

So, they were happy with that.

And also they decided that they wanted to make changes to their executive committee

In the past there were no lower caste people, and there were just two women on that committee.

But, after that general assembly, there was some debate over whether the representatives from the lower castes, from the poor, and from women should be represented on the executive committee.

So, there was a change in the executive committee, and now, they have five women, and then, the lower caste, they have two low caste people.

So, that was an important change, you know.

I felt that was because of my field assistant.

He was really convinced about my research.

He told me that, ah, when I requested him to help me, he thought that, okay, I may not need to help you so many days.

He thought maybe it was just, like, a questionnaire, and he would just need to fill it up, that it would be easy, he said.

And, actually I had just a few questions and I told him, look, this is very flexible.
You don't have to follow each question, but I just want to know these things, you know.
And sometimes he asked the questions, and sometimes I asked questions, and then he
would write, and then sometimes I would write,
because we didn't use a tape recorder.
And he was with me for about three months,
and we revised questions together.

He said, with this research, he had changed.
I was quite happy.
He said that he is also from the same community,
and he said he was poor before, but now he has become middle class.
And he said that he never considered the issues of poor people and women, and lower
caste people before, but with this research, he said that he is really motivated, now.
He said, whenever there are meetings, or a general assembly, I will raise these issues.
And he was the one raising these issues, at this general assembly, that there should be
equal representation for women, low caste people, and that the issue came from the
different settlements, from the people,
that, actually, they were not satisfied, so they suggested this.
So, that was the thing that I was really happy about.
So now he is working with the local NGO.

So, then, we said to the community you make a proposal,
then we can give it to some of the organisations which can give you the financial support
to implement your plan, you know.
And I discussed this with this one international organisation that I know.
I discussed this with them whether they can support them.
And, yeah, they said, yeah, we can support them.
So this NGO has to propose the project and then they can support them, yeah.
So that was a really great outcome.

I am still following up that local NGO,
because it's not just about my research,
because I have spent more than three months, actually, in that field area, so, that means
that I feel that I should do something.
If I can do anything, even though I am in New Zealand,
I am ready to do that.
So, I don't know what will happen to my thesis, but I am satisfied with that.

Discussion

As well as illustrating the challenges many female development scholars face seeking support for decisions to prioritise commitments to family life, Kriti's narrative is interesting because of the level of detail she provides about the impact of her fieldwork experience on her worldview. Her comments about the surprise she felt at discovering that social dynamics in the community where she had grown up, and where she also did her research, had remained unchanged since her own childhood, point to an important consciousness raising function provided by the participation of urban professionals in this type of educational programme.

Like most professionals occupying influential policy or planning positions, these women tend to live in large metropolitan centres, which can promote a degree of alienation from the concerns of communities on whose behalf they are responsible for making policy decisions. So research fieldwork - especially, although not limited to social scientific fieldwork - can provide an important opportunity to connect, or in Kriti's case, reconnect, with the concerns and ways of life of these communities.

Despite the greater emphasis on research-related outcomes, many of the motivations for applying for a scholarship amongst this third group of participants mirrored those reported by the women in Chapters Six and Seven. Frustration and boredom within the working environment remained important motivators:

I was working in a government office, and as you know, when we work it becomes routine.
You come in the morning and go home in the afternoon, and nothing really adds to your knowledge.
I was secluded from new knowledge,
from any opportunity to improve my understanding of the world (NZ4)

The need to upskill in order to meet job obligations was also a powerful motivator. As was the desire to gain greater ‘acceptance’ as a woman in the workplace:

A degree is highly regarded,
So, if we have more degrees, then we can be in a position that if we contribute something, people will acknowledge it.
Because, especially for women,
even with the same intellectual ability,
someone who has a higher degree will be much more accepted than someone without. (NZ4)

This woman stated that she felt that the scholarship experience could help women to become ‘tougher’ in order to challenge gender inequality in the workplace:

Especially in Asian countries, the environment is still a man’s world.
So many times, if a woman with a higher degree comes into a working environment to promote development, men tend to be intimidated, to feel scared, because these women will take their jobs.
It’s always like that.
So, women have to be tougher to be in the same position as men.
If we don’t have knowledge or education, in a meeting, for example, there will be all men talking at the table, while the women just sit and listen.
But with this education, women can go further and challenge men. (NZ4)

The notion that increased education promotes greater control over negotiations with external consultants was also an important theme:

If we are uneducated, we can be fooled.
There are lots of consultants in my country who tend to fool us about things.
If we are uneducated, how can we know?
How can we negotiate?
How can we argue?
So, education is important. (NZ4)

These participants were also more likely to explicitly use the concept of ‘development’ to describe the need for new qualifications.

I saw in my office, in my country, that I think I need to go further, to continue my study to PhD level.
My country is still a developing country, there’s still a development process happening,
so my country still needs many people, the officers, to push their study further, to increase their knowledge.
This is very important for our government. (NZ3)

Participants within this group also talked about the desire for promotion. However, this desire tended to be positioned less in terms of individual gain than the need for increased power to implement professional goals.

I hope at least there is some improvement compared to before I came here.
I don't want to be someone who runs after a position,
but if they give me a new position, and they trust me, then I will be glad to accept that,
because I think that I can give more if I have a higher position.

With a higher position, I can have more access to resources, not in terms of money, but, access to information, and the chance to create teams.
I can decide which team that I want to establish, and which people I want to work with,
because I will then have the authority to do that. (NZ5)

Finally, personal empowerment – the desire for change and growth – while not such a prominent motivator, also featured as an important incentive for participating in the scholarship programme:

I wanted to improve, to get a sense of empowerment of myself as a human being, because there is satisfaction in having achieved something that is worth doing. (NZ4)

Some of the participants reported feeling increased confidence and a greater sense of self-efficacy as a result of their scholarship experience:

Now I feel much more confident,
because I think I can do some things that I didn't realise that I could do, for example, writing skills.
Before I came here, I was not sure whether I could write such a long research report, systematically, and make people understand it.
So, by doing this research and completing it, I feel confidence that, okay, when I come back to my work, come back to my job, then, if I have to do reports or something like that, I can do it.
I proved it to myself. (NZ4)

The ability to finish such a large project, and to deal with the boredom and self-discipline that were required to complete their theses provide the foundations of this greater sense of personal confidence. One woman remarked that she felt that the new personal qualities cultivated by the PhD experience were much more important than the specific knowledge gained:

In terms of myself, I feel that there has been a big change.
The way I think, the way that I convey my thoughts, things like that.
I think it is more about me as someone who has changed through the process,
rather than about getting more knowledge about what is going on in the world.
Because, I think a PhD is a very narrow topic. (NZ4)

In a similar manner to the other two groups of women, these participants had also developed new networks that they hoped to maintain as a source of ongoing professional advice and support:

With education overseas we can also build networks.
So, for example, I did my research here, and I improved my education, but I have also built networks here.
So when I go back, if I need some help, some assistance, I know which person I can ask for advice.
So, if I want to develop a project, I know who to contact.
This is not the main point, but a side effect of having education outside my country.
For example my lecturers have more links to overseas funding organisations.
So, if I am assigned to be a project coordinator working with one of these organisations, and I need information about the best way to do the project, I can contact my lecturers and ask how to deal with these organisations. (NZ4)

The experience had also been an important source of new cultural learning:

I have really enjoyed it. If I didn't have to go home, I would stay here (*she laughs*), and not go back.
People are friendly here, and tend to be humble.
I was surprised, because what I thought was that Westerners would look down on people from non-Western countries,
especially from Asia.
But I didn't find that here. (NZ4)

I'm more wise.
If I compare my life now with my life before, I feel that I have increased my knowledge.
But it's not only my knowledge, but the way that I think, and my interaction with other nations. (NZ5)

I have achieved, from an academic point of view, but also in my life as well.
I have also learnt about my religion, and about the relationship of New Zealand people to religion,
as well as about the Islamic religion in New Zealand.
I have learnt that, in my opinion, New Zealand people generally are religious.
I mean that, in relation to the Islamic religion, they already do what Islamic people do, because they follow the principles of friendliness and kindness, and helping each other.
They already follow the principles of Islamic religion, even though they are not Muslim.
So, I learnt a lot through staying in New Zealand. (NZ3)

As well as new cultural knowledge picked up through living overseas, fieldwork was often also a valued source of new knowledge about social dynamics within communities in their countries of origin. Both Amal and Kriti talked at length about the ways that extended periods of fieldwork back home had raised their consciousness around social and cultural dynamics within communities. Their experiences were mirrored by Jom in Chapter Seven, and by another participant in this group who talked about what her research experience had taught her about culture and the change-making process. Like Kriti, this participant talked about how this new knowledge has given her greater insights into what types of interventions are most likely to be effective within a community:

I learnt a lot from the grassroots people, when I did my fieldwork.
I learnt how to interact with them,
how they see other people from outside,
how to enter the community,
and how to make adaptations.

I learnt a lot about the way that they are struggling for their life in poor conditions;
the way they strengthen their culture,
and how their religion works.
I think it was good for me to increase my knowledge, not only academically, but also socially, culturally, about the community.
And I also learnt how to approach people in local government,
and how to influence them.
So, doing fieldwork was an interesting experience for me. (NZ3)

For many of these women, the fieldwork experience has reinforced their enthusiasm for addressing issues of poverty in their communities. One of the women said that the opportunity to live in New Zealand has also been useful because it has enabled her to observe how the non-government sector deals with issues of poverty in another country. She talked about how these observations have provided her with the motivation to start her own organisation for children living in poverty:

I met a lady here who has opened a non-governmental organisation to help the underprivileged members of society.
Kids can go there to play without having to pay.
So based on that, I am thinking that I will start an organisation - probably not as organised as that institution - but something to give a chance to underprivileged kids around my house to get a kind of education.
Not formal education, but learning English from kids' books,
and learning how to use computers in a very basic way, like word processing,
and things like that.

Hopefully it can give them confidence that they can learn, because I think that it is not that they are not smart, but because they don't have economic resources.

Going to school is expensive, because even a public school, you still have to pay. Some of them can only go for two weeks, because their income is not stable. (NZ4)

Interestingly, while all the women felt that the opportunity to live in and learn more about another culture (as well as their own) was extremely useful within both their work and personal lives, they were also more likely to point to the challenges associated with negotiating this learning so that it didn't threaten cultural identity.

When we do our Masters for two years, that's not long enough for us to gain experience from other nations.

But if it is four years, it's longer, and I don't know whether that changes our way of thinking more.

I don't know.

For instance, now it's easier for me to accept it when people live together with their partner.

It's common here, and maybe, now I will say the same thing when I go home. But before I said, oh, it's not good, that kind of thing.

And now, I can say, oh, that problem, it doesn't matter.

That's why, I feel like, I know now that I can accept things more easily than before, but I don't know whether that is going to be good or bad. (NZ5)

However, most felt that their age made them more adept at negotiating their way through the challenge of maintaining cultural identity:

For me, if a student goes to a Western country when they are not too young, then they can still understand what is good and what is bad, what is our culture, and what is Western.

If they are too young, maybe they will become too Western.

If they are old enough, they can choose.

For me it's better to still have my own culture, but to know that there is something else,

to understand why they do things, without necessarily following those things.

I think sometimes people send their children away too early.

Their mental development is not settled yet, so it's easy for them to become not part of our culture, and not Western, just in the middle.

Not here and not there.

And I think that's a bad thing.

But if they are old enough, they can understand what is good, and what things could enrich their lives. (NZ5)

This participant said that as long as people were not too young, she felt that the positive aspects of the experience outweighed these potential negatives:

I always encourage the young researchers back home in my office
just do a Masters outside,
or a PhD outside.
But you have to choose at least once to go outside,
and see the way other people solve problems.
If they study at home, they will only know one way to do things. (NZ5)

This group of women were also more cautious about talking about the impact the scholarship experience was likely to have on their work lives. Having been away for study before, they were more aware of some of the potential institutional barriers that would limit their ability to make changes in their workplaces:

The higher the level of education, the more this knowledge can be used by society, and by the government,
but sometimes it's about whether you can get the right opportunity.
In my country, it's the opportunity.
If I can get the right opportunity, I can tell people about my findings.
I can explain what I have learned from my PhD to my minister.
But if I don't have an opportunity to do that, I cannot.
If they allow me to meet with them, if they accept my findings, then they can be applied.
But if not, there is no opportunity for me to do that, so I cannot.
But, theoretically, higher levels of education can be useful for the government in developing countries.
It depends on the policy of my government.
I am not the boss.
I am not a policy maker. (NZ3)

Sometimes when we go back, we can be put in a position that does not suit our qualifications,
so it will be a waste.
It has happened many times.
So, my suggestion to NZAID is that if they can, just ask the organisation in government which sends us to monitor whether there has been any empowerment or improvement, so they can contribute something.

Just ask the government, are they given positions that match their qualifications?
Because, if not, many of us who were sent overseas, when they come back they run away.
So, the purpose of giving the scholarship was not achieved.
So, that's why I really want to see that NZAID follows up, not just lets us finish, and, like, for me, I finish my programme and then go home, and stop. (NZ4)

This participant returned again later in the interview to the issue of why scholarship recipients choose not to return:

I hope that this scholarship will not be a waste of time and money, just getting the degree just for the empowerment of oneself.

For some, when they get home,
they don't do the things that they were asked to before they did their degree.
They don't go back to their own offices, they just go to the private sector,
because they can receive a higher income.

But I think it is a vicious cycle, and I don't know how to break the cycle,
because in the government, your income is very, very low, so I can understand
in a way, but in terms of the purpose of the programme, it is a pity because the
government doesn't get anything.

But, to me, it's quite difficult, because we don't know the inside of someone's
heart.

They can promise before they go, but who knows after that.

But I think a monitoring system would work very well. (NZ4)

Finally, it was not just negative job changes (for example restructuring or demotion), or a lack of opportunity to meet with decision-makers that participants identified as barriers to utilising new study skills and knowledge. Promotion was also identified as making it difficult to apply new research findings and skills. As one woman explained:

Sometimes for us, although we have our findings, it's a bit difficult to try to apply them back home.

Especially, because we have our job back home, and we have to go back to our job, but it doesn't mean that we will go back to the same place.

Sometimes we have to move to another place.

So it's a bit difficult to apply things, if you work on this thing, and then you have to move to another section.

Sometimes you can't apply these things in that other area,
or sometimes, you might become a manager, and you cannot do any research anymore.

That's why I said to my supervisor, oh, it will be good if I can apply my knowledge back home.

But we cannot control that.

I cannot control that.

It depends on the top manager.

If they think that now, because of my education, I have to move to another place, it is possible.

But if I can choose, I would prefer to stay in my own place. (NZ5)

The PhD experience was also the source of a number of personal conflicts. As was clear in both Amal and Kriti's narratives, there are often particular issues associated with motherhood and marriage that arise when women take up a scholarship at this stage of their lives. One of the women in the study, who was married without children, said that she thought it was difficult for single women to understand how much harder it is for married women to take up a scholarship opportunity:

I think there is more difference between married women and not-married women.

Yes, there is a difference.

Because married women have children and a husband, and their experience of a PhD is very, very influenced by their role as a housewife, and as a mother.

It is married woman that are struggling, that have more burdens that make it more difficult to achieve their aims and finish their programmes.

Because their role is not just as a student.

Their role is first as a mother, as a wife, and as a student.

They have three roles.

The first is their role as a mother.

They have to take care of their children.

They cannot give this role to their husband, because a mother is a specific role.

The father, also, is a specific role.

And there is also a role as a wife.

Even though the husbands say, 'okay, just study, just study, don't care about me', still, she is a wife.

She cannot avoid being a wife.

Still she is a wife, even though the husband is very kind, and very helpful.

I tried to talk about it with my friend, and she said 'no, it's easy for you to study'.

But as a wife, I have many responsibilities.

I said 'you haven't experienced being a wife,
you haven't experienced being a daughter in law,
you haven't experienced being a sister in law.

If you get married, you will know what it is like.'

But for not-married women, who are just students, just women, and for men, it is different. (NZ3)

However, the two single women within this group talked at length about their awareness and concern over the difficulties married women face. As one of these women commented:

There is a difference between single and married women.

For me, I am single, so I don't have any problems with other things.

I can focus very easily on my research

But I have seen some of my married friends, they have to take care of other things, like their husbands, their children.

They cannot move away from that, because I've seen, also, that the husbands are not really supportive of their wives.

So this is a big problem for someone who is married while doing their research.

We are not talking about when they get back, too, because it will add some more to their difficulties in completing their research.

So that's the difference between single and married women.

But, the other way around, things will be different.

If it's the man who gets the scholarship, they can be like a woman who is single, they don't do anything.

Everything will just be done by their wives.

So that's the situation.

So, that's why I have some friends who haven't continued with their study, because of family difficulties

They just stopped their programme.

I think for women, for married women, I see my friends, they are struggling with combining campus life and home life, wife life.

It's more complicated than their husband's life.

I mean, in our culture, the husband is number one.

He is the head of the household.

And when they come here, and his wife is a student, and he is the dependent, the NZAID dependant cannot work.

They have to stay at home.

If they have children, the husband has to take care of the children.

This is impossible back home, because that's the woman's work.

Men never take care of the children.

And they have to do that, here.

It sometimes frustrates them, and it's a bit difficult for their wives.

I know, one of my friends, we live next to each other, and before she came here, I told her, be careful with your husband.

Tell your husband that he will be the second person at home.

He cannot, he is not the head of the household anymore, because the one who has the money is the wife.

Sometimes it's that kind of thing that frustrates the men.

And, the thing is that when my friend, she is so stressed about her work, and her son kept doing silly things to attract her attention.

And, her husband didn't do anything.

Instead of taking care of the boy, he tried to make himself happy, or something like that.

I say, he has to take care of the family for his wife.

So I said that, and then I felt oh, I am lucky because I am alone.

I don't need to worry about anything.

Like, my friend, if her husband says that, 'no, you cannot go to campus', she has to stay at home.

It's hard for the wives.

But if, on the other hand, if their husband cannot come because of their work, four years is too long to be separated.

Yeah, so it's a bit difficult for the woman student.

If it is the man who studies here, it's okay, because of the work division.

I mean, the man is still the student, the man is still number one at home, and then the wife is still following that man.

But, if the woman is the student, it changes the role, it changes the position.

And sometimes it frustrates me.

And I know some of the husbands who, because of they have nothing to do, they start making problems within the community.

They have nothing to do, and then their mood changes because they are bored. So, if we have a gathering, because they are so bored, they try to say something silly.

I mean, they are bored and they see their wives enjoying themselves in the office, on the campus, and then they say things that you are actually not supposed to say.

Cruel things.

And then they make problems in the community.

And I have experienced that problem.

That's why I told everybody, especially my married friends, be careful with your husbands.

Please tell them that they are not the head of the family when they go abroad. Sometimes the wife says that the important thing is her husband, instead of their study.

And that's difficult. (NZ5)

This participant talked about how she had thought a lot about these issues during her first scholarship period overseas, as she was keen to find out more about how she could combine marriage and further education. It was during her recent second scholarship experience, when she has had the chance to spend time with other female students, that she has found out about the problem of “the husbands”:

When I did my Masters, my friends were men, and it didn't matter, but I think I was just curious at the time, how, if I have a husband, how would he be feeling when I am studying like this, and he is staying at home?

But, I didn't have the answer at that time.

And then when I came here, just two or three months after I came here, I heard about the husbands, and I said, ‘oh, yeah.’

So, I had the answer to my curiosity. (NZ5)

Like Amal, one of the other participants argued that the reason married women faced such hardship was that they do not have the types of support from domestic workers that they would be able to pay for back home:

The beauty of living in my country is that we can ask for help from the helper. So, the women can go to their office from morning till evening, no problem, because their husband will be taken care of.

But big difference here.

Many of my friends, women friends, were really frustrated with the situation because they have to cook, they have to go to the office to do their research, so their focus changes, like, sending the children to school, and other things to do. (NZ4)

However, one woman said that she thought being married had been a considerable advantage when she went to complete fieldwork. She felt that by taking her husband along with her, she had had an important source of practical and emotional support, and importantly, she had also been accepted more easily into the study community:

First, especially the culture there, they accept a married couple, a married woman, more than an unmarried woman.

And the second thing is a technical thing, that if I have to go out at midnight to interview farmers, then it is good if I bring my husband rather than other men.

So, I suggest that you bring your spouse with you to do fieldwork.

It's much better, and more effective, especially in developing countries.

It is better for you, if you are married and you go on fieldwork with your husband or your wife. (NZ3)

In general, for those who weren't married, these participants felt that increased education could potentially have a negative impact on a single woman's relationship chances. However, there was also some hope that this was slowly changing:

It can be a bad thing, because, in Asian cultures, men have to be the leader,
men have to be cleverer,
smarter,
the head of the house.
So it can have a big impact.
But also we cannot avoid the fact that women who have education also sometimes look down on men.
So men get upset because they have been treated that way by women who have higher education.
But I've seen many couples now where the women have higher positions and higher degrees.
It is much more common now. (NZ4)

While there was some ambivalence around the impact on romantic relationships, all acknowledged that the qualification was likely to have a very positive impact on their social status:

It will be a big deal in social settings.
In my country, highly educated people, even if they don't contribute anything, if they put their title on their name card, people will look up to them.
If you look at a name card in my country, the name is shorter than the title.
The name is only one word, but their title will be seven words. (NZ4)

And most were hopeful that their own experience could contribute to the trend towards greater female contribution to and control over the development agenda:

Hopefully, through these scholarships,
more and more women, especially, will get higher education, so they can have more power to participate and have their say in policy.
If they come from a government office they can have more say on policy and decisions, based on women's needs.
Because sometimes development policy is made by men.
So it will not be suitable or will not be a good match with women's needs.
(NZ4)

Conclusion

For these women, studying for a PhD, older and more advanced in their careers, the scholarship experience offers an important opportunity to revitalise their professional practice – reconnecting them with marginalised communities within their own countries, as well facilitating the development of useful new networks of expertise and support. Issues of personal autonomy and independence are still important. However, coming from countries with lower rates of female participation in higher education, courage and autonomy are more likely to be represented as qualities you must possess before you can access educational opportunities, rather than qualities sought through education. The opportunity to become ‘tougher’ and to increase their status within their workplace are, however, still positioned as important career resources for challenging the exclusion of women from positions of influence.

Having studied abroad previously, and with the most established careers, these participants were also the most vocal about the challenges and rewards experienced by those who work as ‘development’ professionals. They talked about their own experiences of the barriers development scholars face attempting to apply their new knowledge within their old work environment, including changes in job roles and the lack of authority to implement research findings. However, this pragmatism was also balanced by a considerable depth of enthusiasm for finding ways to implement the research findings that they had worked so hard to produce.

This group of participants were also the most candid about the difficulties women at their stage of their lives and careers face reconciling the conflict between domestic and study responsibilities. The excitement and optimism displayed within Amal’s and Kriti’s discussions about their early career adventures contrasts sharply with their later conversations about the considerable challenges associated with combining their desire for marriage and motherhood with their desire to undertake further education. One of the single women within this group also provided an important discussion of the relationship disharmony that often accompanies married women’s experience of study abroad.

The following chapter provides a further, more detailed discussion of the themes that have arisen within the narratives of the three groups of women that I interviewed for this research. It also provides an opportunity to examine the wider relevance of these themes in terms of the theoretical debates outlined in Chapter Three, as well as offering a discussion of how these findings compare to the conclusions of previous empirical research reviewed within Chapter Two.

Chapter Nine - Discussion

Introduction

Thai academic, Sinith Sittirak (1998) opens her book *The daughters of development* with an interesting aside on the ways that, as a professional woman, her participation in an international scholarship scheme had been the first time that she had been required to think about her work as ‘development’ work:

Personally speaking, it was the first time that the term ‘Women in Development’ touched my life directly. Unlike many other women involved in the various development schemes, I did not receive funding for developing projects, such as weaving, chicken raising or making artificial flowers; instead, funding came in the form of a scholarship provided by a project with the intent ‘to utilise social sciences and related fields to guide women’s development in Thailand’. (Sinith1998:2)

Like Sinith³², the majority of the women in this research do not see themselves as ‘development’ workers. They have diverse professional histories, and some, through the scholarship process, as well as through other work and personal commitments, have come to see parts of their lives as within the orbit of the goal of ‘development’. In many ways my own research reproduces this same tendency to expect these women to understand their experiences within such terms.

However, I have also made a case for broadening our understanding of these terms in the belief that this will assist us to generate more comprehensive pictures of the impact of educational aid and educational experience. In my exploration of feminist post-development perspectives, I have sought guidance in the construction of a flexible analytical framework capable of acknowledging and utilising multiple genres of scholarship within the field of gender, education and development. As I have discussed in Chapter Three, I have developed this framework through identifying the strengths of key theoretical perspectives within this field, and incorporating these strengths into a set of five principles or ‘prompts’ designed to stimulate debate on the different possibilities available for interpreting the ‘outcomes’ associated with women’s participation in development scholarship schemes.

³² Thai authors are generally known by their first name rather than their surname. In keeping with this convention I have referenced their first name in the text, and provided both names in the bibliography.

From a development policy perspective, this approach is useful because it provides broad insights into the diverse range of interests and outcomes that must be considered, if not reconciled, in the process of making decisions about the future of this type of aid. From a development theory perspective it is also useful because it responds to the call to engage with postmodernist critiques of the over-determinism and arrogance within the history of the modernist development studies project. This analytical framework leaves open possibilities for encountering the unexpected, and the previously unexplored. It offers what Gibson-Graham (2006:8) call “weak theory”: theory that “refuse[s] to extend diagnoses too widely or deeply”, and that “welcomes surprise, entertains hope, makes connection, tolerates coexistence and offers care for the new”.

The five principles, as outlined at the end of Chapter Three, that I have used to guide data collection and analysis are as follows: 1) the need to examine women’s own interpretations of their educational experiences; 2) The need to produce ‘holistic’ explorations of women’s experience that examine all dimensions of their lives; 3) the importance of examining both the intrinsic and instrumentalist gains associated with higher education for women in developing countries; 4) the need to remain cognisant of the role of education as an institution responsible for reproducing social privilege; and 5) the importance of exploring the individual losses and conflicts associated with higher education and how individuals negotiate these challenges.

1) The need to explore women’s own interpretations of their educational experiences

This principle has shaped both data collection and analysis in important ways. As many of the authors discussed in my earlier chapters have argued, convincingly, what is still missing from our (largely statistical) accounts of the lives of educated women within Third World societies is their voices. In the use of extended personal narrative I have sought to foreground the value of creating more opportunities to hear from, and not just about, the ‘scholarship girl’. This commitment is an important one given the quantitative and instrumentalist bent of both traditional research in the field of higher education and development, and literature exploring the experience of the ‘international student’. The tenor of much of this literature has limited the opportunities for women themselves to reflect upon or contribute to the direction of research on the scholarship experience.

As I have argued, I have also sought an engagement with development theory that does not too tightly map out frameworks for analysis in advance of any engagement with participants' lives. Ultimately, this project attempts to seek a balance between the desire to enable these women to determine the shape and scope of their own educational narratives, and the desire to situate their experiences within the broader development debates that have shaped the history and politics of their engagement in this type of educational opportunity.

In the spirit of this principle, I want to open my chapter with a discussion about how the participants themselves understood the value of this research on their scholarship experience. I believe this is important because a) I think in many ways it explains some things about the overall 'flavour' of participants' narratives: particularly the tendency to focus considerably more on the 'benefits' of study abroad than the 'losses'; and b) because a number of participants expressed the hope that I would have this conversation. It was clear that, for many, this hope was an important motivator for participation in this research.

In many ways the emphasis participants placed on the positive aspects of the scholarship experience is consistent with the considerable social status attached to this type of educational opportunity - as a 'reward' for professional or academic excellence. It is also consistent with the ways that the Thai women within this research, in particular, came to understand the opportunity as a 'test' of their autonomy and resilience. When I conducted my interviews (especially those in Thailand) it was also evident to me that a number of participants felt that this was an opportunity to publicly record the gratitude they felt (or thought they should express) for being granted a scholarship by NZAID.

Whether or not I aspired to occupy such a position, it was clear that having had limited connections with New Zealand or New Zealanders for a long time, for some participants, I inevitably came to represent all things 'New Zealand', including NZAID. Some comments from participants that reinforce this perception are:

All in all, I think it was a very good opportunity.
So, you can tell the New Zealand government that at least there is one person who truly appreciates their efforts, right (Th3).

Yeah, I would like to say thank you.
I'm very grateful for the New Zealand scholarship that lets students from developing countries study in New Zealand. (Th12)

I would like to say thank you to the New Zealand government for giving this scholarship to the Thai government to make our country more developed, and better.

So, you are New Zealand's representative. (Th11)

The emphasis on positive outcomes was also associated with an awareness amongst a number of participants that NZAID is no longer offering these scholarships to Thai professionals. Several participants expressed disappointment over the loss of this opportunity, arguing that there is still a strong need for these scholarships, because their country is not yet 'developed':

I know that New Zealand hasn't got more money for Thai students, because New Zealand thinks that Thailand is quite developed.
Because, our Prime Minister right now, is quite proud of our country.
We don't want to beg, you know.
We can give to other countries, like, Laos or Myanmar, or something.
But, still, normally, as I told you, not many people study abroad, because we can't afford the study fees, or the living costs overseas.
And I think that this scholarship is very useful for the Thai government.
Maybe not in all cases, but, in my case, I think it's made our country better. (Th11)

I hope that you continue giving, because a country like my country needs it.
The Prime Minister said we were rich already.
Maybe it's true.
I don't know.
He's rich, but I'm not rich. (Th4)

I just want to thank you, NZAID, for giving me this opportunity to go to New Zealand to learn a lot.
And I hope that in the near future they are going to provide this kind of scholarship to Thai people again.
We are not yet a developed country. (Th15)

I think that your research will help to get scholarships for Thailand in the future.
I think that someone misunderstands - maybe the people in the government.
I don't know what they think, but the reality is, we still need them (Th8).

For some, particularly those who had studied in New Zealand twenty years previously, a considerable degree of nostalgia surrounds the scholarship experience. Playing a starring role in their 'passage to adulthood', their quest for greater autonomy, and/or their pursuit

of greater professional authority and expertise, the experience is universally represented as an incredibly challenging but immensely rewarding opportunity. As outlined in Chapter Two, previous research on the experiences of international scholarship students points to the considerable hardship associated with study abroad: the challenges of adjusting to a new language and a new culture, the loss of traditional support networks, social isolation, and relationship conflict (Barker, 1990; Bhalalusesa, 1998; Furnham, 1997; Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Ward and Seale, 1991).

This body of literature also identifies specific challenges faced by female students: the extension of their domestic roles, the pressure to act as ‘models’ of cultural integrity, and the difficulties renegotiating gender roles within family and romantic relationships (Bhalalusesa, 1998; Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985; Kenway & Langmead, 1999; Leonard, 1998; Wild & Scheyvens, 2000; Wright, 1997). It is in part because this challenge is so difficult that the participants attach such value to having mastered it. The pride attached to having ‘survived’ the experience has a particular resonance for these participants, because they report that, as women, they are less likely to be encouraged to travel, to ‘adventure’, and to take on difficult challenges.

Burnapp (2006:82) argues that narrative research on the international student experience has traditionally encouraged students to cast their experience in terms of ‘crisis’ and ‘recovery’, as an enabling strategy to give them a way to create a coherent structure and sequence within their stories. If this is true, then I think it must also be acknowledged that the considerable personal hardship experienced by these students - possibly particularly by female sojourners - also motivates women to understand their experience in such terms. For all the women in this study, the scholarship experience is understood as an important and challenging life event; and as an opportunity in which the ‘benefits’ *have* been outweighed by, or in indeed have emerged from, the ‘crises’ or ‘losses’. The following section explores the most important benefits that women report having gained from the experience.

2) The need to produce ‘holistic’ explorations of women’s experience that examine all dimensions of their lives

This second principle acknowledges the need to challenge the traditional tendency of education and development researchers to be overly focused on women’s lives as

mothers and/or workers. It acknowledges the need to consider women's multiple roles and responsibilities. This principle provides a useful place from which to begin to flesh-out a picture of the benefits associated with participation in a development scholarship scheme. In my use of extended narrative I have sought to produce more 'holistic' pictures of women's educational experience that encompass all aspects of this phase of their lives, not just their experiences as mother and/or worker, or their experience as 'student'. I have chosen to position participants first and foremost as individuals making an important life decision - a decision that is made in the context of their unique histories and circumstances, and a decision that will likely shape various aspects of their personal and professional futures in complex ways. By starting with 'whole lives', I hope to create space for some of the broader humanist, feminist and poststructuralist ideas about the impact of education on the 'self', as well as utilising traditional scholarship on the impact of education on women's experiences as mother and/or worker.

With this in mind, I have drawn up a table of the most significant 'benefits' attached to the scholarship experience (Table 3), as identified within the previous three chapters. I have chosen to represent this data in table format to provide an opportunity to tease out some of the ways in which different dimensions of the scholarship experience contribute to these 'benefits'. In this manner, I hope to emphasise the value of taking a 'holistic' approach to educational experience that does not just focus on the 'academic' dimensions of the scholarship experience.

I have listed the six most important dimensions of the scholarship experience, as identified by participants within this research, as: 1) Academic experience; 2) immersion within another culture; 3) living and spending time alone; 4) gaining time and space away from your job; 5) forming new friendships; and 6) gaining new romantic experiences. I have then divided the table up to show the impact of these different dimensions of the scholarship experience on women's 'personal' lives and their 'work' lives. I have also included a column devoted to the wider 'social' impact of participation in a scholarship scheme.

In line with the critiques of the focus on women as 'reproducer', the first category is expanded to become the 'personal' – encompassing the self, as well as the self in relation to family and friends. The category of 'work' retains a degree of analytical primacy.

Table 3. Benefits of participation in a development scholarship scheme

	Personal	Work	Wider social impact
Academic experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pride associated with sense of achievement and competence - Increased confidence and resilience as a result of coping with academic failure and difficulties - Increased status in family and community - Greater sense of purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased competency in job - Promotion and increased responsibilities - Increased income - Increased status in workplace - Ongoing professional support from former supervisors/lecturers/NZ organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political impact of commitment to new ways of working – less hierarchy, more debate in relationships - Provides models of female competence and ‘success’. - Contribution to New Zealand economy and society associated with research results.
Immersion within another culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater knowledge of other cultures – sense of connection and ‘worldliness’. - Becoming more reflexive about own cultural values - Becoming more flexible and adaptable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater commitment to value of collaboration in workplace - Greater commitment to value of international collaboration - Becoming more adept cross-cultural communicators - New, ongoing opportunities for professional development in form of international conferences and liaison with consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater commitment to internationalism and value of multi-lateral collaboration - (Re)affirming commitment to key aspects of own culture - Political impact of new values – commitment to environment, questioning materialism, female independence. - Greater opportunities for negotiation with consultants leading to sense of greater ‘control’ over development process.
Spending time alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeling more autonomous and resilient - Learning to enjoy time alone - Feeling safe to travel alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Becoming more confident about taking on large projects, alone. - Being given opportunities to travel abroad alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing alternative models of womanhood that include positive images of women alone.
Time and space away from job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to think about purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting time to learn and think about the ‘big picture’ of policy problems 	
New friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important source of cross-cultural learning - Learning about youth culture - Learning about own culture - New sources of personal support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important source of ongoing professional networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing cross-cultural relationship building
New romantic relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities to become more assertive - Questioning ideas about love and marriage 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political impact of new ideas about love and marriage.

because it is a central focus within participants' narratives, as well as scholarship programme objectives. Finally, the last category – 'wider social impact' is designed to provide an opening for later discussion on the broader social and political implications of this type of educational experience.

It is important to note that all these categories are, in reality, not mutually exclusive. The table is designed to provide an accessible rather than an exhaustive overview of the 'big picture' of scholarship experience. However, in attempting to create this 'snapshot', I am compartmentalising life in a rather artificial fashion. Nevertheless, the table does provide a number of important discussion points that can be used to point to some of the important commonalities of the scholarship experience. The following section examines how both 'intrinsic' and 'instrumentalist' approaches to educational experience can assist us to interpret these 'benefits', as well as some of the 'losses' associated with participation in development scholarship schemes.

3) The value of considering both intrinsic and instrumentalist aspects of the impact of higher education on women's lives

This principle was developed in response to the critiques of the historical tendency of education and development researchers to focus too much on the ways that education for women can be used as an 'instrument' to promote 'national development': the ways that it can assist women to more effectively perform their roles as reproducers and/or producers. Feminist/humanist writers within the 'education for empowerment' tradition have challenged this tendency, pointing to the importance of recognising the wider role education can play in promoting conditions of 'human flourishing', and, in particular, in enabling people to challenge inequalities that limit their freedom and quality of life. These writers argue that education is a good in itself, that it has an 'intrinsic' value that needs to be recognised and explored within education and development research.

I agree with this critique; however, from a policy point of view, I think there is value in using an approach that provides room for both intrinsic and instrumentalist approaches to educational experience. Instrumentalist approaches that focus on how education for women contributes to a skilled workforce or improvements in the wider health and well-being of families and populations speak to valued development policy priorities that need not be sidelined just because they have traditionally received too much focus.

While research in development studies need not (some say *should* not) be determined by policy priorities - which, as researchers, are inherently restrictive because they necessarily require a (political) commitment to certain fixed ways of understanding a ‘problem’ in order to create a coherent, operationalisable plan to ‘solve’ it - I do believe that there is considerable benefit for both researchers and policy makers of creating research/policy that utilises each other’s insights and attends to each other’s concerns. Thus, this section explores how both intrinsic and instrumentalist approaches within the field of gender, higher education and development research might understand the ‘benefits’ outlined in Table 3.

I think there are important signs from an ‘education for empowerment’ point of view that the scholarship experience makes a valued contribution to increasing women’s sense of personal autonomy. The Thai participants, in particular, identify the scholarship experience as an important opportunity to cultivate the courage that is central to becoming more emotionally autonomous. The opportunity to move away from traditional systems of family support offers opportunities to ‘test’ and develop one’s resilience, to experience new types of intimacy, and to develop new support networks. In learning to live and travel alone, and to form new friendships and romantic relationships with people from different cultures, the participants report an increased sense of ‘worldliness’, and an expanded sense of connection to an international community. Immersion within the values of another culture and participation within a more critical academic environment also appear to encourage greater reflexivity, and a clarification of personal and professional goals. All of these things make participants feel wiser, more competent, more resilient, and more intrepid.

It was interesting to note that it was the participants from the country with the highest levels of female participation in higher education (i.e. Thailand) who reported the greatest benefits associated with the scholarship experience as a tool for personal ‘empowerment’. The PhD students were less likely to identify increased courage as an important motivator for participation in a scholarship scheme. This is partly due to the fact that they had all been overseas to study at least once if not twice before, so felt they were now fairly independent. However for Amal and Kriti, especially, I think this is also likely to be related to the fact that they both come from countries with much lower rates of

female participation in higher education and the workforce. In these strongly patriarchal cultures, they report that they needed to become fairly courageous and resilient in order to get access to education in the first place. Okeke-Ihejirika (2004:176) labels tertiary-educated women within these societies “the survivors”, given “the range of social weapons that keep young girls from aspiring to or staying in school beyond the primary and secondary levels.”

Both Kriti and Amal’s stories about how their families, and their fathers, in particular, had helped them to feel brave or ‘special’ enough to take on the challenges of studying and working in strongly male dominated environments are typical of accounts of women who experience educational success in very patriarchal cultures (Bhalalusesa, 1998; Quinn, 1994). What is significant about the Thai participants’ emphasis on the desire for greater autonomy - considering the fact that these women live in a society where (for middle class or elite women at least) they experience greater freedom to make choices about their educational futures - is that it reinforces the arguments made by many feminist education theorists about the inadequacy of using educational access in itself as a measure of women’s empowerment. Even for the Masters level students, most had attended good universities, were financially independent, yet felt personally and professionally constrained by cultural restrictions on their emotional independence. To be a Thai woman, as Jom argued, is to be like a “frog in a coconut shell”, “overprotected by family”, and therefore discouraged from becoming courageous or independent. It is a situation she argues, that leaves you “dependent” on your parents and “vulnerable to the outside world”.

Anthony (1992:45) argues that in Thai society boys are granted a freedom to ‘paiteaw’, or ‘roam’, that is denied to girls. Female autonomy is discouraged on the grounds that women are considered to be “weak, indecisive, emotional, dependent, and less productive than men” (Suteera, 1990:7). Women are said to be “chaang thao lang” or “the hind legs of the elephant”³³: the followers, not the leaders (Panit, 1999:3; Sawadee, 2004:162; Van Esterik, 2000:55). There is also considerable cultural emphasis on the need to ‘protect’ women in order to ensure that they remain ‘virtuous’. It is traditionally

³³ Van Esterik (2000) points to the challenges associated with interpreting proverbs. While this particular proverb is most commonly interpreted as an assertion of women’s inferiority, she argues that some Thai feminists have contended that it could also be understood as a statement about the ‘complementarity’ of men and women, or even women’s superiority: After all, feminist writers Srisambhand and Gordon (in Van Esterik, 2000:45) argue, “the elephants hind legs are the first to move”.

said, Sawahit (1999:9) argues, that to have a daughter is like “having a toilet in front of one’s house”: meaning that “unless one keeps the toilet clean, it can be defamed”. As a result there is much greater emphasis on the importance of women following the rules of ‘kalatesa’, or polite or ‘appropriate’ behaviour (Van Esterik, 2000:36). In this social context, the scholarship experience provides many women with a sought-after opportunity to crack the “coconut shell” and to roam: to travel, to learn to enjoy their own company, to trust in their ability to cope with the new and unfamiliar, and to expand their sense of community and belonging.

This finding points to the importance of acknowledging that there are other aspects of the scholarship experience, not just ‘higher education’ in general which play a particular role in facilitating women’s autonomy. I have argued that as well as their academic experience, the experience of living within another culture; the opportunity to live and travel alone; getting time and space away from their job to reflect on personal and professional goals; new friendships; and new romantic encounters need to be recognised as equally important and valued aspects of women’s scholarship experience that promote greater resilience and autonomy.

As most of the Thai women reported, this new sense of autonomy had important ongoing benefits in their personal lives. They feel stronger, more adventurous, more comfortable travelling alone, and more confident in their ability to solve problems and make important decisions in their life. They no longer feel so much like a “young girl” (Th6) in their families, and some, like Nok, have a sense of the ways that the increased social status attached to their scholarship provides them with opportunities for negotiating greater equality within romantic relationships.

In many ways, the narratives of the Thai participants read like exemplars of the kinds of rewards PhD student Amal argues are associated with women seeking out opportunities to travel and mix with new communities. Amal and Kriti, in Chapter Eight, both talk at length about the ways in which their early professional lives challenged them to travel, and to become braver and more intrepid. Amal, in particular, admonishes women for their tendency to be “scared” of working outside the office, or the capital. Women, she argues, “don’t trust themselves much”, and as a result, they are often “not brave

enough to face reality”. This lack of courage, she argues, has a considerable professional cost: “if they know you just hide in your office, then they will not put you in a challenging situation”.

Indeed, there is clear evidence that this new sense of confidence and resilience has also translated into important improvements in the work lives of participants. In order to survive in male dominated environments, one of the PhD participants argues, “women have to be tougher”: they need the confidence and status to challenge situations where “there will be all men talking, while women just sit and listen” (NZ4). It is evident that the scholarship experience not only improves women’s own sense of self-worth and self-efficacy, but that it can also result in an increase in their status within the workplace. This is in part due to the social status attached to gaining a qualification abroad, and also due to the fact that their time abroad provides them with certain skills and competencies that are highly valued within their ‘globalising’ organisations. English language skills, and skills in cross-cultural negotiation are identified as two of the most significant of these competencies.

Many of the Thai participants reported that their employer has given them new opportunities to represent their organisation, to liaise with external consultants, to do consultancy work, and to attend conferences and take up government appointments overseas, as a result of their scholarship experience. They report that as well as their improved English-language skills, and their increased cross-cultural competence, they believe that their employer’s perception that they have ‘proven’ that they can handle big challenges on their own is an important reason why they have been offered these new opportunities. These opportunities to work internationally are significant in the context of the comments made by participants about the traditional reluctance of women to travel alone. This reluctance is likely to severely restrict the professional opportunities women have to represent their organisations abroad or contribute to international knowledge-sharing forums.

Many, although not all, of the Thai participants reported receiving a promotion that they believed was linked to their overseas experience. However, several participants also said that they thought it was difficult to attribute their promotion directly to this experience. For the several who had picked up consultancy and/or lecturing work in the private

sector as a result of their overseas qualification, this was often very lucrative. This increase in consultancy work is interesting in the context of comments made by Inoncillo (1997) about the ways that, in the Philippines, the scholarship experience had initially led to a larger loss of income for male students because they were more likely to be involved in consultancy work, and they had to give this up while they were overseas. It would be useful to further examine whether the scholarship experience does indeed increase the opportunities open to women to participate in this well-paid, and high status source of extra income.

From a more instrumentalist ‘human capital’, ‘education for production’ perspective it is clear that the scholarship experience has made a valuable contribution to women’s role as ‘producer’. Almost all of the participants reported feeling more competent within their jobs as a result of the new skills and knowledge they have gained abroad. This research also shows that the scholarship experience provides women with greater opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration: for negotiating with foreign consultants; for attending conferences abroad; for networking and collaborating with overseas professionals; and for representing their organisations both at home and abroad. All of these opportunities increase the presence and contribution made by women to international policy and research forums. In these ways, the scholarship experience makes an important contribution to improving the global leadership capacities of women.

The scholarship experience also appeared to provide participants with ongoing sources of ‘up-skilling’ and professional development. The participants relayed that new networks overseas and in New Zealand continue to provide them with ongoing sources of support, professional advice, and opportunities for information-exchange. The Thai participants also stated that their improved research skills, and improved English have been crucial in enabling them to keep up to date with international standards and gain ongoing professional development in the form of English language conferences both within and outside of Thailand. For the PhD students, in particular, their research experience was also often an important source of new knowledge about their own culture and the ‘change-making’ process within disadvantaged communities.

All of the research students said that they appreciated the opportunity to have the time and space away from their jobs to think and learn more about the ‘big picture’ of the problems they work on on a daily basis. They also reported that improved presentation skills and a greater ability to think more ‘strategically’ were key outcomes of the experience. In summary, this research provides a range of evidence that the scholarship experience presents participants with opportunities to become more reflexive, more competent and more collaborative practitioners.

However, benefits associated with the scholarship programme were also accompanied by a number of difficulties. The majority of participants reported finding it frustrating readjusting to a more hierarchical working environment. Several also relayed having to take on unwanted new responsibilities associated with English-language translation. The pressure to keep up English competency, despite only having intermittent opportunities to practice, was also reported as a cause of stress. Job restructuring during their absence was a source of career disruption for some, and the cause of demotion for one Thai participant. Finally, employment bonding was an ongoing source of frustration for those Masters students who aspired to continue their education to doctorate level.

As well as experiencing a range of work-related difficulties, participants also talked about some of the personal adversities that arose out of their scholarship experience. A number of women in the PhD group experienced stress associated with the ways that the study experience had (temporarily) altered gender roles within their family, enlarging their domestic responsibilities. Others commented on how their time abroad had changed their romantic expectations in a manner that had made it more difficult for them to find a suitable partner. Finally, participants expressed a degree of concern over environment and ‘quality of life’ issues that could presumably have affected some aspects of their satisfaction with life on return. As well as considering the individual ‘losses’ associated with participation in development scholarship schemes, it is also important to attend to debates over the wider social ‘losses’ associated with this type of aid. The following section explores this issue.

4) The need to remain cognisant of the role of education as an institution responsible for reproducing social privilege.

This principle acknowledges the importance of attending to the critiques writers within the ‘education for submission’ school of thought provide of the ways that the scholarship experience can entrench existing social inequalities. As is noted throughout this project, development scholarships are becoming an increasingly unpopular form of educational aid, in large part due to concerns over the ways that this aid is believed to be ‘captured’ by elites.

One of the most controversial outcomes associated with development scholarships is the ‘brain drain’: or the tendency of overseas-educated scholars to emigrate and take their much needed skills with them. This was not a significant issue within this research, primarily because the Thai students were required to work off long bonds (up to 6 years) when they returned, limiting their capacity to emigrate. It may also be related to the fact that (apart from the one Thai student who was undertaking further study overseas) I only conducted research with Thai returnees who were living in Thailand. I was not able to make contact with returnees who are no longer resident in Thailand, because NZAID only keep a record of the initial application address supplied by former students.

It is perhaps significant to note, however, that two of the five PhD students did discuss the idea of returning to New Zealand. Certainly, several of the Thai students mentioned having friends from other countries, other former NZAID scholarship students, who had emigrated to New Zealand. The issue of the impact of bonding on the opportunities and also the desire of participants to emigrate is an significant one that warrants further exploration. It would be useful to examine the diverse range of employment and bonding arrangements that surround the participation of students from different countries in NZAID’s scholarship schemes; and to explore how bonding affects personal and professional outcomes for returnees, as well as the extent to which it may encourage ‘brain drain’.

Beyond the issue of the ‘brain drain’, it is perhaps inevitable that the scholarship experience entrenches a degree of middle-class privilege at the individual level. Because these scholarships aim to provide professional development for ‘policy shapers’ - those who are in a position to affect change at an institutional level - and in most societies

these roles are occupied by an educated middle-class, then providing further educational opportunities to this group is obviously likely to increase the privileges they enjoy. Certainly, I don't think my research provides any compelling evidence that, at the individual level, the scholarship experience challenges the financial or social privilege enjoyed by middle-class professionals.

Indeed, it provides some evidence that the scholarship experience entrenches it. While the participants are cautious about linking promotions to their scholarship experience, there is some evidence (certainly in the context of consultancy work) that it does result in an increase in income, as well as an increase in their 'status' within the workplace and the wider community. However, critiques of increases in middle-class income and status also need to take into account the unequal access women generally have to these resources. The interplay between class and gender privilege and inequality is complex.

Cook (1998:259) argues that in the Thai context, urban middle-class women's advantages "have more to do with class than gender equality". Certainly, there are stark differences between the 'choices' available to educated middle-class urban women and those open to poorer rural women who have had little or no access to education. While, as highlighted in Table One (pg.38), Thai women make up 51% of university graduates, they are also over-represented amongst those who have little or no access to education. Two thirds of those who experience illiteracy in Thailand are women (UNESCO, 2004:264).

In traditional Thai society, education was exclusively linked to participation in monastic life - an opportunity still restricted to boys and men³⁴. As Sawadee explains, in pre-modern Thailand:

[O]rdination was crucial for the literacy of ordinary man. While the literacy provided at the temple was meant to be used for religious purposes, it could also be used for reading texts dealing with astrology, herbal medicine, folk arts, and so on. (Sawadee, 2004:54)

³⁴ Thai Buddhism prohibits women from becoming monks. It emphasises the subordination of women, who are considered to have inferior karma because they failed to earn enough merit in a previous life. Unlike men, therefore, they are not allocated a recognised religious role (Cook, 1998: 255; Sawadee, 2004: 51). This exclusion has important social and financial implications for women. While men are able to enter the monastery briefly for a period of several months in order to earn merit, women instead must commit to financially supporting their parents for a lifetime in order to earn sufficient merit (Cook, 1998:266; Suteera et al., 2001).

Until relatively recently, she argues, women's 'education' has been restricted to training in the domestic arts:

One of the old traditions retained up until the early Bangkok period was a simple ceremony associated with birth. A newborn baby would be placed in a basket lined with a mattress. Thread and needles would then be placed next to a girl baby and stationery next to a boy. This was to signify that when grown up, the boy would be scholarly and in turn have the chance to become a noble. Accordingly, while boys entered monastic education to be prepared for their productive work, the girls would be taught how to run their households and take care of their husbands (Sawadee, 2004:56)

Despite the general exclusion of women from educational opportunities, like in many other societies, elite women were able to negotiate a degree of access (Panit, 1999:3). This access was expanded during the 'modernisation' process:

Thai modernisation was elite-led, and elite women benefited from forms of modernisation introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century. ... In the late nineteenth and twentieth century elite women agitated for their access to education. (Cook, 1998:256)

Despite the introduction of secular primary education in the 1930s, opening up possibilities for girls to access basic education, the preference for educating sons has continued to limit the educational opportunities open to poorer women living in rural areas. By entering a *wat*³⁵ boys are able to save their parents the cost of room and board, thus reducing the expense associated with their education. As a result, parents are still more likely to support educational opportunities for boys. As Walter (2004) relays:

[E]ven with almost universal access to primary and lower secondary schooling in Thailand today, the Buddhist educational system provides a crucial upward avenue of education for the sons of poor families; one which is still unavailable to girls. (Walter, 2004:434)

A number of authors also argue that while increasing the opportunities open to urban elite and middle-class women, the modernisation process has generally undermined the livelihoods of the majority of Thai women, who are based in rural areas and work in the agricultural sector (Sinith, 1998; Cook, 1998). Declining incomes and the loss of land in

³⁵ Buddhist temple

rural agricultural communities has led to an increase in pressure on women, in particular, to migrate to cities in search of employment³⁶ (Pawadee, 2002:1; Suteera et al., 2001:85). Without education, Cook argues, their options are limited:

An uneducated and illiterate teenage girl seeking employment in Bangkok has very limited options: domestic service, factory work, labouring or prostitution. Some sex industry work is not only much the better paid option, in many respects it can compare favourably with conditions in other available occupations. This limited choice contrasts sharply with the case of an urban woman of the new middle-class, who benefits from an extended education and, at least until recently, has had the opportunity to choose from a number of well paid prestigious jobs in comparison to her rural counterpart. (Cook, 1998:259)

I think that there is mixed evidence that in ‘Freirian’ terms, the scholarship experience promotes opportunities for ‘conscientization’ around issues of class inequality. Two of the Thai participants did argue that people from poorer communities and those with less access to education should be given greater opportunities to participate in scholarship schemes. One of these participants also reflected at length on her surprise at encountering income inequality in New Zealand. Although neither of these participants analysed the existence of this inequality (in Thailand or New Zealand) in explicitly ‘class’-based terms, or demonstrated an awareness of how class may operate differently within these diverse cultural contexts. I think there is clear evidence amongst the PhD students that their fieldwork experience, particularly for those who had the opportunity to spend an extended period of time in a rural community, has raised their awareness around issues of poverty. These participants were more likely to explicitly position poverty as evidence of ‘class’ inequality.

Apart from the fact that the PhD experience offered the opportunity for a more extended period of fieldwork in an unfamiliar community within their home country, the difference between the PhD students and the other two groups is also likely to be related to the fact that the Thai students more commonly studied science and business subjects,

³⁶ The financial benefits to rural families associated with female migration are substantial. In one year, Cook (1998) reports, it was calculated that female sex workers sent home to rural communities eight times the amount of money the government had spent on rural job creation schemes designed to stem migration. Suteera et al’s (2001:275) study of Thai women who had emigrated to Germany, often ending up in the sex industry, highlighted the intense financial pressure these women are under to support their families in Thailand and pay for the education of their siblings. In the move away from a subsistence economy, and with the loss of land, one participant in this study argued, families are struggling to live on rural wages: “In the past villagers could live on their own and didn’t need to buy food. But they have to buy food now and buy other things they want. They don’t have the money. People get hired to harvest rice for 30bht [NZ \$1.20] per day. Oh, really, what can you eat [with that]?” (Suteera et al, 2001:44)

which offered less opportunities for analysis of poverty-related issues. This difference could also reflect the shift in scholarships policy away from funding the sorts of broad-based degree programmes experienced by the early Thai participants towards the more specialist postgraduate training, and ‘poverty elimination’ focus within the contemporary NZAID scholarship programme.

However, it was notable that this greater awareness of issues around class inequality did not necessarily translate into a cognisance of how this inequality operated in an important aspect of their own lives – support from domestic workers. In particular, while the ‘extension’ of women’s domestic roles that women experienced or witnessed in New Zealand did tap into some quite strong feelings around gender inequality, it didn’t, in general (with the exception of Amal), encourage these women to reflect on the class inequality that made it possible for them to have a “helper” (NZ4) back home. Indeed domestic support was largely positioned as an example of the ‘advantages’ women experienced within their culture, rather than as evidence of income inequality that forces uneducated women to take up low-paid employment like domestic work.

Krishna Sen (1998) provides an interesting discussion around how this issue has played out within the Indonesian feminist movement. She argues that in a society highly segregated along class lines, the participation of middle-class women in the workforce has been strongly reliant on the labour of poorer women who take up work as domestic servants. In contemporary Indonesia, she asserts, “the erosion of functional (work-related) and social (status-related) divisions between the sexes is necessarily premised on inventing new divisions between the classes” (Sen, 1998:57). This new axis of inequality, she maintains, does not feature prominently on the Indonesian feminist agenda:

The very selective inclusion of domestic responsibility into the gender equity agenda is understandable when we take into account the Indonesian professional women’s ... domestic arrangements. In middle- and upper-class households, the physical work is performed largely by domestic servants. The female (and male) civil servants who draft government policies do not themselves have to undertake domestic chores. Indeed, the professional woman’s ability to establish herself in a career depends on the continuation of inequalities of wealth and power, which make it possible for her to be released from domestic work. The professional women’s claims to equality with men of her class do not require a man to share domestic work, since the burden of domestic labour can be passed on to the displaced rural poor and to female members of the urban working-classes. In contemporary Indonesia (unlike

many Western contexts)³⁷, housework cannot be described as unpaid appropriation of women's labour. Rather it represents one of the least regulated and lowest-paid sectors for the appropriation of working-class women's labour. (Sen, 1998:45, footnote added)

There was evidence of conscientization around one issue related to middle-class privilege, and that was the issue of materialism. McGrath (1998) and Butcher (2002) also comment on the ways that the New Zealand educational experience encourages students from Asian countries to challenge aspects of materialism in their societies. To some extent this concern, as well as the reported heightened awareness of environmental issues, are perhaps fairly predictable outcomes associated with enabling professionals from Asian megacities to spend time in a country with comparatively low population density and lower levels of pollution.

However, the participants argue that these new values are a significant outcome of their experience - an outcome that has extended beyond a concern with individual 'quality of life' to concrete commitments within their professional lives. Fah's comments about the differences between an 'American' and a New Zealand education, and the ways that she felt the former encouraged materialism, while the latter tempered it, are also notable in the context of the comments I have made earlier about the need to recognise the impact of 'extra-curricula' aspects of the scholarship experience. Many of the participants also expressed a strong desire to participate in less hierarchical, more democratic working environments. Several of the Thai participants provided examples of how they had attempted to put this into practice within their workplace.

Ockley (2004) contends that students returning from overseas have played an important role in increasing the popularity of democratic ideals within Thailand. While he is cautious against overemphasising the influence of this small group of individuals, arguing that it should be interpreted in the context of a long-standing cultural commitment to political participation, he argues that the impact of returned sojourners has been tangible:

Students studying abroad and then returning with new ideas were a crucial part of the 1973 uprising. These students went abroad, were exposed to other

³⁷ It is perhaps a little problematic to lump all Western countries together in regards to this issue. The reliance of white middle class women on the labour of female domestic servants from ethnic minorities has been the source of considerable debate within US feminism in particular.

cultures and ways of thinking, and returned to teach in Thai universities. So Western ideas became an important force for change. (Ockley, 2004:14)

Importantly, Ockley (2004) asserts, these new ideas, at least in urban areas, have included a greater commitment to so called ‘phudi’ styles of leadership (based on ‘virtue’, and associated with women), and increased dissatisfaction with traditional ‘nakleng’ styles of leadership (based on ‘power’ and associated with men). This move, he contends, opens up greater possibilities for increasing women’s leadership and political participation.

The issue of women’s leadership and political participation is an important one. Due to high levels of female workforce participation, Thailand has long been held up as an exemplar of ‘gender equality’ within Asia (Cook, 1998:254; Van Esterik, 2000:43). It is argued that in traditional Thai society women enjoyed a degree of status and financial autonomy due to their participation within agricultural production (Ockley, 2004:56; Van Esterik, 2000:43). Thus high rates of contemporary workforce participation are believed to be carried over from the status women enjoyed as ‘producers’ within this era. However, as a number of authors have pointed out, this economic status has not translated into political power for women (Bulbeck, 1998:22). Indeed, Ockley argues that this economic power within the household has traditionally been seen as ‘complementary’ to the political power held by men (Ockley, 2004: 56). Women’s political representation remains extremely low (below 10%) within decision-making bodies at village, provincial and national levels; as well as within the judiciary and the upper levels of the civil service (Ockley, 2004; Walter, 2004:429).

Amara (1992) argues that tertiary-educated Thai women have played an important role in lobbying for an end to social and legal barriers to women’s political participation:

Thai women continue to be limited in their ability to move into powerful leadership positions, both by the lack of precedent for their taking such a role and by legal restrictions. The movement of women into higher levels of educational achievement and professional occupations has created an expanding group who are concerned with economic, social and political equality. (Amara, 1992:79)

Certainly almost all the participants within this research reported seeing the scholarship experience as an opportunity to challenge gender restrictions on women’s workforce participation and personal autonomy. There was not the sort of strong evidence that,

like in Quinn's (1994) study, this had translated into an broader feminist commitment to work to 'improve women's lives'. However, even in the absence of explicit feminist commitments to challenging gender inequality on a wider scale, it is clear that the scholarship experience does provide a number of important and sought-after opportunities to cultivate women's leadership capacities.

Despite the fact that these women most certainly experience a degree of class privilege, they also act as important 'role models' of female courage and success. These women are, as Okeke-Ihejirika (2004:3) argues in her own research on the experience of tertiary educated African women, a "small minority whose life chances ... greatly affect and define the prospects of the entire female population". Here I would agree with Goldsmith and Shawcross who argue that while these sorts of educational opportunities act as important routes to leadership within Third World societies, they are particularly valuable to women:

We would not argue that access to higher education in the West will be the answer to bringing about continued development in the third world, nor the answer to the inequality of women. But higher education, and particularly higher education overseas, remains a criterion for political power, influence, reward and status. So long as this is the case, lack of access for women, and particular third world women, will remain a further barrier to their full and active participation in shaping the future of their own societies. (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985:5)

Beyond the issue of the 'status' attached to these opportunities, I have argued that the scholarship experience provides women with important opportunities to cultivate leadership qualities such as autonomy and courage, as well as expanding their sense of membership of, and authority within, the international policy community. Thus, the issue of how the scholarship experience impacts on existing class and gender privileges is a complex one. The following section examines another area of controversy surrounding the impact of development scholarships: the issue of maintaining 'cultural integrity'.

5) The importance of exploring conflict and negotiation associated with the scholarship experience

This principle acknowledges the value of the poststructuralist emphasis on examining the ways in which individuals negotiate the conflicts between competing ideas (or discourses)

about how they should experience and understand their educational experience. This emphasis on conflict and identity construction is useful in the context of this research, because, as outlined in Chapter Two, previous researchers have identified study abroad as a time of intense reflection upon, and renegotiation of, values and familiar ways of being. And, as I have argued, this process has particular implications for women because they have had less experience of and encouragement to take on these types of challenges.

One of the most important conflicts to arise out of the development scholarship experience is the problem of how to negotiate between the old and the new: to be adventurous and open to new ideas, whilst also maintaining a degree of ‘cultural integrity’. Stivens (1998:19) asserts that, in contemporary Asia, women understand this problem as the challenge of “how to be female, and modern, but not Western”. She (1998:19) argues that concern over the destruction of women’s traditional gender roles and the impact that this will have on the ‘Asian family’ has become a central site for the expression of more general anxieties about the impact of modernisation and ‘development’. In this context, she claims, women face particular pressure to demonstrate how their engagements with institutions of modernity, like higher education, can be reconciled with a commitment to their culture.

This pressure to show how they have avoided the ‘Westernisation’ associated with higher education is particularly acute for development scholarship recipients because their educational experience requires an extended period of immersion within a Western culture, and because the colonial heritage of the schemes marks them out as a ‘tool’ of ‘cultural imperialism’. Nash (1997), discussing the role of development scholarships within Africa, argues that returnees often experience a sense of cultural alienation that is the source of considerable disappointment within their communities. Development scholarships, she argues, promote not just a ‘brain drain’, but a “heart drain” (Nash, 1997:81):

Students who do not return are quite literally lost to the community but even the students who do return are likely to disappoint their community by encouraging Western values at the expense of local African values, such as accepting monetary wealth as a measure of success. (Nash, 1997:87)

Moshi (in Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004:179), also discussing the African experience, asserts that the cultural burden on educated women to prove that they have avoided ‘heart drain’ is

so acute that they often come to experience higher education as a “double-edged sword”. As she summarises:

Although formal education can be used to raise women from the shackles of poverty and inequality, it can also make the same women victims of constant criticism for abandoning cultural and traditional values. (Moshi in Okeke-Ihejirika, 2004:179)

Thus, women who participate in development scholarship schemes face the dual challenge of demonstrating how their educational experience will contribute to the wellbeing of their ‘nation’, as well showing how they have managed to negotiate this experience in ways that preserve their cultural integrity as ‘women’.

Most of the women within this research did report returning with a number of new value commitments that they identified as ‘Western’, including commitments to more debate and less hierarchy within workplaces, and greater personal autonomy for women. However, participants generally identified relationships with other international students as an equally important source of new cultural learning. As a result, while the opportunity to learn about life in a ‘Western’ culture may, for some, have initially been a motivator for applying for a scholarship, participants were more likely to represent the outcome of the scholarship experience as an opportunity to learn about and become more reflexive about cultural difference (and similarity) in general.

Rather than experiencing the scholarship experience as the source of a new ‘binary’ that forces them to choose between the values of home and the values of the ‘West’, participants report that the experience is a source of greater ‘internationalism’. As Amal argues, the opportunity to mix with and form friendships with professionals from a range of other countries encourages you to abandon the notion that you “should stick to one culture, one country”. The Thai participants reported that the opportunity to learn about the cultures of other ASEAN nations, in particular, has made an especially valued contribution to their personal and professional lives, opening up important opportunities for ongoing bilateral and multilateral collaboration in the region.

Almost all of the participants argued that their scholarship experience has given them a heightened awareness of their ability to ‘choose’ how they want to engage with Western culture. The experience has challenged preconceived ideas about Western cultures -

both good (for example, lack of poverty) and bad (for example, racism). For some it has also encouraged a reflection on the diversity within the category 'Western'. New values such as environmentalism and 'living simply' were represented as 'New Zealand' rather than more broadly 'Western' values, and indeed were explicitly contrasted to perceptions of US values, in particular. It was especially interesting to note the ways in which a number of the Thai participants represented the New Zealand 'model' as a sort of exemplar of the 'middle way' or 'sufficiency economy' advocated by their monarch³⁸.

Thus, these participants actually came to understand New Zealand not as a more 'modern' - in opposition to their more 'traditional' or 'underdeveloped' - society, but as a culture that has adopted a version of modernity that provides an alternative to their experience of 'over'-development. Leaving aside the issue of the accuracy of this perception of New Zealand, the fact that the participants understood their experience of New Zealand's 'simple' life as a resource for critiquing the model of Western-style development adopted by their countries unsettles easy assumptions about the scholarship process as incubator for commitments to Western materialism. It was also interesting to note the ways in which the 'simple' New Zealand lifestyle was interpreted as providing a degree of inoculation against the tendency for scholarship returnees to exploit their newfound status.

In addition, it was clear that the greater cultural reflexivity that participants gained as a result of the scholarship experience was equally likely to encourage them to reflect upon the 'strengths' of their own culture. Certainly Fah, in particular, reported that becoming more 'Western' has been a distinct job asset for her because she now works for a multinational corporation. And almost all the participants reported that increased knowledge of English and the 'culture' of 'Westerners' had been extremely useful in their

³⁸ The concept of the 'sufficiency economy' is attributed to Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Described as a form of populist 'localism' that has become increasingly accepted in the wake of the economic collapse of the late 1990s (Connors, 2003:431; Hewison, 1999:11), the concept combines an emphasis on economic self-reliance, with Buddhist notions of 'moderation' and ethical conduct (United Nations Development Programme, 2007:30). A highly revered monarch, the King's ideas on the sufficiency economy have become increasingly interpreted as providing a 'middle path' that will enable Thailand to reap the rewards of globalisation whilst avoiding the economic instability, inequality, materialism and environmental destruction that have come to represent the country's experience of market economics. The 'sufficiency economy' was presented as the theme for Thailand's 2007 Human Development Report to the United Nations, and Thai leader General Surayud Chulanont has announced that it will be the guiding principle of Thailand's 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan 2007-2011 (Surayud, 2007:iii).

jobs. However, the majority appeared to interpret these as important new ‘global’ skill sets rather than as a commitment to ‘Western values’ - skill sets that were equally likely to provide them with greater opportunities to communicate and collaborate with their ASEAN neighbours as with Western organisations.

On the whole, the participants were pragmatic about how to reconcile the fact that the status attached to the scholarships might widen the social and economic gap between them and the communities that the scholarships are set up to benefit. As one PhD student argued, she didn’t want to be someone “who chases after a position”, but if she was offered a promotion on her return, then obviously she would take it because it would provide her with much greater opportunities to implement her research findings. Amal’s discussion on the ways that returnees become “Mr John” (ie. become like a European person) also touched on these issues. She argues that education abroad can actually unsettle the status of educated elites, because returnees (potentially) bring home a commitment to more collaborative and less hierarchical ways of working. At least this is what local people hope for, she contends. People expect to see some change, she maintains, some unsettling of old hierarchies. They joke about how Western you have become, she states, but “they admire it very much, if you change to become something good.”

Significantly, all thought that their respective age when they went abroad was one of the most important resources that enabled them to pick up new ‘good’ values whilst also retaining their cultural integrity. Those who were younger felt that their youth gave them an ‘openness’ that would diminish with age, while those who were older felt they had the necessary maturity and stability of world view that was lacking in the young. Notably in the Thai case, participants also believed that the fact that they came from a respectable or ‘good’ family meant they could be ‘trusted’ to make the right decisions about values.

The other major conflict to be negotiated by participants was around family and relationships. The belief that overseas education leads women to question gender roles (Chen, 1999; Davis and Dodds, 1993; Ghosh and Wang, 2003; Goldsmith and Shawcross, 1985; Kenway and Bullen, 2003; Misun Kim, 1999), as well as provides new sources of conflict associated with attempts to reconcile family and professional

responsibilities (Bhalalusesa, 1998; Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985; Wild & Scheyvens, 2000; Wright, 1997) is certainly borne out by the experiences of the women within this study. PhD research, in particular, because it generally occurs at a later stage in women's reproductive years appeared to be a particular site of conflict over negotiating roles as wife, mother, and student.

There is mixed evidence to support the idea that the scholarship experience is also the source of longer-term conflict within romantic and family relationships on return. Certainly there was some evidence that in questioning established gender roles, in particular the emphasis on female dependency, some women did feel that this experience had made it more challenging for them to establish romantic relationships. In the Thai case, this appeared to be particularly an issue for the women who were the youngest when they went abroad, and had participated in a scheme nearly twenty years ago. Study abroad for women and a commitment to female autonomy would have been more unusual then, and potentially more controversial when they took up their scholarship, perhaps having a more tangible impact on their romantic lives.

Nok's discussion about how she had used the scholarship experience to strengthen her autonomy within her relationship also points to a degree of diversity in the ways that women negotiate the impact of this educational experience on their romantic lives. This may, at least in part, be due to changing gender roles making female independence more acceptable and valued; and is also likely to be due to a degree of individual difference in how much power women have within their relationships to make significant life decisions. Bhalalusesa's (1998) research on female postgraduate international students in the UK also points to a degree of diversity in how much success women have negotiating the support from their spouse that is needed for them to take up a scholarship.

The issue of how study abroad impacts on romantic relationships is a very sensitive one, and one which participants with partners appeared to be reluctant to discuss in any depth, perhaps for fear of appearing disloyal or ungrateful to husbands who are understood to have made a significant 'sacrifice' in leaving their jobs, and braving the stigma attached to 'following' their wives overseas. Certainly, it appeared that the single woman who provided an extended discussion of the problem of 'the husbands' felt she

had the ability, and perhaps the responsibility, to talk about relationship conflicts in a manner that was not open to her married friends.

The longer term impact or ‘fallout’ of this conflict is not well explored within my study, primarily because all of the women who experienced these problems were current rather than returned students. The one Thai participant who had brought her child to New Zealand also brought a relative with her to look after the child; so, as a result, she had not experienced such a high degree of role conflict. Indeed, she felt that being a mother had given her important opportunities to mix with teachers and other parents at her child’s school, and thus feel more integrated into the community during her time in New Zealand. She also felt that the experience had had positive effects on her child’s life: providing improved English, new friends, and an increase in status within school on return home.

How do these results compare to the findings of previous researchers?

There are a number of themes that arise within this research that support the findings of previous researchers within this field. As noted, this research confirms a number of conclusions related to the experiences of female international students in general, and female development scholars, in particular, as outlined in Chapter Two. It supports the idea that, for women, the scholarship experience generally provides important opportunities to reflect on issues surrounding gender identity and gender inequality (Chen, 1999; Davis and Dodds, 1993; Ghosh and Wang, 2003; Goldsmith and Shawcross, 1985; Kenway and Bullen, 2003; Misun Kim, 1999). It also points to the scholarship experience as a valued opportunity for women to increase their professional status. This study identifies this increase in status as a valuable tool for opening up greater opportunities for women to occupy positions of influence within their organisations - as managers, but also in liaison roles with external consultants, and as representatives of their organisations within international forums.

This research also substantiates previous research findings that point to the scholarship experience as an important opportunity for women to cultivate the confidence and personal autonomy (Davis & Dodds, 1993; Ghosh & Wang, 2003; Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985; Kluger, 1996) that is necessary for them to challenge gender inequality within their personal and professional lives, and to feel more confident about taking on

leadership roles. It further identifies increased cross-cultural knowledge, and greater experience of travel as important outcomes responsible for providing women with the confidence and skills to participate in international decision-making forums. This project identifies the wider overseas study experience, not just the academic programme provided by development scholarships as providing important opportunities for professional development for female recipients.

This thesis also supports previous findings that show that for female students who have children and/or who are married, the study abroad experience can be a significant source of role conflict and a degree of relationship discord (Bhalalusesa, 1998; Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985; Wild & Scheyvens, 2000; Wright, 1997). My findings also differ in some ways from other New Zealand studies that examine the experiences of female international students. Certainly the women within my study did not report experiencing the sorts of adversities Quinn (1994) discusses in relation to conflict with husbands or extended family on return, around their desire to work or be part of public life. In the Thai case, in particular, I think this highly likely to be related to the much greater participation of Thai women in the workforce compared to the Solomon Islands. It may also be due to the cultural emphasis on a “conflict-free” discourse, which, Shasni (2002:16) argues, makes middle-class Thai women reticent to talk about these sorts of issues.

None of the women within this study reported the sorts of conflict McGrath (1998) talks about in relation to choosing to become ‘stay at home mothers’, as none had chosen this as an option. The women generally also did not report a significant amount of ‘re-entry’ conflict with their families of origin. While several of the Thai students did say that they found it initially stifling having to move back in with parents on their return, many also said that their parents had been very supportive of their decision to study abroad, and because they had other siblings who had also studied overseas - and in some cases their parents themselves had an overseas education - their parents were ‘used to’ the changes associated with overseas education. The longer-term impact on relationships with partners, children, and family of origin is an important one, and would perhaps be especially suited to a longitudinal study. Longitudinal research generally provides greater opportunities to build the sorts of rapport necessary to talk in depth about these very personal issues.

This research also provides support for a number of other conclusions reached by studies on international student experience. It confirms, for example, the importance of friendship networks with other international students as a crucial source of support (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Kashima & Loh, 2006), and contributes a further exploration of the longer-term impacts of these friendships on the personal and work lives of returnees. In particular, it identifies these networks as an ongoing source of professional support as well as opportunities for bilateral cooperation. This research also verifies various findings on the experiences of scholarship students. It supports findings that show that possession of a scholarship can be the cause of anxiety, as well as a degree of social isolation due to the need to maintain high levels of academic performance (Kenway & Langmead, 1999; Okorocha, 1997; Sodjakusumah, 1996).

Finally, this project endorses a number of previous findings that relate specifically to NZAID scholarship recipients. In particular, this research supports other studies that show that study abroad provides an increase in status and new work opportunities for scholarship recipients. It endorses Inoncillo (1997), Quinn (1994), Davenport and Low's (2004), and Strachan et al.'s (2007) findings that the majority of NZAID scholars believe the skills and knowledge they gained as part of their scholarship experience have been very useful within their jobs. My research further substantiates Strachan et al.'s (2007) findings that this is the case even where recipients study courses with a high 'New Zealand' content.

This thesis also upholds a number of previous conclusions about work-related adversities that can arise as a result of participation in a development scholarship scheme. In particular, it confirms Inoncillo's (1997) findings that job restructuring during absence can be an issue for returnees. The New Zealand-based PhD participants who were contractually required to return to government jobs also expressed concerns about being allocated to positions that did not fully utilise their new skills on their return. This was a fear that was realised by some of Strachan et al.'s (2007) ni Vanuatu participants. The Thai participants did not report experiencing particular problems with this issue, although they did encounter other problems associated with having to work off long employment 'bonds'. Butcher's (2002) research also confirms 'bonding' as a source of

frustration around the inability to take up new employment opportunities. My research further identifies bonding as a restriction on the desire to pursue further educational opportunities, particularly PhD study.

Finally, perhaps the most important contribution of this research is that it recognises the diversity of experience amongst female development scholars. While the majority of research on international students focuses on the experiences of students in late adolescence, and tends to gloss over areas of cultural difference, this research explores some of the ways that age, level of study, type of academic course, stage of career, stage within reproductive life-cycle, and ideas about women's roles within country of origin shape the outcomes associated with women's participation in development scholarship schemes.

Implications for future research on NZAID scholars

There is a need for more research on the outcomes associated with NZAID's development scholarship programme. The influential Ministerial Review of New Zealand's Official Development Assistance programme that occurred in 2001 identified a lack of research on scholarship outcomes as a significant area of policy concern for NZAID (Ministerial Review Team, 2001:61). However, a number of researchers have pointed to the challenges associated with conducting this sort of research. Locating returnees is identified as a particular area of difficulty (Brabant et al., 1990:388; Davenport & Low, 2004:9). Kluger (1996) argues that the paucity of evaluative data on scholarship outcomes is a global phenomenon; commenting that international scholarship schemes "usually lack the financial resources to track their alumni, or to track them in more than the most superficial way" (Kluger, 1996:40). Given the challenges associated with this type of research, several recommendations are made about the most effective way to address this knowledge gap.

Firstly, there is a need for greater acknowledgement and utilisation of existing research on the experiences of NZAID scholars. It is notable that the 2001 Ministerial Review of New Zealand's Official Development Assistance programme did not consider any findings from studies on the impact and benefits of NZAID's scholarship schemes. The authors of the report explained this decision by stating that "[t]here have been only a few tracer studies undertaken", and therefore "[t]here is no way to gauge how these students

contribute, if at all, to defined human resource development needs, other than anecdotally” (Ministerial Review Team, 2001:61). Despite the inaccuracy of this statement, given the existence of in-depth studies by Quinn (1994) and Inoncillo (1997), there was also no effort to include any anecdotal evidence about benefits; despite the fact that the report made extensive use of anecdotal material about the perceived negative outcomes associated with the schemes.³⁹

The section of the report that talked about scholarship outcomes concluded with a comment from one High Commissioner in the Pacific, who stated simply that “there is no evidence that they (scholarships) can make a difference or bring a New Zealand flavour” (Ministerial Review Team, 2001:61). Comments such as these contrast sharply with empirical findings provided by this thesis, as well as research by Quinn (1994), Inoncillo (1997), Davenport and Low (2004), and Strachan et al. (2007) that identify a number of positive enduring outcomes associated with the NZAID scholarship programme.

Thus, future decision-making around the value and direction of NZAID’s scholarship programme would benefit from the existence of a comprehensive review of existing research on the outcomes associated with this programme⁴⁰. This review could identify both the positive and negative outcomes identified within this existing body of research. It could also provide a forum for more in-depth discussion of the significance of these outcomes. Davenport and Low’s (2004:140) research report, for instance, provides an important discussion on the ways that the ‘brain drain’ associated with scholarship programmes in the Pacific needs to be situated within larger debates over the meaning and value of Pacific migration. This review could also provide useful comparative material on the ways that cultural context influences the operation and outcomes associated with NZAID’s scholarship schemes. The 2001 Ministerial Review focused almost exclusively on comments made in relation to scholarship students from the

³⁹ The only benefits associated with these schemes identified within the report were potential remittances from those who failed to return, and a quote from one man who stated that “there are heaps of politicians I have met that were educated in New Zealand” (Ministerial Review Team, 2001:59). The authors identified the main reason for continued support for these scholarships as the fact that countries were still requesting them. (Ministerial Review Team, 2001)

⁴⁰ Davenport and Low (2004) do provide such a review; however, it is not the focus of their research, so as a result, it is presented as a list of bullet pointed highlights, rather than an in-depth discussion of the issues raised in each research report.

Pacific Islands. Yet, Davenport and Low's (2004) research in the Pacific identified some quite different issues associated with return than those identified in Inoncillo's (1997) research in the Philippines, or my own research in Thailand.

For instance, Davenport and Low (2004) commented on the ways in which New Zealand's special immigration relationships with a number of Pacific nations likely encourage a high rate of 'brain drain'. They also reported (anecdotal) evidence of low rates of bonding enforcement. However, this situation contrasts with the experience of the Thai women in my own study, who had been required to work off very long (up to 6 year) bonds. The issue of bonding, and the outcomes associated with this practice may vary between partner countries, and this would be a valuable area for future research.

Another important area for future research is that relating to women's specific experience of return. As noted in Chapter Two, Davenport and Low (2004) found that women expressed significantly higher levels of ambivalence about remaining in their country of origin in five years time. This finding has important implications, considering the much smaller number of tertiary-qualified women within the Pacific. This research also reported that women were less likely to have found that the skills they gained during their scholarship experience have been useful within their jobs. The reasons for these gender differences, and the possibility that there may be a relationship between these two findings is not explored within this study.

Both Quinn (1994) and McGrath's (1998) studies, however, found that female returnees experienced a degree of frustration with lack of career progression on their return. In Quinn's (1994) research, she argued that this was the result of sexist barriers to women's career advancement, and that this was a factor in the decision of women to take up further study abroad. Further research is needed to examine whether indeed 'brain drain' may be more of an issue with NZAID's female development scholars, and what factors might contribute to the decision to emigrate – temporarily for further study, or more permanently for personal and/or professional reasons.

Certainly, as discussed in Chapter Two, previous research suggests that female international students, and female development scholars in particular, face a number of frustrations and difficulties associated with settling back into families and communities

(Brabant et al., 1990; Kluger, 1996; Martin, 1984; Quinn, 1994; Strachan et al., 2004). Kluger (1996), in her review of women's participation in nine international scholarship schemes, concludes that female returnees also often suffer from professional isolation, because of the lower numbers of women in professional positions in most countries. Thus, she contends that scholarship programmes should allocate a proportion of overall scholarship funding to continued professional development programmes designed to provide female returnees with ongoing access to professional networks. Certainly, the gendered outcomes of return for NZAID scholars requires further examination.

Finally, several suggestions are made in relation to the methods and scope of future studies on the experiences of NZAID scholars. Firstly, to provide scope for comparative work, it would be useful to establish a consistent format for tracer studies. Secondly, it is recommended that there is a clear rationale established for the type of data collection method utilised within tracer studies. In particular, the small size of New Zealand's scholarship programme, and the challenges associated with tracking participants make the use of quantitative methods particularly challenging. With such a small potential participant pool (in some countries, only one student may be allocated a scholarship per year), and the difficulties associated with tracking down returnees, quantitative studies (and particularly survey research) are likely to struggle to get the sort of response rates or participant numbers to meet conditions of research rigour.

Thus, except in specified special cases – where, for example, all students, across all programmes are surveyed during their study (when they are easy to locate), or an alumni office in a country with a high number of recipients has a particularly good method for keeping track of returnees – qualitative methods will provide the most useful tools for examining NZAID scholarship outcomes. Longitudinal studies, in particular, would provide an especially useful method for examining the impact of scholarship experience.

Longitudinal studies that included one pre-departure (in New Zealand), and at least one post-departure interview would have a number of advantages. Firstly, by conducting a pre-departure interview the researcher would get the opportunity to build a rapport with participants that would make it easier to keep in touch and keep a track of their location for follow-up interviews. Secondly, conducting both pre-departure and post-departure interviews would provide valuable insights into if, and how, participants' expectations for

use of new skills on return are met. If they are met, then the second interview could identify what factors support ‘successful’ use of skills. If they are not met, this second interview could identify the reasons why, pointing to the sorts of barriers returnees may face in attempting to apply research findings or using new skills when they return home.

Consideration should be given to the timing of follow-up interviews. Interviews conducted in the first few months after return are likely to provide valuable insights into the sorts of challenges students face readjusting to life at home (“re-entry shock”). These challenges are likely to make a significant contribution to decisions returnees make about whether they want to stay. On the other hand, studies conducted several years after return are likely to provide a better insight into the longer-term impact of the experience on work and personal life; although they are likely to lack the immediacy of interviews conducted prior to or just after return, where participants are able to remember more in-depth details about what they learnt and to reflect in more depth about the impact they think it has had on their personal and professional capabilities. My research provides a good example of this, with the current PhD students providing the sort of in-depth reflections on the impact of their research experience, for example, that are lacking from the accounts of returnees who are no longer immersed in the experience.

It is also recommended that the scope of these tracer studies be fairly broad. Davenport and Low (2004) restrict their measurement of ‘development impact’ to four measures: successful completion of programme of study, return to home country, “use of skills learnt during study in paid employment”, and the “use of skills learnt during study in civic/private life” (Davenport & Low, 2004:13). Yet, as this, and previous research has highlighted, many of the ‘extra-curricula’ aspects of the scholarship experience (cross-cultural knowledge, English skills, new personal and professional networks, greater confidence and autonomy) are equally valued and important professional outcomes of the scholarship experience. Thus, a narrow focus on ‘skills acquisition’ is likely to reduce our ability to access information on the complex benefits and losses associated with participation in these schemes. Using a less structured interviewing approach which gives students greater opportunities to reflect on their perceptions of the positive and the negative outcomes associated with participation provides greater scope to capture the complexity of the experience.

Finally, there are a number of ethical issues associated with tracer studies that need to be considered. Most importantly, like all research projects, there are ethical risks associated with identifying participants. It is particularly difficult to talk about work-related outcomes associated with the scholarship experience without providing examples that identify participants. Within this research, I have dealt with this issue by discussing the usefulness of new more generic skills like strategic planning, or new professional networks, but I have not included more specific information related to the impact on returnees' performance within their particular profession.

The desire to protect the identity of participants was particularly important within my own research because my primary aim was to increase the amount of information available on women's experiences of development scholarship schemes, rather than a more (necessarily) narrow policy evaluation focus on the impact on work life or community contribution. Protecting the identity of participants is particularly important if, like I did, researchers want to create a research environment where participants are comfortable talking freely about all aspects (including very personal aspects) of their experience. However, tracer studies designed to act as a policy evaluation, would benefit more from the inclusion of additional detail about specific professional outcomes, particularly where the focus is on evaluating the impact on 'human resource development' needs. Given the challenges associated with collecting quantitative data on the experiences of NZAID scholars, the accumulation of concrete examples of how new knowledge translates (or fails to translate) into new projects or programmes would be particularly valuable within debates over the value of these scholarships.

Profiles of returnees like those included in Davenport and Low's (2004) research, Quinn's (1994) thesis, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2001) report *The Colombo Plan at 50*, all provide compelling examples of the concrete ways in which former recipients have used their skills within their specific jobs; however, by identifying (or including enough material about their professional role to make it possible to identify) participants you significantly reduce the kinds of information you will have access to as a researcher. Under these circumstances, participants are much less likely to want to talk about negative or controversial outcomes of their experience. Both the social pressure to show gratitude for the 'honour' of receiving a scholarship, and the emphasis on the need

for recipients to ‘repay’ their communities for this type of opportunity, place considerable pressure on returnees to highlight the positive outcomes of their scholarship experience.

The need to maintain loyalties to families and employers, as well as the pressure to demonstrate that they have maintained ‘cultural integrity’ are also significantly likely to reduce their willingness to talk about the sorts of challenges they may experience attempting to use their new skills and knowledge on return. These limitations exist within all research on scholarship returnees, but are likely to be particularly acute within studies that identify participants. Future NZAID tracer studies would benefit from a discussion of this issue, as well as a wider conversation about the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches to evaluating the impact of the scholarship schemes. Rather than relying on one research method, it may be necessary to build a picture of outcomes that brings together several sources of data, explaining the contributions and limitations of each method.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of some of the most important themes to arise out of this research. It points to areas of commonality and divergence within the work of other researchers in this field. It also demonstrates the potential of utilising diverse theoretical perspectives to provoke debate on different ways of interpreting aid outcomes. Ultimately, it seeks to highlight the complex, and at times conflicting, outcomes associated with development scholarship schemes. While, for instance, there is evidence that these schemes may entrench class privilege on some levels, this research also provides evidence that they also continue be an important resource for challenging gender inequality. This research also problematises the idea that overseas study necessarily leads to cultural ‘alienation’, pointing to the ways that the experience can both challenge and consolidate ‘cultural integrity’, and aid in the development of greater cultural ‘reflexivity’ and commitment to multilateral collaboration.

Finally, this chapter provides a number of reflections on the challenges and possibilities associated with research on the experience of NZAID scholars. It highlights several points for consideration by future researchers, including the need for greater acknowledgement of existing empirical research on the experiences of these scholars; the

value of establishing a consistent format for tracer studies in order to provide greater opportunities for comparative research; the challenges associated with the use of quantitative methods to assess the outcomes associated with New Zealand's development scholarship programme; the possibilities of longitudinal research to provide evidence on the concrete ways that the scholarship experience translates into personal and professional changes within returnees' lives; and the methodological strengths and weaknesses associated with research that identifies the professional details of former NZAID scholars.

The following chapter provides a summary of the most significant contributions made by this research. These contributions include: enlarging the body of theoretical resources available to researchers examining the impact of development scholarship schemes; providing an empirical evaluation of the experiences of three groups of women who have participated in a development scholarship scheme; and providing an exploration of the potential of emerging feminist post-development perspectives to open up new methodological and epistemological horizons within development studies.

Chapter Ten – Conclusion

In Hull, that winter of 1961, the skies were grey streaked to black. The wind sliced in from the North Sea. In a laundrette once, a Ghanaian man urgently showed me photos of his wife and children in Africa. He wept. No one could do anything about the loneliness of postgrad students. They'd come from warm, peopled, lives to a place with no reward except scholarship. (O'Faolain, 1996:68)

Throughout this project there have been a number of conversations about the meaning of the development scholarship experience that have stuck with me. I kept this excerpt from Nuala O'Faolain's autobiography pinned to the wall beside my desk to remind me to find an opportunity to talk about an encounter I had with a former NZAID graduate who had returned to live in the south of New Zealand. When we met, the wind was indeed 'slicing' in from the (Southern) ocean, and our conversation also turned fairly quickly to the loneliness associated with trying to make a new life in this harsh and unfamiliar landscape.

Earlier in the day, I had met another woman from overseas who, when the conversation turned to my thesis topic, had delivered an unexpected and fairly blistering attack on what she considered to be the elitism and materialism of those who participate in development scholarship schemes. Her critique had shades of that delivered by author Ama Ata Aidoo, who writes scathingly about African elites and their

[e]xpensive trips to
Foreign varsities where
honorary doctorate degrees
come with afternoon teas and
Mouldy Saxon cakes from
Mouldier Saxon dames ...

While
Able-bodied fishermen
Disappear in
Cholera, the rest, from under
Leaking roofs and unlit alleys. (Aidoo, 1979:9)

Yet, later when I met up with the NZAID graduate, she mainly talked about her kids. She talked about the experience of going home to war and feeling sick with worry each day as she waited for her children to walk home from school. She had a qualification

that was highly portable, so she left her homeland, taking her much needed skills with her. Her country's loss has been New Zealand's gain.

I came away from these two conversations feeling that both narratives were immensely understandable responses to the realities of the poverty, inequality and insecurity that exist within many Third World communities. I also came away thinking about the intense pressures and responsibilities associated with the decision to participate in a development scholarship scheme. These conversations reinforced for me the value of research that seeks to deepen our understanding of the complex ways in which this type of aid is actually lived out in the personal and professional worlds of recipients. In the absence of detailed studies of the diverse ways that individuals actually understand and experience the opportunities associated with these schemes, feelings run high, and stereotypes abound – stereotypes that place a heavy burden on the educated women (and men) who choose to participate in these programmes.

This thesis is not so much an effort to respond to (or refute) the political objections to these schemes, as it is a treatise on the value of broadening the research base that we can call upon to make considered decisions about the value and the future of this type of aid. This thesis contributes to this goal in three important ways: firstly, it brings together the diverse, and previously disparate areas of literature that examine aspects of the 'scholarship girl' experience; secondly, it provides an exploration of the contribution that new fields of research practice within feminist post-development writing can make to the task of creating more holistic pictures of women's experiences of development scholarship programmes; and finally, it provides valuable empirical material that examines the outcomes associated with the participation of three groups of women in a specific development scholarship scheme.

Enlarging the field

In the interests of creating a more 'holistic' picture of the outcomes associated with development scholarship schemes, I have sought to utilise both traditional literature on the experiences of the 'international student', as well as bringing in writing within the field of gender, education and development research. This decision is an important one, as previous research on overseas students has contributed important (albeit quantitative and liberal) empirical explorations of the impact of study abroad on personal life; yet this

literature has largely ignored broader questions around the longer-term ‘social’ impact of this type of educational opportunity.

Previous research on the experiences of development scholars, on the other hand, has tended to be overly concerned with the wider social and political impacts of this type of educational opportunity, at the expense of documenting how and why the concrete practices that constitute the scholarship experience might translate into these development outcomes. Thus, bringing these two fields of literature together facilitates opportunities for the construction of more comprehensive accounts of the outcomes associated with participation in development scholarship schemes.

A feminist post-development approach

This project makes a case for the epistemological and methodological strengths associated with adopting a research approach that is flexible and open-ended, and provides scope to utilise the diverse ways of interpreting the outcomes associated with the development scholarship experience. I have argued that this type of research approach, which calls upon “multiple genres of scholarship to enrich social criticism and make it meaningful in different contexts” (Udayagiri, 1995:173) is consistent with the desire within development studies to move away from the ‘grand narratives’ of modernist or so-called “strong” development theory , towards a new era of “reparative” theorising (Gibson-Graham, 2006:7) that emphasises the need for more modest, more holistic, and more creative research efforts. I have suggested that within development studies, emerging feminist post-development perspectives represent some of the most robust efforts to articulate and realise this sort of research programme. These perspectives call upon the “critical mobility” of feminist political/research practice (Rose, 1993:13) in ways that encourage and support ‘hybrid’ or collaborative theoretical projects.

My use of feminist post-development perspectives has influenced my work in important ways. I have sought to build a broad, multidisciplinary review of literature within the field of gender, higher education and development that resists the traditional tendency to produce linear narratives of disciplinary progress – highlighting the diversity and complexity of theory/practice within the field. I have then sought to build a research framework that is capable of acknowledging and utilising this complexity and diversity whilst avoiding the modernist tendency to make “a parade of theory” (Firth in Wolcott,

2001:2). I have argued that this research framework, which brings together different genres of scholarship to provide a loose ‘guide’ for data collection and analysis, is consistent with the feminist call for more modest, “weak” development theorising (Gibson-Graham, 2006:8) that “renounce[s] theoretical projects that seek full development and coherence prior to an encounter with the world”(Smith, 1987:11).

Development scholarship schemes seek to operationalise a range of varied, and at times competing, educational commitments within the field of international development. For this reason, there is considerable policy value associated with adopting a research approach that is capable of acknowledging the similarly heterogeneous range of theoretical perspectives on the meaning and value of this type of educational experience. Finally, my use of open-ended qualitative research methods, rather than more narrow, instrumentalist programme evaluation frameworks, and my exploration of the value of presenting data as poetic narrative, also respond to the call within feminist post-development thought for more creative and accessible research writing.

Empirical exploration of the ‘scholarship girl’ experience

This thesis makes an important contribution to addressing the paucity of empirical data available on the experiences of female development scholars. It responds to the historical absence of women within research on development scholars, as well as the criticisms by Kenway and Bullen (2003:7) that previous research on female international students has lacked an empirical depth - offering “a synthesis of existing secondary materials and ‘Western’ feminist theories.” It also responds to the quantitative bias within the field of gender, higher education and development research, providing valuable qualitative data on the experiences of women who take part in development scholarship programmes. Importantly, this research challenges the ongoing exclusion of the voices of educated Third World women from debates around the value of development scholarships, providing opportunities for three groups of women to provide their own interpretations of the meaning and value of this type of aid.

This project also provides important qualitative data that can be used in the ongoing evaluation of NZAID’s development scholarship programme. It is the first study to provide a review of research on the gendered outcomes associated with New Zealand’s development scholarship programme. It is also the only study that explores the

experiences of Thai women who have participated in an NZAID scholarship scheme. Given the historical prominence of Thailand within New Zealand's aid programme since the early days of the Colombo Plan, this research also contributes valuable commentary on the outcomes associated with this important part of New Zealand's foreign policy history. In this respect, the fact that it explores the experiences of two groups of Thai women who have taken part in an NZAID scholarship scheme in two distinct policy eras is particularly valuable.

My thesis makes a number of conclusions about the positive and negative outcomes associated with taking part in an NZAID scholarship scheme. In particular, it provides evidence of the importance of taking a holistic approach to examining the outcomes associated with these scholarships. This is identified as particularly important because the recipients within this research placed as much emphasis on benefits associated with the 'extra-curricula' aspects of their scholarship experience, such as immersion within another culture, living and travelling alone, having time and space away from their job, and the opportunity to form friendships and romantic relationships, as they did on their academic experience.

Some of the most important benefits associated with participation in a development scholarship scheme, as identified within this research, include greater confidence and emotional autonomy, increased cross-cultural knowledge, new personal and professional networks, new work skills, and improved English-language competency. For the Thai participants, in particular, these outcomes have translated into increased respect within their workplace; greater opportunities to represent their organisations at home and abroad, improved opportunities to contribute to international research/policy forums; a greater sense of control over negotiations with foreign consultants; and increased interest in and commitment to collaborative projects with other professionals within the ASEAN region. These new opportunities, combined with greater English-language fluency, and the new networks established through the scholarship experience, are also credited with opening up their new sources of ongoing professional development for returnees.

Further, I have argued that the opportunities provided by the scholarship experience to become more confident and more resilient, and to gain greater cross-cultural knowledge and experience are particularly important for increasing women's ability and

opportunities to contribute to international decision-making forums. These aspects of the scholarship experience are identified as particularly valuable to women because of the cultural restrictions they report experiencing on their personal autonomy and their opportunities for travel and cross-cultural learning. The increase in status associated with participation in these schemes is also identified as especially important for improving women's prospects for occupying leadership positions. This research confirms findings by previous researchers that development scholarships represent an important capacity building opportunity for women - providing "visibility for female competence in society at large" (UNESCO, 1999:12), and cultivating important opportunities for leadership and greater social participation.

This research also identified a number negative outcomes associated with participation in an NZAID scholarship scheme, including increased family conflict for married women and women with children; career disruption caused by job restructuring and employment bonding; new unwanted work responsibilities; and dissatisfaction with some aspects of quality of life in country of origin.

Other contributions to knowledge

This thesis makes a number of useful contributions to research on the lives of female international students, and female development scholars in particular. Firstly, it highlights the importance of acknowledging the diversity of experience within these categories. Factors such as age, level of study, type of academic course, career stage, marital status, and the shape of gender relations within country of origin emerge as especially important areas of diversity that are not well-explored within previous research on the experience of these women.

This project also contributes to the broader field of research on the experience of the 'international student'. Alongside Butcher (2002), it challenges the lack of attention paid to the wider social and political implications of overseas study. In particular, it highlights the problems associated with the uncritical focus on successful 'adjustment' when examining the experiences of female sojourners. In addition, as noted above, this research is distinctive in its attempt to bring together the two fields of disparate research that examine the experience of development scholars: research on the experience of international students, and research in the field of gender, higher education and

development. The inclusion of this latter body of thought provides a wealth of material that future researchers within this field may draw upon in efforts to broaden their scope of inquiry to create more holistic portraits of the experiences of this group of international students.

My thesis also makes a number of useful contributions to feminist/development theory and practice. As noted earlier in the chapter, it provides a valuable exploration of the potential of feminist post-development perspectives. This is an emerging field of thought, and, as a result, this project provides useful discussion on the potential epistemological and methodological parameters of this approach. In particular, it highlights the possibilities for incorporating previous feminist writing on the “critical mobility” of feminist research/practice and the epistemological strengths of “situated knowledge/s”. This research also provides the first attempt to define what the distinctive features of a feminist post-development methodology might look like. I have identified a focus on collaborative or ‘hybrid’ theoretical practice as a potential strength associated with the desire of these writers to carve out new spaces between competing genres of feminist/development thought and practice. I have also sought to make a broader contribution to feminist knowledge, joining other efforts aimed at addressing the exclusion of non-Western women from debates around the meaning of women’s education and career experiences.

This project also makes a number of useful additions to the broader field of gender, higher education and development research. It challenges the continuing dominance of quantitative research within this field, illustrating the value associated with qualitative explorations of women’s educational experiences. My research supports the conclusions of other feminist education writers who argue that qualitative research is especially important within research on women’s experience of higher education because of the need to understand the ways in which women are able to successfully ‘negotiate’ barriers to their use of new educational opportunities.

Finally, this thesis also makes a number of important contributions to development theory/practice. As noted above, I have understood this project as, in part, an opportunity to operationalise a commitment to new types of “weak” or “reparative” anti-imperialist development research that responds to the call for more creative, more

inclusive, and more ‘tentative’ methods of inquiry - research that, Gibson-Graham (2006:8) explain, encourages us to act as “beginner[s]”. I have sought to realise this commitment in a number of important ways, including the use of literature from a range of disciplines and sources, the development of a flexible analytical framework, the use of open-ended data collection methods, and the utilisation of poetic transcription as a technique for presenting empirical material in a more accessible and engaging manner.

Margery Wolf (1992) provides an important discussion of the dangers of the feminist focus on reflexivity and humility. She argues that after being excluded from *malestream* thought for so long, too much emphasis on the limitations of our work does us a disservice:

Feminist work has always been under suspicion, often for the same things the postmodernists’ critiques now celebrate – like questioning objectivity, rejecting detachment, and accepting contradictory readings. Feminists who have only recently gained some academic security might think carefully about whether intense reflexivity in their research and writing will be evaluated as being in the new post-modernist mode or as simply tentative and self-doubting. (Wolf, 1992:135)

However, I would agree with Fraser that “humility need not be the enemy of conviction” (Fraser, 2004:196), where it is used as a tool to promote the search for knowledge that is more open-ended – knowledge that, in Laubscher and Powell’s (2003) terms, “emphasises continued dialogue, openness to complexity, … and a committed search for a truth that resists emotional foreclosure” (Laubscher & Powell, 2003:218). In-depth, qualitative research aimed at increasing our understanding of the complexity of outcomes associated with development assistance programmes provides important opportunities to resist this foreclosure.

When I started this research, I was in a university setting where I had the opportunity to mix with a number of students who were taking part in a development scholarship scheme. It was these relationships that initially convinced me of the value of this research:

Tearoom conversations about why we care so much or not enough about fat,
trees,
our children,
the art of sidewalk conversation,
dance,
remind me why I find chronicles of the ‘foreign student’ so boring.

Victims of ‘culture shock’,
subject to models of ‘U-curve adjustment’ and ‘cultural fit’,
lives sifted through hierarchical-multiple-regression analyses,
there is barely a trace of the adventure that is sojourn...

Education has the power to alter our lives in fundamental ways. The development scholarship experience is a distinct type of educational event, situated within a history of colonialism, aid, and cross-cultural encounter. This thesis represents one effort to enrich our understanding of how women, in particular, interpret the possibilities of this type of educational experience.

Appendix A: Interview information sheet, New Zealand

Project title: Gender, higher education and development: Exploring the long-term impact of development scholarship schemes on women's lives

INFORMATION SHEET

Hi,

My name is Kirsty Wild. I am a PhD student in the Institute of Development Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. My research looks at the long-term impact that aid-funded tertiary education scholarships have on the lives of women who decide to study overseas. The results of this research will be a useful source of information for staff who work with female postgraduate students. This research will also provide important information about the ways that tertiary education can affect women's lives.

If you would like to be part of my research, then I will contact you to organise an interview. This interview will take 1-2 hours. You can choose when and where the interview takes place. With your permission, I would like to record the interview onto audiotape. I am also happy just to take notes, if you would prefer this.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to accept the invitation to participate in this study. This research is solely for the purposes of my PhD, and any publications that come out of it.

If you would like to be part in this study, please email me at kirstylwild@yahoo.co.nz, or ring or text me on +64 274333532. If you would like to ask any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at any time. You are also welcome to contact my supervisors, Dr. Regina Scheyvens (R.A.Scheyvens@massey.ac.nz, ph. +64 63569099, ext. 2509) and Professor John Overton (J.D.Overton@massey.ac.nz, ph. +64 63569099, ext. 2504) to discuss any aspects of my research.

Thank you very much for considering this invitation to take part in my research

Regards,

Kirsty Wild

Important interview facts

At all times, you have the right:

- *To decide that you do not want to take part in this study*
- *To withdraw from the study at any stage, and/or to decide not to answer any of the questions asked*
- *To ask any questions about the research*
- *To ask for the tape to be turned off at any time during the interview*
- *To provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher (all personal information will be kept confidential, unless it is revealed that serious harm has occurred, or is likely to occur, to you or any other individual)*
- *To read and change any interview transcripts*
- *To be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded*

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of the research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics and Equity), telephone +64 6 3505249, email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix B: Interview information sheet, Thailand

Project title: Gender, higher education and development: Exploring the long-term impact of development scholarship schemes on women's lives

INFORMATION SHEET

Hi,

My name is Kirsty Wild. I am a PhD student in the Institute of Development Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. The New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) has given me permission to contact you to ask whether you would like to take part in my research. I would like to find out more about the experiences of women from Thailand who have completed post-graduate qualifications through the NZAID scholarship scheme.

I am interested in hearing about:

- What it is like to study in New Zealand, and
- Whether the things you learnt when you were in New Zealand have been useful since you have returned home.

My research looks at the long-term impact that tertiary education scholarships have on the lives of women who decide to study overseas. The results of this research will be a useful source of information for staff who work with female postgraduate students from Thailand. This research will also provide important information about the ways that tertiary education can affect women's lives.

If you would like to be part of my research, then I will contact you to organise an interview. This interview will take 1-2 hours. You can choose to be interviewed in English or in Thai (with a translator), if you prefer. You can choose when and where the interview takes place. With your permission, I would like to record the interview onto audiotape. I am also happy just to take notes, if you would prefer this. I am planning to visit Thailand from June to August, 2006 to conduct interviews.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to accept the invitation to participate in this study. This research is solely for the purposes of my PhD, and any publications that come out of it. It is not a requirement of NZAID that you participate in this research.

If you would like to be part in this study, please email me at kirstyLwild@yahoo.co.nz, or ring or text me on +64 210398329. If you would like to ask any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at any time. You are also welcome to contact my supervisors, Dr. Regina Scheyvens (R.A.Scheyvens@massey.ac.nz, ph. +64 63569099, ext. 2509) and Professor John Overton (J.D.Overton@massey.ac.nz, ph. +64 63569099, ext. 2504) to discuss any aspects of my research.

Thank you very much for considering this invitation to take part in my research

Regards,

Kirsty Wild

Important interview facts

At all times, you have the right:

- *To decide that you do not want to take part in this study*
- *To withdraw from the study at any stage, and/or to decide not to answer any of the questions asked*
- *To ask any questions about the research*
- *To ask for the tape to be turned off at any time during the interview*
- *To provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher (all personal information will be kept confidential, unless it is revealed that serious harm has occurred, or is likely to occur, to you or any other individual)*
- *To read and change any interview transcripts*
- *To be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded*

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of the research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics and Equity), telephone +64 6 3505249, email: humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C: Interview consent form

Project title: Gender, higher education and development: Exploring the long-term impact of development scholarship schemes on women's lives

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

(This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years)

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio-taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio-tape to be turned off any time during the interview.

I wish/do not wish to have a copy of the recording returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed

Name

Date

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