GENDER UNDER “DEVELOPMENT”: A STUDY OF CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN IN FOUR COUNTRIES

by

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Abstract

This multi-site, mixed-methods study of the ways in which gender is conceived and practiced across ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ nations offers a critical inquiry into the varied impacts and experiences of ‘development’ on women.

From a post-structural perspective, this study critically examined key discourses culturally available in Western scholarly and popular publications (including online news articles and NGO donor information) concerning relationships between ‘development’ and cross-national conditions for women, and the realities and subjectivities they produced. The conceptual and analytical diversity evidenced in the scholarly literatures was not found in the popular media reviewed; rather, these publications presumed and presented hierarchical assumptions of Western superiority over other less ‘developed’ regions with respect to conditions for women.

To extend and deepen the analysis of both academic and popular literature, ‘fictional’ representations in the form of cartoon constructions, as well as ‘factual’ self-reports of gender-equity and development, were solicited from participants in four countries (Sri Lanka, Canada, Botswana, and Norway). These accounts were then mapped on to institutional policies and practices in order to understand how they impinged upon the lives of differently positioned women. At a national level, relationships between ‘development’ and conditions for women proved to be extremely complex. Factors that enabled advancement for (some) women differed from one country to the next, for instance legal rights and social assistance in Canada and Norway, free education in Sri Lanka, and the availability of affordable domestic labour in Botswana. Factors that constrained or impeded gender-equity, too, differed across national contexts,
however they often produced comparably inequitable results. For example, women in Canada appeared to be more regulated indirectly by state structures than regulated directly within the domestic sphere, making sexism less visible and, precisely for that reason, harder to identify and thus harder to combat than in countries where direct and overt gender discrimination is prevalent. At a local level, women’s ethnicity, class, familial status, age, education, and occupation intersected in different ways to produce quite different lived experiences even within the same national context. These findings trouble associations between the advancement of conditions for women and national ‘development.’

Keywords: gender; development; conditions for women; feminist; discourse; Canada; Sri Lanka; Norway; Botswana
Dedication

According to Minh-ha (1989) “writing .. is always practiced at the cost of other women’s labour” (p. 7). Although she asserts this statement in relation to “Third World” women, I believe that this statement is even truer for women from high-income countries, like myself. This dissertation is dedicated to all the women who enabled me to complete this work.
Acknowledgement

This work is a co-production, and with much gratitude, I acknowledge the contributions of committee members, Dr. Suzanne de Castell, Dr. Kumari Beck, and Dr. Kelleen Toohey, examiners, Dr. Diane Dagenais and Dr. Erica Meiners, as well as the participants in this study. My views, both theoretical and personal, have been profoundly shaped by the insights generated by the women (and men) who contributed to this study. I dreamed once that if I won the lottery I would travel around the world and learn about factors that enhance women’s lives in order to (hopefully) improve conditions for women. I am so incredibly privileged to have been able to live out this fantasy on a small scale within my lifetime. For me, the opportunity to talk to women from different places and learn about their lives is the best education a woman could have.
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Chapter 1 - Cross-National Conditions for women: The Personal Story

From Personal to Political

My dissertation began not with a theory, a hypothesis or even a question but with a perplexing conversation.

Spring, 2003

Many years ago now, I met a woman who had immigrated to Canada from South Africa. Now a Canadian citizen and a police detective in Ontario, this woman was one of the first black female police officers in South Africa. Surprisingly she told me that she preferred (actually preferred!) the sexism and racism she experienced in South Africa compared to the sexism and racism she had experienced in Canada. In Africa, the discrimination was always clear.

“You can’t sit here – you’re black.”

“I don’t want a female partner.”

In Canada she experienced unspoken double standards and implicit expectations based on her race and sex. She had to work harder to prove herself than any white male rookie cop, taking greater risks with her personal safety than would be expected from others. She witnessed inexperienced white men getting away with errors that would have resulted in her termination had she committed them. In Canada the sexism and racism was always indirect and therefore, in her view, much more difficult to deal with. Her perspective was so surprising to me. I wondered how sexism and racism could possibly be worse in Canada, a country more renowned for valuing multiculturalism, human rights, and equality, than South Africa, a country plagued by colonialism and apartheid?

I often thought about the conversation that I had with this woman so many years...
ago and it has served as an organizing framework in which I have incorporated other similar anecdotes. Since that time through my work and studies at the university, I have had many opportunities to meet international graduate students and visiting scholars from different countries, and I continue to be intrigued by examples of seemingly superior conditions for (some) women in countries not necessarily renowned for gender-equality. For example, I have been impressed by the number of female mathematicians, engineers and computer scientists that I have met from India and Middle Eastern countries, as Canadian institutions struggle, with limited success, to recruit women to these fields. Likewise some female scholars I have met from countries in Asia and Africa have been able to leave their children, homes and husbands in the care of nannies, housekeepers and relatives, in order to pursue their educational and professional goals, while I juggle personal and professional responsibilities, a source of tension in my own life.

It was a discussion with two visiting scholars from Botswana, however, that was the catalyst for this work, and prompted me to formally study cross-national conditions for women\(^1\), and the ideologies that influence our understanding of sex-related inequities, discrimination and oppression across cultures.

\[^1\] In studying women’s status and quality of life, I needed a broad general term, in order to be open to learning about different aspects of women lives that may not be encompassed by Western terms typically used to evaluate the quality of women’s lives, such as “gender-equality”, which means sameness or balance, and involves providing men and women with the same opportunities, or even the term “equity” which often implies enabling women to achieve similar outcomes as men (American Association of University Women, 1999; Streitmatter, 1999). These concepts limit the possibility that women may have different roles than men, but may still enjoy a high quality of life and a high social status. As Burke Leacock (1981) notes, equality conflates similarity with justice, which may be particularly problematic when examining conditions for women outside of contemporary “Western” cultures (see Minh-Ha, 1989; Shiva, 1989). In this regard, I chose to use the term, “conditions for women.” Where “equity” is used in this dissertation it refers to “justice” for women rather than enabling women to achieve the same outcomes as men.
Over breakfast, Olga and Caroline told us about a recent referendum in their country to determine whether women should have the right to apply for a bank loan without their husbands’ consent. (Men in Botswana, of course, did not require their wife’s consent in order to obtain bank loans.) My initial reaction was consistent with my beliefs about gender-equity outside of the “Western” world: the practice was draconian! It did not surprise me to learn that women in Botswana did not enjoy the same rights that I have as a woman living in Canada. What did surprise me however, was the reality that despite different banking policies, my own experience was not so different. At the time I was applying for a small bank loan ($2,000) to purchase a Retirement Savings Plan. Although my income at the time was not high (about $30,000 annually) it was not far off the average annual income of a married Canadian woman ($36,800), I was employed, had an extensive and impeccable credit rating, and was a co-owner of our home, which had substantial equity. The bank, however, required my husband to co-sign the loan.

Unlike women in Botswana, the reason for requiring a co-signer was not because I was a woman, but rather because my current personal income was low. My situation is not atypical - most Canadian women make substantially less money than Canadian men primarily because of the gendered divisions of labor, the gender gap in earnings, and institutional practices that do not financially reward the contributions of women. I realized that although my experience was not as regulated or blatant as women’s experiences in Botswana, I required a co-signer to obtain a bank loan because of my gendered social position.

\footnote{Statistics Canada (2006a)}
The discrepancy between my assumptions regarding cross-national conditions for women and what I was learning from immigrants and visiting scholars created a tension which motivated me to seek a deeper understanding of how women live in other places, and through this process, I hoped to develop a more nuanced knowledge of conditions for women in my own country.

**Development as a Central Concept**

In order to better understand the discrepancy between my initial beliefs and what I was learning about conditions for some women in different countries, I began to explore the assumptions that influenced my perceptions of equality across various countries. By analyzing the assumptions and contradictions inherent in these narratives, I was able to explicate my own tentative theories and make connections between these ideas and various existing theoretical frameworks that guided the subsequent evolution of my work, as well as identify possible insights and questions for further study.

When considering why I thought of Canada as a place where conditions for women are superior, the immediate associations that came to mind were the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states that “every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination” (Department of Justice Canada, 1982, clause 15.1), as well as annual United Nations’ Gender Development Indices which typically rank Canada as one of the top countries in the world for women (UNDP, 2009). I knew little about South Africa but was aware of the country’s history of colonialism and racial segregation. I knew virtually nothing about the country of Botswana other than its geographical location, and yet I made the assumption that life for women in these countries was worse
than life for women in Canada. I presumed that the lived experiences of women in South Africa and Botswana were worse than the lived experiences of women in Canada based on the fact that these countries are situated within the African continent, which I knew to be poorer, less “developed,” and more conservative in terms of gender-roles than Canada. The concept of “development” began to “emerge” as a key concept in my work.

The troubling term, development, typically conceptualized as progressive, normative change towards an improved condition (see Sachs, 1992), has explicitly or implicitly been a recurring theme in my work across diverse projects. While working on my honour’s thesis in the department of psychology on historical accounts of beliefs regarding menstruation as they pertained to women’s education (Hill, 1995), I was surprised to learn that educational conditions for women did not advance in a linear predictable pattern as the “progress narratives” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) inherent in popular media, such as the Virginia Slims commercials suggested. For example, I was fascinated to learn that after the Civil War the number of female post-secondary students in some coeducational American universities exceeded the number of male students (Rosenberg, 1982), and later declined, as did the scholarly interest in the relationship between menstruation and cognition. This project left me with an uneasy insight that advances for women might be more cyclical than progressive in nature, and just as easily lost as won.

When working on a girls-only computer project in an elementary school for my Master’s thesis (see Hill, 2001), I found that understandings of gender-equity and the

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3 These advertisements depicted women’s lives past and present, juxtaposing archaic and oppressive images of women in the past with emancipated and independent images of women in the present, and reassured women, “You’ve come a long way baby.” A Canadian interviewee in this study also referred to these advertisements to indicate the extent of perceived progress for women in Canada.
agency to seek social justice did not seem to advance with age, as Kohlberg’s and Piaget’s developmental theories might suggest. I found that elementary school girls were aware of and could clearly articulate the gender-based inequities that they experienced at home and school, but their female teachers were less likely to do so and tended to attribute sex-based discrimination to other causes. Rather than acquiring an increased sense of awareness and agency, it seemed that as “development” progressed, gender inequities became increasingly normalized and naturalized. The teachers involved in the project viewed girls as more vulnerable and in greater need of an equity intervention than women because women were assumed to have the cognitive ability to identify inequities and the agency to seek justice if necessary. Here developmentalism served to construct women’s interpretations of sex-based inequities as more rational than the interpretations of the girls.

Based on these two previous research projects, as well as the growing tensions between my own assumptions and what I had been learning about some of the conditions for women in other places, I was beginning to recognize the specific ways in which developmental discourses constructed the illusion of the linear advancement of conditions for women over time, across cultures, as well as throughout individual trajectories, and ultimately served to maintain the status quo. Based on Bolker’s (1998) recommendation of attending to themes that recur across scholarly projects as they are often generative, I focused on development as a key concept in relation to this work.

Like Mary Lynch Martin⁴ (1983), I found that drawing parallels between inequitable conditions for women in countries considered to be “developed” with those

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⁴ Since the format of APA citations and referencing serves to obscure the sex and sometimes the ethnicity/nationality of the author (Thompson, 2004), the full names of the author will be included in the
thought to be “developing,” and interpreting gender-inequities in Canada within theoretical frameworks that were critical of mainstream perspectives of development (which asserted that development advanced gender-equality), such as the work of Boserup (1970/1989) and Moen, Boulding, Lillydahl, and Palm (1981), could be useful strategies for recognizing and framing the inequities experienced by (some) Canadian women. As Lynch Martin (1983) asserted:

There is much to be gained from applying an international perspective to the issue of women’s inequality. The pervasive ethnocentricity of Americans has deprived reference list and included in the body of this dissertation when appropriate. Further, because female scholars can experience tensions between maintaining professional recognition and assuming the last name of their partner after marriage, efforts will be made to accurately represent the identities of authors with double last names.

5 Much of cross-national research on conditions for women is framed theoretically within the hierarchical classifications of nations, typically based on perceived level of national “development.” (This relationship will be further explored in Chapter 2.) Since 1990 the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has ranked counties based on their scored on the Human Development Index (HDI), which is comprised of assessments of standard of living, knowledge, and health (see Chapter 2). Countries with an HDI of 0.900 or higher are considered “very high human development,” countries with an HDI of 0.800 - 0.899 are considered “high human development”, countries with an HDI of 0.500–0.799 are considered “medium human development” and countries with an HDI lower than 0.500 are considered “low human development” (UNDP, 2009). The terms “First World” and “Third World” are also used to classify countries and organize comparisons of cross-national conditions for women. These concepts originated in the 1950s during the cold war to differentiate between the capitalist block of aligned nations in the “West” (First World) and the communist block of “Eastern” nations (Second World), as well as countries adopting a stance of non-alignment (Third World), typically nations in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and South and Central America (Reddock, 2000). These terms however are often used interchangeably with development classifications. Because the concept of development is central to my work, these terms are difficult to avoid. Throughout this dissertation research and writing I have struggled to find concepts, practices, and language that could enable and support an understanding that did not depend upon reifying what might be entirely constructed differences and hierarchies between and among nations. Although the term “Third World” has increasingly been resignified to have a more positive connotation, as a subversive, unaligned force (Minh-ha, 1989), the meaning of the term is influenced by the position and identity of the speaker. As Minh-ha (1989) asserts, “coming from you Westerns, the word can hardly mean the same as when it comes from Us members of the Third World” (p. 98). Consequently, I have chosen to represent “developed/developing” and “First World/Third World” in quotation marks to distinguish my own conceptions from the meanings that might be most commonly associated with these terms. I have also chosen to use the terms “Majority World” (Janzen, 2008) or “Two-thirds World” (Bulbeck, 1998) to represent lower income countries in Asian, African, Middle Eastern, South America, Oceania regions and “Minority World” (Janzen, 2008) to represent higher income countries in North America, Europe, and Oceania regions. I will be using these terms interchangeably with “developed” and “developing” to disrupt these comfortable unitary words. Although the usage of Minority/Majority Worlds are intended to disrupt the hierarchical ordering of worlds and the pejorative connotation associated with “Third World” or “un/underdevelopment,” I recognize that I am inevitably reproducing classifications I equally would wish to refuse.
most of us from a world’s view that could illuminate what has been lost in all that has been gained through technological and economic progress. In fact, a global view leads to a questioning of linear assumptions regarding progress and improvement as the inevitable and desirable outcomes of such growth. For to survey the world from the perspective of women’s inequality alone leads to the conclusion that modernization, the process of adapting to increasing technological and economic sophistication, has not resulted in equitable nor necessarily desirable progress for women. (p. 45)

I began to realize that “development,” as its pervasively understood, may not necessarily improve conditions for women and in fact may make them worse. Consequently, the goal of this research project was to learn more about what is “known” about cross-national conditions for women and how various ideologies shape our understandings, as well as how cross-national comparisons of conditions for women can inform our understanding of gender-equity in Canada.

My project started out very different however, and has been shaped by many forces including existing scholarship, my own insights, and the guidance from my committee, as well as the conditions of my life, from the standpoint of my own my gendered subject position. This chapter tells the “confessional tale” (van Maanen, 1988) of this research project, providing a reflexive account of my subject position that influenced this research, as well as the methodological context in which I struggled to produce a scholarly, cohesive, legitimate piece of research within the constraints of my everyday life.
Subjective Context: Location, Location, Location

“No one has ever devised a method for detaching a scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his (sic) involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or a mere activity of being a member of society.” (Said, 2003, p. 10)

As Said (2003) observed, it is not possible to provide an “objective” account of research. Many different stories can be told based on different interpretative practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and in this sense, my present ‘research story’ is undeniably one of many possible accounts. Much of what is made visible, and a good deal more of what is actually noticed, depends on the perspective of the observer. The beliefs, values, assumptions and experiences of the researcher influence all aspects of the research from the positioning of the researcher, the guiding theoretical framework, the types of questions asked, to the ways in which data is collected (Despret, 2005). When researchers acknowledge the value-laden nature of their work it becomes important to provide a reflexive account that allows readers to locate the researcher’s perspective with respect to experiences and values that may inform and/or constrain the research.

The heart of this project is its feminist perspective. I bring to this study over ten years of experience conducting feminist research. Many diverse views are housed under the concept of feminism, but a “base-line” definition of a feminist is “someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change … in the social, economic, and political order (Delmar, 1986/2005, p. 27). This perspective is of course also grounded in my everyday
experiences as a gendered subject, as exemplified in the introductory narrative and throughout this chapter, as well as supported by research and theory (see Burn, 2000; UNDP, 1995). According to the United Nations Development Program (1995) “in no society today do women enjoy the same opportunities as men” (p. 29).

Although there are many different feminist perspectives and multiple methods used in feminist research (see Nagy Hesse-Biber, 2007) “very simply, to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the center of one's inquiry” (Lather, 1991, p. 71). My work is most closely aligned with feminist post-structural theory (Butler, 1997; Gannon & Davies, 2007; Plumwood, 1993; Weedon, 1987) and feminist post-colonial theory (Narayan, 1999; Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003). As will be described in the following chapters, I am also influenced by other post-structural (Bakhtin, 1981) and feminist scholars (Walby, 1990), as well as by post-development (Esteva & Suri Prakash, 1998; Illich, 1971/1997; Shiva, 1989) theorists.

My scholarly background is multidisciplinary. I completed an undergraduate honours degree in psychology where I was schooled primarily within a post-positivistic interpretive paradigm and quantitative research methods. I later completed a Masters degree in the Faculty of Education and was trained in qualitative research methods and engaged with critical and post–structural interpretive paradigms. Although this is where I locate my scholarship, at times I find positivistic ideologies influencing my work.

Although my perspective has changed throughout the course of this project, when I first began this work I thought of myself as highly privileged to be born in Canada, one of the wealthiest nations in the world. I grew up in Kelowna, British Columbia, a medium sized community (at that time a population of 60 000) with a relatively conservative,
homogeneous population of white, middle class people. I made friends with immigrants and people of colour, largely for the first time after moving to Vancouver, a large (population 2 million), culturally diverse city on the West coast of Canada, to attend university. My family history has been its own kind of “progress narrative,” which makes me feel advantaged, and lucky to be living in this time and place. My father’s parents were the children of British immigrants and were profoundly poor during the depression. My mother’s father, who lost an arm in a logging accident, immigrated to Canada from Finland with his wife, young children, and few resources. Despite these relatively humble beginnings, my family firmly established themselves within the middle class through hard work, education, taking risks, and a fair amount of good luck.

I grew up with an awareness that the conditions for people in many other places were inferior to the conditions for people in Canada, through experiences such as “sponsoring” African foster children through my high school and my family’s benevolent involvement with foreigners, including financing people they had met overseas (such as a Chinese tour guide) to “vacation” in Canada. I was taught to have empathy for unfortunate “others” and to do what I could to help them. I acknowledge now that there may be many other advantages associated with growing up in other places, and distinct disadvantages associated with living in such a capitalistic, consumer-oriented society. I also grew up with a conviction that conditions for women in Canada at this time in history were very good, as evident from the feminist logos on my t-shirts and the Virginia Slims ads that informed me that women had “come a long way baby,” yet felt the tensions between representations of conditions for women and my actual experiences. I took a women’s studies course during my first semester as an undergraduate and found
that a feminist framework was helpful in making sense of those experiences, including the 1980 murder of my aunt during a sexual assault.

The combination of my desire to help people in other places and my appreciation of a feminist perspective led to an interest in “helping” women overseas. I was very moved by detailed stories of the dire conditions for women elsewhere, particularly “iconic” (Narayan, 1997) issues associated with “Third World” women, such as girls who were denied an education in Afghanistan, women burned for their dowries in India, and unsuspecting women infected with HIV in Africa, and wanted to help. I signed petitions and contributed time and money to international women’s organizations. As a graduate student I had the opportunity to meet (and at times host) visiting scholars and graduate students (typically very privileged people from the university-educated elite) from many nations. These experiences began to challenge my modernist, neocolonial conceptions of conditions for women in different places, as well as my sense of self as a compassionate feminist and deserving individual, and encouraged me to critically assess gender-equity in Canada and to be open to what could be learned from women’s experiences in other places.

Before conducting this current research project, I had traveled extensively, but only in the “Western World”. In 2006 I moved to Sri Lanka seven months after the Tsunami, after my husband was seconded to work on a university project there, and I had the opportunity to travel around the island and witness some of the heartbreaking realities of international “development” projects including misallocation of resources, the lack of adequate and/or appropriate resources, the destabilization of local systems, and most disheartening, the extreme disparity between the resources allocated to Tsunami
survivors and resources available to international aid workers. During my time in Sri Lanka I worked in a local university on a “modernization” project funded by the Asian Development Bank, which provided me with some first hand experience of the politics of international development. After leaving Sri Lanka, I traveled briefly in Southern Africa (South Africa and Botswana), as well as Northern Europe (Norway, Sweden, Finland). Although I have had the opportunity to travel and to meet people from different countries, I realize that my contextualized knowledge of the diverse cultures in Botswana, Norway, Sri Lanka, and even in my home county of Canada (where my data was collected) is limited.

The process of becoming pregnant, having a child, and trading off with my husband as the primarily stay-at home parent during the completion of my dissertation has also shaped this work and provided me with increased insight into some of the challenges affecting Canadian women. It is these experiences that I bring with me to this research project that have shaped my interpretive lens, and have enhanced, as well as constrained my findings.

**Methodological context: How (not) to conduct research**

Research is commonly written about as if it were a logical, linear, systematic endeavor. For example, Creswell (2005) describes the research process as consisting of six steps.

1. identifying a research problem
2. reviewing the literature
3. specifying a purpose for research
4. collecting data
5. analyzing and interpreting data
6. reporting and evaluating research. (p. 8)

The ways in which research is traditionally reported further perpetuates the notion that research is conducted according to an orderly set of distinct activities. According to Madigan, Johnson, and Linton (1995) “the typical published study is portrayed as a logical, linear sequence of activities that leads directly from carefully considered conceptual issues presented in the introduction, to data collection, to the discussion in which the contribution of the new data is assessed” (p. 430). Despite the pervasiveness of traditional models of the research process, in reality research is not always conducted in ways that are so predetermined, logical and linear. For example, B. F. Skinner attributed some of his most significant findings to serendipity or equipment failure (Madigan, Johnson, & Linton, 1995). Following a more traditional path as a scholar as outlined by Creswell, and specifically to detach and insulate research from ones ‘personal’ everyday life, is more feasible if you have the time, support, and resources to enable such dedication to one endeavor. As Virginia Woolf⁶ (1929/1957) and Linda Zerilli (1991)...

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⁶ Woolf identified some of the inequities that constrained female scholars by juxtaposing the opulent conditions at the male colleges of “Oxbridge” with the sparse conditions at the associated female college. Male scholars were provided with treasured resources to support their scholarship, a magnificent building in which to study, beautiful grounds for leisure and inspiration, fine foods and drinks for sustenance, and servants to attend to their needs. All this was funded by donations she described as “an unending stream of gold and silver” (p. 8). In contrast, as a result of the difficulty of raising funds to support women’s colleges, female scholars studied in shared rooms with sparse furnishings, surrounded by unkempt gardens, eating plain food off of plain plates. While the inequities for female scholars identified by Virginia Woolf in 1929 could easily be dismissed nowadays by invoking a progress narrative, drawing attention to how much has changed for female students in the past century, Woolf’s description of the financial disparities for women in universities is not unfamiliar to me. Female students continue to experience financial inequities that impact their scholarship; however these disparities are much less obvious than in the days of Virginia Woolf. For example, while teaching an undergraduate class I was surprised to learn that my female students who were varsity athletes had to pay their own travel expenses to sports competitions (see Hill, 2004). They worked triple time: studying hard to maintain the required grade-point-average, training to keep at the top of their game, as well as working to finance their education and pay for their sport-related expenses. I knew that members of the (male) football team were not burdened with any travel expenses. Upon further investigation I found out that (at last count) the endowment for male varsity athletes was six times the amount of the endowment for female varsity athletes at my university, despite the fact that female sports teams were higher ranked than the male sports teams. I knew that national and local equity policies prohibit inequitable funding on the bases of sex. I investigated further and found that this injustice was not
have persuasively argued, such devotion and separation is a good deal harder for women, even relatively privileged women like myself, than for their male counterparts.

My own research process was certainly not consistent with the six-step process as described by Creswell, followed a far less linear trajectory, and was guided by opportunity and necessity, as often as logic. For better and worse, my research was shaped, governed, and regulated by the conditions of my own life, particularly my gendered subject position. For me the research process involved many interrelated and reoccurring steps and was profoundly embedded within my personal life (see Figure 1.1). It would be difficult to represent the convoluted nature of my process in a linear format; however, its major influences and turning points are discussed below.
Figure 1.1 – My Research Process

1. identify a research problem that fits with husband’s career
2. conduct a brief review of the literature
3. opportunistic collection of data
4. re-envision research project
5. get pregnant and struggle with new subject position
6. tend to sick husband and new baby while trying to keep my foot in the door of the academy
7. recursively review additional literature and analyze data
8. experience a “triple crisis” and re-envision the research methodology
9. collect more data
10. get pregnant and struggle to maintain momentum
11. more reading, analysis, and interpretation while struggling with issues related to representation and evaluation
Identifying a research problem and selecting sites for data collection

January, 2005

The Sri Lankan Project is going ahead despite the tsunami, and the schedule has been accelerated. An international project that was once a long shot is now a reality. My husband will be based in Colombo for nearly a year. He is the primary wage earner in our home so if we want to be together, it is me who must adjust my professional life accordingly. To live in a foreign country is an opportunity of a lifetime and yet I have reservations. What will happen to my work and my studies if I move to Sri Lanka? How would I spend my time in Sri Lanka? I think of “Carol”, who left her career in the States to follow her husband when he was transferred to Japan. Unable to find work in Tokyo, Carol diligently enrolled in flower arrangement classes while her husband worked long days and romanced his next wife. Perhaps collecting data for my dissertation in Sri Lanka would give me the perfect opportunity to create a life for myself independent of my husband, and living overseas would certainly provide a unique opportunity to conduct my doctoral research…

As previously discussed, my research problem stemmed from a personal tension, created by the discrepancy between my assumptions about conditions for women abroad and what I was learning about the experiences of female immigrants and visiting scholars. While my starting point was decidedly subjective, research that is located in personal experience may have far wider implications and lead to insights regarding complex social processes, organizations, and relations (Riemer, 1977; Smith, 1987).

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7 My baby was born nine days after my defence.
According to Dorothy Smith (1987) studying the tensions inherent in everyday experiences can lead to awareness of the structures, which are typically invisible, that regulate local activity, seamlessly organizing and coordinating the everyday practices of individuals over large geographical areas. In this regard, personal experience is an invaluable as a starting place for inquiry. As Smith (1987) asserts, “the particular case is not particular in the aspects that are of concern to the inquirer. Indeed, it is not a ‘case’ for it presents itself to us rather as a point of entry, the locus of an experiencing subject or subjects, into a larger social and economic process” (p. 157).

Studying conditions for women in different countries was also particularly appealing to me at the time because it complimented my husband’s professional trajectory, and provided me with a practical reason to accompany him while remaining engaged in my own work. The selection of the sites of data collection was also largely determined by the constraints of my life rather than being based on logical decisions guided by previous research. My husband’s work took him to Sri Lanka, so that became one of the main sites for my research. We came back to our home country of Canada (the other main site of my research) via Northern Europe to facilitate my husband’s work on another project. I collected more data during the six days we spent in Norway, knowing that Norway typically ranks high, if not the highest on the UNDP’s gender-equality indices (see Chapter 2). In between our time in Sri Lanka and our trip to Europe, we stopped briefly in Botswana in order to enable me learn more about the conditions for women there that I initially found so intriguing. Although it was not possible to conduct extensive research in Botswana and Norway, impressionistic data was collected to provide a greater breadth to the investigation.
While there are clearly disadvantages associated with the opportunistic nature of my research, including limited choice of research topics, sites and participants, some of the advantages of such research can include situational familiarity, heightened rapport with participants, access to research sites that would not normally be available to outsiders (Riemer, 1977). Indeed it may be difficult to conduct some studies in any other way and there is much that can be learned from this type of data collection (Riemer, 1977), and the benefits, for my purposes, outweighed the disadvantages. Few researchers, particularly graduate students, have the opportunity to collect data in four different countries, and despite the constraints regarding the selection of the research sites, and as will be discussed in Chapter 4, there is much to be learned from these locations.

When I first began my doctoral research I was interested in exploring not only conditions for women in different cultures but also other developmental themes that had presented themselves in my previous research. Initially this study was conceptualized as a cross-national comparative study, contrasting the gendered experiences of women of different ages and from different generations, living in different countries. I hoped to study assumptions and realities regarding the evolution of gender-equity within historical, individual and cultural contexts and wanted to tell a story that troubled common conceptions of development in different ways, weaving together the three threads in a manner that was mutually informative. Once the data was collected however, I spent months trying to cope with the sheer volume of the information, the multiple themes running through my work, and the general lack of cohesion. It was clear that my initial vision of the project was too broad, vast and unruly. Subsequently I decided to focus on
the most generative thread of the research: conditions for women across nations. The concept of development continued to play a key role in my research.

Review of the literature

My husband left for Colombo with less than four months notice and I stayed behind to complete my professional obligations and tend to our affairs. I wrote a brief research proposal while teaching a course, organizing an international conference, hosting visiting scholars, supervising a (unpaid) directed reading, and packing up our house. I brought various resources with me to Sri Lanka expecting to have ample time to read, write and collect data. Shortly after arriving in Colombo however, I was offered a full time job working on a “modernization” project at a local university, which was an amazing opportunity for a graduate student like myself who was used to accepting primarily low paying teaching contracts. I hoped that this job would serve as a stepping-stone for more lucrative employment in the future, would help to build my CV, and would provide novel opportunities for me to learn more about conditions for women in Sri Lanka.

The lack of a comprehensive literature review before beginning a study is not necessarily problematic however, and could even be viewed as advantageous. Corbin and Strauss (2008) for example, recommend that researchers do not review the literature prior to beginning data collection and analysis in order to minimize a priori assumptions and to ensure that interpretations are grounded in the data. Their method, commonly known as grounded theory, however is based on the premise that the researcher has ongoing access to the research site in order to gather additional data and test interpretations as they “emerge.” As I traveled from place to place, however, there was little time for reflection,
let alone analysis during the data collection process and few opportunities to collect additional data.

The majority of my literature review was completed after the collection of my data and simultaneously during data analysis, interpretation and evaluation. While I found the process of concurrently reading, analyzing, interpreting and writing to be enormously informative and insightful, my lack of prior knowledge during data collection combined with lack of continuous access to the research sites became problematic as I began to analyze and evaluate my research. To address this limitation, I collected additional data upon returning home, which allowed me to extend the breadth of my investigation.

**Specifying a purpose for research**

*The story I wanted to tell...*

*I wanted to tell a story about the advantages for women in other places.*

*I wanted to validate my hunch that, contrary to popular opinion, conditions for women in Canada were not so different for conditions for women in “developing” countries and in some ways, were perhaps worse.*

*I wanted to find that somewhere, at some time, at least for some women, life was good.*

The initial purpose of this research was to conduct a comparative study of conditions for women in four countries that problematized the assumption that gender-equality advances as “development” progresses. In this regard, I gravitated towards post-development perspectives, which critical of development projects, viewing them as tools of cultural domination and oppression (see Esteva & Suri Prakah, 1998; Illich, 1971/1997; Shiva, 1989). Illich (1982) and Shiva’s (1989) theories that conditions for
women have actually deteriorated with development (which are described more thoroughly in Chapter 2) were particularly intriguing. As I learned more about post-structural theory however, I began to realize that one of the shortcomings of some of the post-development scholarship is that it merely replaced old binaries that associated development with progress and equity, with new dualisms that equated development with decline and oppression. I realized that this theoretical framework would constrain my ability to understand the factors that enable and constrain conditions for women. As Janzen (2008) noted, “treating development as a homogenous monster and people as passive victims fails to acknowledge the individuals, the women who live in developing countries, who are already engaged in some form of grassroots development activities” (p. 26). Further, if overly influenced by a post-development framework, I feared I might, as a friend duly noted8, “romanticize” conditions for women in the Two-Thirds World.

Consequently, the purpose of my work has shifted towards enhancing my understanding of particular factors that improve women’s lived experience rather than seeking to exemplify ways in which developmental models of gender-equality can be disrupted. My work is still influenced by post-development theory however, in that I am critical of perspectives that suggest an inherent positive relationship between “development” and the advancement of conditions for women.

Data collection

My initial data collection included interviewing 35 women in Sri Lanka, Botswana, Norway, and Canada, and asking them about their experiences as a woman and then comparing their experiences and their beliefs about women’s lives across time,

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8 Amrit Mundy, personal communication, October, 2006.
cultures and different ages. I created a questionnaire, in which university students from four countries were asked to construct the spoken words and thoughts of cartoon characters in various settings, as well as articulate how they thought women’s lives could be improved in their country. I collected ethnographic data including fieldnotes, photographs, newspapers, novels and magazines in all countries, which informed my analysis.

Once I began thinking more deeply about my analysis, I soon became frustrated with the complex nature of my data and became more fully aware of its limitations. Selection of interview participants in Sri Lanka and Canada, where I spent more time and had larger social networks, was diverse and yet limited compared to the more broadly diverse populations of interest. Given my timeline and budget, however, it was not feasible to conduct more interviews. Selection of interview participants in Botswana and Norway, where I depended on local contacts to set up interviews for me during my brief time in these countries, was limited. So was the selection of classes in which the questionnaires were administered. I depended on colleagues in various universities to give the questionnaires to their students, which resulted in the questionnaires being completed by students from a variety of disciplines. Some samples were predominately female (Sri Lanka and Canada), one sample was predominately male (Norway) and one sample had roughly equal number of male and female participants (Botswana). The differences in the samples made it difficult to make comparisons, and an error I made in administering one of the Sri-Lankan bubble dialogues to Norwegian participants further complicated my data. The questions I asked during the interviews were not always
consistent with my emerging post-structural perspective. In many ways, my data seemed inadequate.

I was tempted to abandon my original project and start over. Yet I found my data was compelling and despite its shortcomings, informative. I learned something new each time I approached it. Although opportunistic data collection can lack the forethought associated with more precisely pre-conceived studies, as Skinner found, it can produce unexpected important insights. My samples, although small, were diverse and informative, not an unimpressive outcome, given the lack of funding for and the extensive scope of the work. I decided to acknowledge the limitations of my data, and view the words and actions of my participants, not as unique “cases,” but rather as examples of tangible discourses, institutional practices, and social relations (Smith, 1987). The utterances of the participants in this regard, take on historical significance and are dynamic, reflecting past and foreshadowing futures. Thus I have come to see ways that my initial data, for all its acknowledged limitations, is multifaceted, forgiving and have generated unforeseen analyses and exciting results.

And baby makes three: Three more years to complete, that is

*Fall 2006*

_I became pregnant shortly after collecting my data and returning to Canada. At first I was encouraged thinking of a female faculty member who tells her students, “the best way to finish your dissertation is to get pregnant.” I thought that my pregnancy would provide me with an opportunity to finish my dissertation and I quit my jobs to focus exclusively on my scholarship. This was not however, a productive time for me._

_Physically I was tired and nauseous; however it was the change in my subject position_
that greatly impeded my scholarly work. Becoming pregnant created a heightened awareness of my gendered subject position and an increased sense of vulnerability. A report on the front page of our university website that provided empirical support for “mommy brain,” a cognitive deficit during pregnancy that purportedly can continue long after childbirth\(^9\), fractured my sense of self as an intelligent woman, and caused me to question my capabilities. As my body became visibly pregnant, I became increasingly aware that I was viewed as public property and my status was secondary to the fetus that grew inside of me. Friends and mere acquaintances felt entitled to touch my body and regulate my behaviors they felt were detrimental to my baby through embarrassingly public judgments and confrontations. I also became hyper-vigilant about my safety.

During my pregnancy, two pregnant women in my city, Manjit Panghali and Navreet Waraich, were murdered, and the trial of Liana White, who was murdered in Edmonton during her second trimester, was underway\(^10\). My dear friend Katherine Alexander knit me a poncho to obscure my pregnant body\(^11\).

I hoped that I would complete a draft of my dissertation before my baby was born but I only managed to finish my data collection. My husband took a parental leave, which we thought would enable me to complete my work. He became ill however, and my life became very busy caring for my son, as well as my husband. During this time I was offered a part-time job teaching a graduate course, which I accepted thinking it would be

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9 See *The Cause of “Mommy Brain”* (Johnson, 2005)

10 These cases are illustrative but perhaps not atypical. Murder is one of the leading causes of pregnancy-associated deaths in the US (Chang, Berg, Saltzman & Herndon, 2005; Horon & Cheng, 2001).

11 As Dr. Kumari Beck (personal communication, November, 2009), noted, as seen through certain cultural lenses, pregnancy is viewed as benefiting the public and common good rather than as an individual act, and consequently women’s status is elevated to a special place as the bearer of children.
advantageous in terms of future employment. My dissertation was left largely untouched for ten months.

By April 2008 my teaching was finished, my husband was well and back at work and I was getting back to work on my dissertation by presenting part of my data at the annual CSSE (Canadian Society for the Study of Education) conference, which fortunately, was held in my hometown. I was determined to prove that motherhood and scholarship were not incompatible and tried to develop strategies that would allow me to multitask. I brainstormed while nursing, recorded ideas in my cellular phone while taking the baby for a walk, read electronic articles on half of my computer screen while keeping my son amused with youtube videos on the other half of the computer, and learned to type efficiently on a keyboard missing several keys that had been pried off by my son. I also got up early every morning to work uninterrupted while my son and husband were still sleeping, sacrificing two hours of sleep each night to write my conference paper.

Although it seemed feasible at the time, the lack of sleep coupled with a year of getting up with my son at night, sometimes as frequently as every hour, took a toll. When I found myself sobbing in my car at the side of the road, detained by two police officers, the day before I was to present at the conference, it became clear I that I needed time and space if I was going to continue my studies.

In 1929 Virginia Woolf wrote, “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write” (p. 2). She asserted that women required a place where they could work without interruptions, and be supported without having to work at the types of the mundane jobs available to women (Woolf, 1929/1957, p.40). I am very fortunate in that for the past year we have been able to allocate $700 of our monthly budget, roughly
equivalent to a mortgage payment, to provide me with three days of child care in which I have been able to work on my dissertation, as well as accept the occasional part-time teaching position. Further, I was allocated a “room of my own” in the library where I could work on my research uninterrupted by the disruptions and impositions associated with working from home. (That is not to say that there are not disruptions in other workplaces; however those disruptions are typically less obligatory, less mundane and more enjoyable.) My dissertation was completed in small chunks on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays, and during brief periods between and within attending to my son, husband, home, and students.

Although having a room of my own and the funds to release me from some of my childcare duties made completing my dissertation more feasible, it was not ideal. I left the project untouched for weeks at a time when my son was ill or when I needed to use my daycare days to facilitate my teaching. Unlike the visiting scholars who left their children in the care of family and/or servants, I struggled to maintain momentum and achieve a cohesive sense of the project because of my diffused attention and piecemeal approach to writing. My schedule likely influenced my decision to write each chapter as a discrete (yet interconnected) paper. The extended period of time over which I completed this project also further lengthened my completion time as my thinking changed quite drastically over the four years which I worked on the project in ways it would not have had I completed the study in a more traditional manner.

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12 During the last four months of my dissertation writing, I did not accept employment and my son was in care five days a week, costing us over $1000 a month.
13 I am aware that these women had different challenges. For example, I am reminded of the extreme sadness of a graduate student from Cambodia who left her one-year-old son in the care of her mother while she completed her studies at my university. She would not see her son for an entire year.
14 This organizational strategy also felt right for me as my work was involved many diverse pieces with distinct methods and methodological assumptions.
My trajectory as a scholar however, is not atypical in Canada and other similar contexts. Many female graduate students and junior professors are of childbearing age when completing their dissertations and establishing their research agendas and must carve out “opportunistic” projects that fit within the confines of their partner’s careers, their own professional obligations, their childbearing and rearing schedules, as well as the other non-paid care work commonly assumed by women. This can prove to be particularly challenging if their methods require extensive “time in the field” and lengthy reports as credible qualitative research often does (see Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Although my process was lengthy and extremely challenging, ultimately my trajectory was successful in that I completed my dissertation (as well as produced two children, remained married to the same man, presented my work at a conference, and taught part-time). As Smith (1987) suggested, my subject position as a female graduate student in her child-bearing years provided an “entry point” to enhance my understanding of conditions for some women in Canada. Further, the long periods of time away from this project have provided me with a chance to reflect on my work and enabled my thinking to evolve ways that would not have occurred had I followed a traditional research trajectory. I will never know however what I might have been able to accomplish, or what contributions I might have made, if, like Machiavelli, I could take full leave of my “house”, strip off my “mud-stained” (Zerilli, 1991) (or rather pablum stained) clothes, and engage more fully and completely in my studies.

Analyzing and interpreting data

Through the simultaneous process of reviewing the literature and analyzing and interpreting my data, my own “triple crisis” began to brew in relation to my initial
ontological position (more aligned with realism than relativism), my interpretative framework (critical theory), and my method (comparative research.) Initially my work was grounded more so within a realist ontology, that is, an assumption that reality exists independently of our perceptions and that it can be apprehended, at least to some extent (Rohmann, 1999). I felt that by talking to women about their lived experience, observing conditions for women, and collecting ethnographic data, I could really know something about how women lived in those places and would be able to compare conditions for women in “developed” and “developing” countries. My work was also closely aligned with critical theory, “a research perspective that foregrounds the notion of emancipation, so that it not only describes the world or generates knowledge about it, but also seeks to change it by detecting and unmasking beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, justice and democracy” (Scott & Morrison, 2005, p. 47). In this regard the goal of critical research is to work towards the production of emancipatory knowledge, often collaboratively, through dialectical engagement with participants, in order to dissipate ideological distortions (Scott & Usher, 1999) and disrupt false consciousness (Lather, 1986).

Reading post-colonial and post-structural texts created dissonance between my beliefs and what I was learning, and my identification with these frameworks began to shift and fragment. As a feminist, critical theory was appealing in that the emancipatory perspective is often privileged over other perspectives. Participants however may have difficulty interpreting and articulating their experience in a way that advances an emancipatory perspective. As Smith (2007) asserts, “we’re not always conscious of what we know because most of the time it doesn’t become spoken” (p. 411). In this regard,
critical researchers may be confronted with multiple views of reality as participants may identify with ideologies that do not appear to serve their best interest, which creates methodological tensions between valuing participants’ accounts of their experiences and constructing an emancipatory interpretation of the data. It is not the privileging of the researcher’s (co-constructed) perspective that is problematic. Rather it is the lack of acknowledgment of the subject position(s) influencing the research. As Scott and Usher (1999) note, even critical dialogues are not free of ideology. Indeed, the more that I read about feminist post-colonial theory, the more aware I became of how “Western” feminist researchers, who likely believed that they were producing emancipatory knowledge, were actually regulated by colonial ideologies which served to reproduce the oppression of “other” women in different forms (see Jayawardena, 1995; Narayan, 1997; Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003). Also, increasingly mindful of the “triple crisis” in qualitative research in which the destabilizing of the objectivity and authority of researchers lead to concerns regarding the representation and legitimation of knowledge, as well as praxis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), I began to question what could really be known about conditions for women in other places. How could I differentiate between lived realities and “false consciousness” of my participants, how might I interpret the various perspectives expressed by my participants to tell a cohesive, credible story, and how I could possibly attempt to represent women’s lived experiences, particularly in other countries other than my own?

Increasingly I identified with a more relativistic position, the perception that no truth or values are absolute (Rohmann, 1999), while continuing to value freedom, justice, and democracy. Rather than trying to establish reliable and valid methods for ascertaining
the lived experiences of my participants, I began to focus on the knowledge that could be produced from my own subject position(s). As Richardson (1994) notes, a post modern position does allow us to know “something” without claiming to know everything. Having a partial, local historical knowledge is still knowing.

Qualitative researchers are off the hook, so to speak. They don’t have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal, atemporal general knowledge; they can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it. (p. 518)

My focus of my work also began to shift towards a need to understand what is known about cross-national conditions for women, the purposes this knowledge serves and how it is produced and disseminated. In this regard, I found feminist post-structural theory (FPST) useful as a guiding interpretative framework. Weedon (1987) describes FPST as “a mode of knowledge production which uses post-structural theories of language, subjectivity, social process, and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change” (p. 41). The concept of language is central to FPST: our understanding of the world and our subject positions within it are constructed based on the available discourses, which are locally and historically specific (Weedon, 1987). In this regard, discourse is the site where various meanings are asserted and contested. There are a variety of discourses available to individuals but particular discourses tend to be more pervasive, dominant, more appealing and consequently may be more likely to be reflected in institutional practices. Through studying the discourses
that are culturally present and prevalent, FPST enables researchers to elucidate the
“realities” and subject positions culturally available to her participants. Increasingly
influenced by FPST, I was compelled to collect more data regarding the social
construction of meaning regarding conditions for women and development. In 2009, I
collected representations of conditions for women and girls in different countries as
reported in Canadian newspapers, as well as within a international NGO (non-
government organization) fundraising campaign.

Through my reading I also became increasingly aware of the serious
methodological and ethical issues in regards to comparative research. Methodologically,
it is difficult to make comparisons across cultures because concepts central to the
research may be understood in different ways in different contexts, theoretical and
methodological assumptions may not be shared across research sites, and the ethnocentric
assumptions of the researcher may be left unchallenged (Scott & Morrison, 2005). Uma
Narayan (1997) for example, found it nearly impossible to compare the prevalence of
dowry related murders in India with prevalence of domestic violence murders in the US.
She found that different agendas on domestic violence in the two countries produced
different styles of record keeping. In India where there is a focus on dowry-related
killings but not domestic violence, statistics on dowry related murders were readily
available, but not statistics related to other forms of domestic violence. In the U.S. where
awareness of domestic violence is heightened, she found an abundance of statistics on
prevalence of domestic violence, but not necessarily domestic murders. Although she was
able to estimate the percentage of domestic murders, she found that again national
concerns influenced institutional practices in record keeping: Indian agencies recorded
statistics of suspected dowry murders, while US agencies recorded statistics of convicted murders\(^{15}\).

More importantly, there are serious ethical concerns that must be taken into account when conducting comparative research in foreign countries or cultures, particularly when researchers from (former) colonizing countries conduct research in (former) colonized nations. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) asserted, within the context of colonialism scientific research served as a means of “objectively” “representing the dark-skinned Other to the white world” (p.1). In this regard, “the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 1). Conducting comparative research in which the other is compared with the self from an ethnocentric, and perhaps a politicized perspective, can clearly (re)produce invalid and oppressive representations.

Although there are serious methodological and ethical concerns regarding comparative research, making comparisons, as Narayan (1997) demonstrated, can be a useful and important analytic tool. Further, as Corbin and Strauss (2008) assert, doing comparative analysis can help to elucidate aspects of the data that otherwise may have been obscured by the biases of the researcher, to produce creative insights, and to identifying variations as well as general patterns. Such negative case examples lead to more comprehensive and richer analyses.

In this regard, I decided to use the comparative method to inform my emic perspective of conditions for women in Canada and how issues of development and

\(^{15}\) Based on her estimates, Narayan (1997) found that the proportion of dowry related murders in India and domestic violence murders in the US are “roughly similar.” She noted, “given that roughly the same proportion of women in the US population are possible victims of “domestic-violence murder” as the women in the Indian population are possible victims of “dowry-related murder,” it is interesting that one of these phenomena is named, noted, and made into a “specific social issue” while the other is not” (p. 99).
gender-equity are typically understood in this context, rather than to construct knowledge about conditions for women in other countries from an etic, and likely ethnocentric perspective. Although the emic perspective enables a more contextual understanding of local practices, insiders may not always recognize the significance of implicit understandings and taken-for-granted assumptions because these practices are so normalized and naturalized within cultures. As Mills (2002) said, “everything which is usual appears natural” (p. 135). Primarily I want to use my outsider status in foreign cultures, which allows me a degree of cultural separation, to inform my insider perspective of conditions for women in Canada, and how these conditions are understood in relation to conditions for women in other places.

**Reporting and evaluating research**

Once my “triple crisis” was resolved, my preferred form of representation was clear. Guided by the metaphor of crystallization, a “3D version of triangulation” (Hubbard & Miller Power, 1993, p. 127), in which knowledge is represented according to multiple accounts, each revealing different truths (Richardson, 1994), I decided to represent this dissertation as five different types of stories of gender and development including my own personal stories (as presented in this chapter), the official stories as published in scholarly reports (Chapter 2), the popular stories as told in newspapers and the documentation of a charitable organization (Chapter 3), the “fictional” stories, as constructed by university students from four countries in the form of cartoons (Chapter 4), and the “factual” stories based on self-report data from four countries, as triangulated with institutional policies and practices (Chapter 5). By labeling each chapter a story, I

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16 Thank you to Dr. Michael Ling for sharing this quotation with me.
hope to draw attention to the constructed nature of my interpretations, as well as different angles and the different truths they reveal. The guiding methodological frameworks, methods of data collection and analyses, as well as my results and interpretations of each set of data are presented separately in each chapter.

Once it is accepted that multiple perspectives are possible, and indeed valuable (Richardson, 1994), the challenge becomes how to assess the credibility of one’s work. While there are no common criteria for evaluating post-structuralist and postmodern research, “what is important nevertheless is that attempts are made to conduct research in as scholarly a way as possible, to make appropriate claims about the findings, and to keep debating issues of validity and reliability on research” (Fawcett, 2000, p. 55). Clearly there is no “right” way to proceed to construct the story of your data, only ways that are more or less informed, plausible, useful and/or insightful.

Heron and Reason’s (1997) notion of critical subjectivity is useful in this regard. Critical inter/subjectivity involves the use of internal sources of information (as generated through reflexive practices) and external sources of information (as generated through engagement with data, theory, and peer review) to develop of heightened awareness of the lens, biases and assumptions that shape our work, and inform our tentative theories. As this chapter demonstrates, throughout this research project I have attempted to be critically subjective, using theory, dialogue, data, and reflection to identify my preconceptions and to advance my understanding.

I am also hopeful that this research will demonstrate catalytic validity (Lather, 1986), that is, it will provide a novel way of understanding cross-national conditions for women, which may perhaps produce shifts in thinking or practice that may be viewed as
“emancipatory” in some regard. I will be satisfied however, if it provides a framework for better understanding my own experience and perhaps assisting others in understanding theirs. As is clearly evident in Smith’s (1987) work, understanding one’s own condition is a significant accomplishment that can lead to dissemination and transformation through one’s personal and professional roles.

Finally, this work was largely exploratory in nature and was intended to develop a research agenda for my future work as a scholar. While this research may not be conclusive, it will nevertheless be valuable if it is generative and opens up “interesting” (Despret, 2005) perspectives and “fruitful” (Hodder, 1994, p. 401) lines of inquiry for future research.

**Intentions of the Story Teller**

Perplexed by the tensions between my own assumptions about cross-national conditions for women and what I was learning from the accounts of visiting scholars and immigrants to Canada as described at the beginning of this chapter, as well as the tensions between my status as a “First World” woman and my experience of the ways in which my gendered subject position constrained my “choices,” my research was driven by three personal goals:

1. to learn about the ideological sources of the assumptions inherent in my initial beliefs about local and foreign conditions for women that were inconsistent with my experiences, and what purposes they might serve;
2. to understand how my initial beliefs may have been formed and to know if these beliefs are exceptional or more ubiquitous;
3. to explore conditions for women in different geographical and cultural
locations through a critical theoretical framework in ways that could potentially produce novel insights.

These goals led to the formation of two primary research questions. First of all, how are cross-national conditions for women represented and understood in relation to development? What ideologies are inherent in scholarly and “popular” representations and what are the implications of such ideologies? In this regard my work was largely influenced by post-structural (Bakhtin, 1981; Weedon, 1987) and post-colonial (Narayan, 1999; Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003) theorists who informed my understanding of how particular worldviews, subject positions and power relations are discursively constructed, and disseminated. The second goal of this project was to ascertain what might be learned about conditions for women at home and abroad based on a critical cross-national investigation involving four countries: Canada, Sri Lanka, Botswana and Norway. In this regard post-development theorists (Illich, 1982; Shiva, 1989) who offer critical accounts of how development has impacted conditions for women, and feminist scholars (Walby, 1990) who have studied the impact of societal change on women have informed my perspective. Throughout this dissertation I argue that our understanding of cultural changes regarding conditions for women, as well as our knowledge of “gender-equality” in local and foreign contexts, are influenced primarily by mainstream Western discourses of development and progress, which serve to extenuate differences between “First World” and “Third World” women, and obscure local inequities.

What follows in the remaining five chapters is: an exploration of the ideological assumptions inherent in the scholarly literature regarding the impact of development on conditions for women across cultures, as well as a critique of this literature which
provides a theoretical framework for this study (Chapter 2); a review of the discourses prevalent in popular texts regarding conditions for women in different countries (Chapter 3); representations of gender and development as depicted by university student from Sri Lanka, Botswana, Norway and Canada (Chapter 4); conditions for women in four different countries based on self-report data and triangulated with institutional policies and practices (Chapter 5); and “concluding” thoughts (Chapter 6).
Chapter 2 - Gender and Development: *The Official Story*

*Just because one is in the mainstream, however, does not mean that one is necessarily adopting the appropriate approach to the question at hand* (Carr, 2008, p. 902).

**Introduction**

The primary purpose of this chapter is to review and critique literature on the advancement of conditions for women across cultures as it relates to development, and to explore the assumptions inherent within this body of work. What follows is an examination of this diverse body of literature located in the landscapes of multiple disciplines, including Women Studies, Political Science, Economics, Geography, Sociology, Anthropology, Education, and Development Studies, investigated from a variety of theoretical frameworks including liberal, humanist, socialist, feminist, and postmodern perspectives.

The concept of development is central to this review because development discourse, that is “the ideological assumptions, associations, images and metaphors that inform and justify meanings and practice of development” (Pritchard, 2000, p. 46), is pivotal in understanding perceptions of equity across time and place\(^\text{17}\). As will be demonstrated, conditions for women are often explained, as well as predicted and manipulated, based on understandings regarding political, economic, and/or cultural development. Consequently, after describing the method of the literature review, this chapter begins with a historical exploration of the etymology of “development” and a review of the ways

\(^{17}\) Although issues regarding mainstream development and gender often intersect in important ways with other transnational endeavors, such as globalization, imperialism, and colonialism, this study is primarily limited to an exploration of the relationship between development and conditions for women.
in which conceptions regarding development have intersected with understandings of conditions for women.

Given that understandings and interpretations of conditions for women are heavily dependent on theoretical perspectives (see Walby, 1990), the literature was organized according to the primary underlying theoretical framework (liberal, humanist, socialist, feminist, or postmodern perspective) of the publications, and secondarily based on conceptions of development. The first section of liberal scholarship includes publications in which development is conceptualized as modernization, economic growth, or economic freedom. The second section of humanist scholarship includes publications in which development is conceptualized as enhancing human capacities. The third section of feminist scholarship includes publications in which development is conceptualized as inherently discriminatory (or alternatively that discrimination enables development). The fourth section of socialist scholarship includes publications in which development is conceptualized as dependent upon exploitive social relations, and the fifth section of post-modern scholarship includes publications in which development is conceptualized as discursive constructions of power, or as maldevelopment. Each section is followed by a critique of that literature. Finally the implications of the scholarship regarding conditions for women and development is analyzed from a critical perspective, drawing mainly from post-structural and post-colonial feminist perspectives, which provide a conceptual context and a theoretical framework for the remainder of this dissertation.

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18 Shiva (1989) conceptualized development as “maldevelopment.” She asserted, “I want to argue that what is currently called development is essentially maldevelopment, based on the introduction or accentuation of the domination of man over nature and women. In it both are viewed as the ‘other’ the passive non-self” (p. 6).
Literature Review Method

The scholarly literature, including books, peer reviewed journal articles, as well as policy papers, was searched, first of all, for theoretical as well as empirical publications regarding conditions for women in relation to development. Included in my review were publications that reported conditions for women across nations, cultures, or throughout time, and/or in relation to development that were published between 1970 and July 2009 and were written in English.

Resources were located through journal databases, the library catalogue, google scholar, as well as based on recommendations from colleagues. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the topic, journal databases from seven different disciplines including Women Studies (Women Studies International), Political Science (International Political Science Abstracts), Economics (ECONLIT), Geography (GEOBASE), Sociology (Sociological Abstracts), Anthropology (AnthroSource) and Education (ERIC)\(^{19}\) were searched in order to ensure a broad representation of the work in this area. Search strategies were continuously refined throughout the process and differed slightly depending on the discipline\(^{20}\). Initially three sets of primary concepts were used to search databases including: conditions for women (including women, gender, sex, gender-inequality, or sexual inequality), development (development, cultural change, modernization, industrialization, capitalism, democracy, or growth), and multiculturalism (international, cross-cultural, cross-national, transnational, comparative).

The biggest potential limitation of this review, although not atypical, is the exclusion of articles published in languages other than English. Efforts were made to include the

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\(^{19}\) Development Studies does not have a distinct database in the Simon Fraser University library catalogue.

\(^{20}\) Search terms were narrowed when more than approximately 500 resources were located. Results were reviewed to identify relevant articles and the descriptors of these articles were used to narrow the search.
work available in English of scholars from Majority World countries. Although many of these academics were educated in and/or reside in Minority World countries, these perspectives should not on that account be dismissed as inherently “Westernized,” as the work of such scholars is often situated within everyday experiences and theoretical contexts of Majority World countries (see Narayan, 1997).

**Historical Overview of “Development”**

Develop, the root of development, stems from the Old French “desveloper”, a combination of the prefix “des,” to do the opposite, and “enveloper,” which means to enclose (Merriam-Webster Online, 2006). Thus the etymology of development is to unfold, unroll, or to unfurl and this definition dates back to the late sixteenth century (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). This definition however differs markedly from current connotations of the term.

During the 19th century, the concept of “development” was applied to the growth of organisms, plants and animals, used synonymously with evolution (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Consequently, development came to be understood as a natural, normative achievement of preordained potential (Sachs, 1992). This metaphor, which implied purposeful, positive, continuous, cumulative, and irreversible growth, was applied to the process of social change, (Rist, 2002). In this regard, the concept of development acquired a “violent colonizing power” (Sachs, 1992, p. 9) in which the Western model was established as the norm.

It converted history into a programme: a necessary and inevitable destiny. The industrial mode of production, which was no more than one, among many forms of social life, became the definition of the terminal stage of a unilinear way of social
evolution. This stage came to be seen as the natural culmination of the potential already existing in neolithic man, as his logical evolution. Thus, history was reformulated in Western terms. (Esteva, 1992, p. 9)

By the middle of the 20th century, the concept of development assumed a dual process of economic exploitation of “developing” nations, as well a new humanitarian agenda (Esteva, 1992). In 1939 the British added the responsibility for the welfare of the members of colonized countries as part of the official “law of development of the colonies” in order to create a more positive connotation of colonialism, and in 1949 US President Truman disclosed his agenda to make the technical, scientific, and industrial advantages of American society available “for the improvement and growth in undeveloped areas” for the mutual benefit of all peaceful and free nations. He said:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. (Truman, 1949, ¶7)

Although seemingly altruistic, the “development” of other nations in this regard was a constitutive act, which interpellated Majority World Countries as “underdeveloped” (Williams, 1983), and established the hierarchy of Western superiority and the deficiency of other nations. As Esteva (1992) notes, “on that day, two billion people became underdeveloped” (p.7).

Thus development has become a normative term, inextricably linked to the concepts of improvement, advancement and progress (Pritchard, 2000), as well as growth, evolution and maturation (Esteva, 1992). As Esteva asserted (1992):
No matter the context in which it is used, or the precise connotation that the person using it wants to give it, the expression becomes qualified and coloured by meanings perhaps unwanted. The word always implies a favourable change, a step from the simple to the complex, from inferior to superior, from worse to better. The word indicates that one is doing well because one is advancing in the sense of necessary, ineluctable, universal law and towards a desirable goal. (p. 10)

I refer to this connotation of development, influenced by modern values of progress, reason, and universality (see Shiva, 1989), as the mainstream view of development. As we shall see various scholars including humanitarian, feminist, socialist, and post-modern scholars have challenged this conception of development in different ways. There is some evidence signaling the “death” of mainstream conceptions of development and their utility (see Esteva & Suri Prakash, 1998), and increasingly development agendas have intersected with globalization agendas or have been reconfigured within globalization discourses (see Rist, 2002). The mainstream conceptions of development however, continue to shape our understandings of the world, and to constitute and regulate its subjects.

**Perspectives of Gender and Development**

*During my two weeks at Shouting Hill ... I saw mothers, daughters and wives who seemed to have been left behind at the beginning of history, living primitive lives in the modern world. I was worried for them. Would they ever be able to catch up? One cannot walk to the end of history in one single step, and history would not wait for them. ...Big*

[21] Although like development, globalization is a concept that has taken on many meanings and interpretations, Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2004) provide this basic definition, “the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate worldwide” (p. 110).
Li listened to my account of the women of Shouting Hill, then asked, “Are they happy?”
Mengxing exclaimed, “Don’t be ridiculous! How can they be?” I said to Mengxing that,
out of the hundreds of Chinese women I had spoken to over nearly ten years of
broadcasting and journalism, the women of Shouting Hill were the only ones to tell me
that they were happy. (Xinran22, 2002, p. 239)

The concept of development is central to my understanding of the forces that
enable and constrain the advancement of gender-equality. In the scholarly literature
conditions for women and development are associated in five different ways. These
arguments, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section, are summarized
below. Although the logic differs, as will become evident in this review, the improvement
of conditions for women remain commonly and popularly understood in as a function of
“development.”

First of all, conditions for women are often thought to improve in relation to
development. Within the field of development studies, development is commonly defined
as “processes leading to a higher quality of life for a given population” (Fry & Martin,
1991, p. 98). Consequently, advancing the quality of life of a particular group of people,
such as women, is often inherently intertwined with development initiatives. As in the
narrative included at the beginning of this section, it can be difficult to consider
conditions for women independent of societal “progress.” Indeed, gender-equality is one
of the eight development goals of the United Nations (2008), and as we shall see, many
economic and modernization theorists view development as a strategy for women’s

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22 Xinran is a journalist who reported on the lives of women living in “modern” China, and made public
issues that had previously been largely silenced, through her radio talk show in the 1990s. Shouting Hill is
an economically impoverished community whose residents were viewed as living “primitive lives” by
Xinran and her colleagues.
emancipation (see Inglehart & Norris, 2003). As Dollar and Gatti (1999) asserted, “increases in per capita income lead to improvements in different measures of gender-equality, suggesting that there may be market failures hindering investment in girls in developing countries, and that these are typically overcome as development proceeds” (p. 1).

Interestingly, the order of the causal relationship between conditions for women and development has also been reversed: advances in gender-equality, such as increasing numbers of girls in school and women in the paid labour force, have been thought to increase economic development. This discursive shift is evident in the documentation of transnational organizations after WWII (Berkovich, 1999). More recently, Lawrence Summers, a former chief economist for the World Bank popularized this perspective in an influential policy speech in which he asserted, “Investing in girls’ education may well be the highest return investment available in the developing world” (Summers, 1992, p.1). There has also been a resurgence of this discourse in light of the current global economic crisis. An Ernst and Young (2009) report, entitled Groundbreakers: Using the strength of women to rebuild the economy, calls for the increased participation of women in the labour force, particularly in leadership positions, to stimulate economic development and improve corporate performance.

While development is commonly viewed as benefiting women, women have not always been perceived to benefit development. Development is a gendered concept in that it is associated with other related concepts associated with the masculine, such as rationality, activity, mobility, and progress (Pritchard, 2000; Shiva, 1989). Concepts

23As a matter of interest, Lawrence Summers is the former president of Harvard University who resigned as the result of the controversy that ensued when he suggested that the low number of women in math and science could be attributed to gender differences in innate ability.
viewed as antithetical to development that hinder progress, such as irrationality, passivity, stability, stagnation, and tradition are commonly associated with the feminine. As a result women have often been excluded from the development initiatives (Boserup, 1970/1989), and this has been a source of feminist critique. In this regard, Young, Fort and Danner (1994) have called for “economic development policies to take gender into account – not only in Third World nations, but also in advanced industrial countries” (p.72). While some theorists have argued that women have been overlooked in terms of development initiatives, others have argued from socialist (see Burke Leacock, 1981) or post-development (see Shiva, 1989) perspectives that capitalism and industrialization have not benefited women. For example, Vandana Shiva (1989) asserted that development initiatives have disrupted harmonious relations between men and women, and established women as subservient to men, devaluing their knowledge as well as their productivity.

Other scholars also argue that a negative relationship exists between conditions for women and development but from a different position. Seguino (2000a; 2000b) for example, suggests that gender inequities advance development. As Klasen (2002) suggests:

If women have enough education to participate effectively in the formal labor market, wage discrimination can boost investment in industries that employ female workers. Reducing gender inequality in education may enable employers to employ cheap female workers – boosting investment and thus economic growth. (p. 351-352)

Finally, although post-structural (Carr, 2008; Klenk, 2004) and post-colonial (Narayan, 1999; Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003) scholars do not necessarily suggest a causal relationship between conditions for women and development, they have
demonstrated how development discourses produce various realities regarding conditions for women, as well as subject positions for women, that typically reproduce imperialist discourses and re-establish the superiority of Minority World countries.

**Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Findings Regarding Gender and Development**

There are many possible ways to organize and frame the literature on the advancement of conditions for women across cultures in relation to development: for example according to disciplines, theoretical frameworks, methods, arguments, and findings to name the obvious categories. Based on my desire to learn more about the ideologies that influence this body of work, I organized the literature primarily according to underlying theoretical frameworks (liberal, humanist, socialist, feminist, or postmodern), and then based on assumptions regarding development (mainstream or critical) and indicators used to assess conditions for women (equality, well-being or alternatively discursively constructed), as explicitly identified by the author and/or indirectly implied (see Table 2.1). I hoped that this organization would help to explain the diverse, sometimes contradictory conclusions reached by the authors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions for Women</th>
<th>Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality (sameness of rights and roles)</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being (status, agency, health)</td>
<td>Feminist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discursively constructed</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is important to be mindful however that the publications did not always fit neatly into one category of this classification system that I imposed upon them. Indeed, there is overlap between categories, and diversity within them. Feminist scholarship in particular was difficult to classify. While some feminist work was predominantly guided by feminist theory, other feminist work was guided primarily by socialist, post-development, or post-structural theory, and consequently classified as such. Further, some of the feminist, as well as some of liberal scholarship assessed women’s empowerment using both equality and well-being indicators suggesting a greater fluidity between these categories that what is depicted by this representation.

What follows is a review of the scholarly literature organized according to the classification system previously described. The liberal perspectives are based on mainstream views of development, typically operationalize women’s empowerment as gender-equality, and suggest an inherently positive relationship between development and conditions for women. The humanist perspective is based on a capacity building notion of development, views women’s empowerment as gender-equality, and asserts a positive relationship between development and conditions for women. The feminist perspective is critical of the effects of development on women, although not necessarily critical of the goals of development, typically assess conditions for women primarily
based on well-being, and asserts a negative relationship between development and conditions for women. Socialist perspectives are critical of mainstream views of development, typically assess conditions for women based on well-being, and asserts a negative relationship between development and conditions for women. Post-structural and post-colonial perspectives assert that understandings of gender and development are constructed by discursive representations, and tend to be critical of mainstream views of development and universal notions of gender. Post-development perspectives are critical of mainstream views of development and typically assess conditions for women based on well-being, and asserts a negative relationship between development and conditions for women.

Before beginning the review of this literature, I conclude with one final note of clarification. While there are a plethora of theories of development (see Peet with Hartwick, 1999), this review is limited to a general exploration and discussion of the theories of development that have been specifically applied to the study of conditions for women.

Liberal Perspectives

Liberal theories of development encompass several different perspectives that have been applied to the cross-national study of women, including theories that conceptualize development as modernization, economic growth, and economic freedom.

Development as Modernization

Modernization theories of societal change, prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, are still influential in current publications regarding conditions for women and development (see Bergh, 2006; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Spierings, Smits & Verloo, 2009; Steel &
Kabashima, 2008). Although there are a variety of theories of modernization, including sociological, economic, psycho-cultural, and historical models (see Peet with Hartwick, 1999 for a review), modernization theorists typically conceptualize development as a linear process comprised of a series of hierarchical stages, based on Western trajectories of cultural change (Fry & Martin, 1991). Rostow’s (1960) Stages of Economic Growth provides a classic example of modernization theory. He constructed five hierarchical stages of development from “traditional societies” to “high mass consumption,” based on the typical scientific, technological, economic, political, and/or cultural changes evident in the historical trajectories of nations such as America, Canada, Great Britain, and Japan.

Although few modernization theories specifically addressed how development impacts women (Marshall, 1985), the general principles of modernization theory have been applied to the study of the advancement of conditions for women (see Marshall, 1985; Moore & Shackman, 1996; Shena & Williamson, 1999). Political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2003) however provide a notable exception. In their often cited book, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*[^24]他们 theorized that “modernization brings systematic predictable changes in gender roles” (p. 10) [italics in the original], suggesting that transitions from agricultural to industrial and post-industrial societies result in cultural changes, as well as socioeconomic changes that alter societal values that impact women’s roles and legal rights. According to Inglehart and Norris (2003) people in agrarian societies struggle for survival, and women and children are among the most vulnerable. In these societies with no social protection services and high levels of insecurity, people tend to be wary of rapid change, and value tradition, authority, religion, communal ties and ascribed status. Women are valued for

[^24]: Cited 435 times in Googlescholar (October 25th, 2009)
their child bearing and rearing roles given the high infant and child mortality rates, and traditional divisions of labour are reinforced because they maximize the chances of the survival of children. As societies transition from agrarian to industrial communities, with insurance, unions, cooperatives, loans and the like, individuals become less vulnerable, and individualism, innovation, secular social beliefs, and achievement are increasingly valued. With improvements in healthcare, infant mortality declines and fertility rates drop. Although women’s traditional roles are largely maintained during this stage, more women enter the paid labour force and attain greater legal rights. With the transition to post-industrial society, prosperity and security are heightened because of the growing economy and increasing social services, which facilitates another shift in values. “In advanced industrial societies the public has given increasingly high priority to quality of life issues, individual autonomy and self-expression, the need for environmental protection, and direct participation in political decisions making” (Inglehart & Norris, 2003, p. 17). As the nuclear family declines, women’s rights increase, and gender-equality (in the public and private spheres), is increasingly accepted by both men and women.

Inglehart and Norris (2003) provide empirical evidence for their theory, as described above, by correlating “modernization,” (based on the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index, as well as 13 other measures of development) and “gender-equality,” based on the “Gender Equity Scale, a survey of

25 The Gender Equity Scale includes the following questions: “On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do; When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women; A university education is more important for a boy than a girl; Do you think that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled or is this not necessary?; If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent but she doesn’t want to have a stable relationship with a man do you approve or disapprove?” (Inglehart & Norris, 2003, p. 31).
attitudes regarding women’s roles. Although they acknowledge that an unknown third factor could be responsible for the correlations they conclude:

It is clear from this wide range of evidence from many nations, and consistent with our theoretical interpretation, that where societal modernization and human development have progressed furthest, traditional conceptions of a strict demarcation between the roles of women and men have broken down most fully.

(p. 36)

The authors emphasize, however “although the broad outlines of this shift are predictable, not every society responds in the same way: … traditional cultural heritage helps to shape contemporary social change” (p. 18). They thought that the relationship between modernization and gender-equality was mediated by religion, historical traditions, as well as institutional structures. The Islamic religion was found to be one of the most profound barriers to the “rising tide of gender equality” (p. 71).

Other modernization theorists take a more contextualized approach. Gill Steel and Ikuo Kabashima (2008) found that, in general, people had more egalitarian attitudes towards gender in wealthier countries. They asserted, however, that since the modernization process is not the same in all countries, the cultural values may differ at similar stages of modernization. The focus of their work was to try to generate a deeper understanding of the explanation (typically identified as vague “cultural factors”) for atypical cases. Their study focused on East Asian countries whose populations are seen by them to exhibit less egalitarian attitudes than is expected given their level of development. Steel and Kabashima (2008) concluded that cultural ideologies evident within economic development policies mediated the relationship between modernization
and attitudes towards gender-equality. In East Asia, national ideologies that stressed “hard work and the sacrifice of individualism for the greater good of society” (p. 135) supported economic development by encouraging gendered employment practices and justified the use of women as cheap, casual labour.

Development as Economic Growth

In much of the mainstream literature, development is conceptualized as primarily an economic endeavor. According to this group of theorists, “development means improving the conditions of life. Basically economics is knowledge about the effective use of resources in producing the material basis of life. Therefore, development is fundamentally an economic process” (Peet with Hartwick, 1999, p. 17). In this regard, development is commonly assessed according to the Gross National Product (GNP) or the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The higher the GNP or GDP per capita, the more developed the country is assumed to be, and because Minority World countries typically have a higher economic performance than Majority World countries, Western economic strategies are viewed as the key to development.

According to economic theories, although not always explicitly stated, growth is commonly thought to reduce gender-inequalities as a result of the “trickle-down effect,” in that the benefits of development are thought to eventually reach all members of societies and consequently, little attention is paid to equity issues (Fry & Martin, 1991). As Inglehart and Norris (2003) assert:

Growth was seen as the panacea that would lift all boats, and it was often implicitly assumed that this included the endemic problems of women’s literacy and education, low pay, and occupational segregation in the workforce, their
caregiving responsibilities in the home and family, and their participation in the political system. (p. 5)

The research on conditions for women and economic development is complex and contradictory. Economic development is thought to advance conditions for women (see Arnold Lincove, 2008; Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Owen & You, 2009), but advances in gender-equality, particularly in regards to women’s education, are also thought to increase economic development (see Arnold Lincove, 2008; Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Klasen, 2002). Others report no relationship between the advancement of conditions for women and economic growth (Viterna, Fallon & Beckfield, 2008; Jose; 2008), or mixed findings (Brady & Kall, 2008; Forsythe, Korzeniwick, & Durrant, 2000; Lantican, Gladwin, & Seale, 1996; Moore & Shackman, 1996; Shena & Williamson, 1999; Young, Fort, & Danner, 1994).

Some of the research in this area suggests that economic development has a positive impact on conditions for women (see Arnold Lincove, 2008; Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Owen & You, 2009). World Bank economists David Dollar and Robert Gatti’s (1999) policy research report entitled Gender Inequality, Income and Growth: Are Good Times Good for Women?, is frequently cited in both scholarly and development-related books and articles. They (1999) found that in general as per capita income increased, so did gender-equality, which led them to assert a causal relationship between these two variables. Dollar and Gatti (1999) concluded however, that economic growth was not necessarily sufficient for the reduction of gender-inequality. “Societal preferences” such as religious variables, civil freedom, and regional variables accounted for some of the variation in this regard. Muslim and Hindu religions were associated with high gender-

26 According to googlescholar this paper has been cited in 226 publications as of September 18th, 2009.
inequality whereas the Protestant religion and civil liberties (such as freedom of press and political association) were associated with low gender-inequality. This finding lead Dollar and Gatti to assert that in countries where girls’ education is limited by religious or cultural factors, economic growth may be constrained. Overall, their hypothesis was supported, particularly for middle-income countries. Based on these findings the authors concluded, “apparently good times are good for women” (p. 21). They also established that as women’s attainment of secondary education increases, so does the GNP.

The related argument, advances in conditions for women increase economic development, is also evident in this literature (see Arnold Lincove, 2008; Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Klasen, 2002). Professor and World Bank economist Stephan Klasen (2002) found that gender inequality (female to male ratio in total years of schooling), has both a direct and an indirect effect on economic development. Gender-inequity was found to impede economic growth in both “developed” and “developing” countries, particularly in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Klasen (2002) concluded, “prompting gender equity in education may be among the few “win-win” development strategies. It advances economic prosperity and efficiency, promotes other essential human development goals (such as lower mortality and fertility) and is intrinsically valuable as well” (p. 370).

Other similar studies, however, report no relationship between the advancement of conditions for women and economic growth (Viterna, Fallon & Beckfield, 2008; Jose, 2008), or mixed findings (Brady & Kall, 2008; Forsythe, Korzeniwicz, & Durrant, 2000; Lantican, Gladwin, & Seale, 1996; Moore & Shackman, 1996; Shena & Williamson, 1999; Young, Fort, & Danner, 1994). Different ways of conceptualizing and measuring gender-equality may explain some of these discrepancies. For example, David Brady and
Denise Kall (2008) found that in “affluent Western democracies”, the extent of women’s poverty (and men’s poverty) declined with economic growth; however, they found no relation between economic growth and the feminization of poverty (ratio of women living in poverty compared to men), leading them to conclude that the feminization of poverty was a distinct problem with unique causes. The feminization of poverty was “nearly universal” across the 18 countries included in their sample, although there had been modest declines between 1969 and 2000 in most countries. The authors found only a weak relationship between women’s poverty and the feminization of poverty, leaving them to wonder, “is it preferable to have a society with lower women’s poverty or a society with less feminized poverty?” (p. 996). Similarly, Spierings, Smits and Verloo, (2009) found that woman’s absolute labour market participation was positively related to GDP; however women’s labour market participation relative to men’s was only indirectly related to GDP and was mediated by political structure and by the extent of active political participation. Many of the other articles reviewed here combined relative and absolute measures of equality, which made it difficult to assess whether differences regarding absolute compared to relative measures of conditions for women could account for some of the other discrepancies in the literature.

It is also possible that researchers were more likely to find positive relationships between conditions for women and economic development when they conceptualized conditions for women based on liberal notions of gender-equality, such as equal rights, and similar roles for men and women (Walby, 1990), rather than based on socialist and post-development perspectives of empowerment, such as women’s well-being, agency, and status (see Shiva, 1989). Although it is difficult to make comparisons across studies
due to the diversity of the work, findings that suggested a positive relationship between conditions for women and economic growth seemed more common when gender-equality was conceptualized as women’s educational enrollment or attainment, literacy and/or employment (Arnold Lincove, 2008; Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Klasen 2002; Owen & You, 2009). Findings that suggested a negative or no relationship between conditions for women and economic growth seemed more common when gender-equality was conceptualized as women’s well-being (Jose, 2008; Young, Fort, Danner, 1994; Wejnert, 2008). A more extensive review of the literature in this area however, is needed in order to draw conclusions in this regard.

*Development as “Economic Freedom”*

Independent scholar of literature, translation theory, and philosophy, Michelle Cohen (2006), provides one of the more extreme examples of the liberal perspective regarding the relationship between development and conditions for women. Although her scholarship is not nearly as methodologically rigorous or theoretically grounded as most other studies reviewed, this article is included here because it provides one of the clearest examples of some of the negative ways in which mainstream development theory has influenced understanding of cross-national conditions for women.

Cohen (2006) argued that economic freedom, high income, and legal frameworks that protect women, advance conditions for women. She claimed, “the free state is good for women” (p. 267) and justified her argument based on the positive relationship between countries’ scores on Gwartney and Lawson’s “Economic Freedom Index” (which values free markets, limited government, rules of law, personal choice), and the UNDP’s Gender Empowerment Measure and the Gender-Related Development Index
(discussed in the next section). Although she admits that the relationship between economic development and conditions for women is not clear, based on her results she dismisses the idea that economic freedom and “women’s development” are incompatible, which she states has been asserted by “many radical feminists” (p. 268).

In further support of her argument, she compared conditions for women in “developed” countries, which she refers to as “economically progressive areas dominated by Western culture, including North America, Europe, and Australia” (p. 261), with conditions for women in “developing” countries, “areas dominated by non-Western culture” (p. 261), (also equated with “primitive cultures” at one point in the paper), through the use of narratives and descriptive statistics. Cohen (2006) asserted, “in contrast with the dire condition of women in developing countries, the condition of women in Western countries is now outstanding” (p. 266). Conditions for women associated with “developing countries” included “iconic” issues (Narayan, 1997), such as domestic violence, denial of property rights, honour killings, dowry-related “bride burnings,” female infanticide, lack of legal protection, the marriage of under-aged girls, and war-related trauma. Unlike the “developing” context, her description of life for women in the “developed” world is based primarily on secondary reports of descriptive statistics, and few if any narratives of specific cases are discussed. She described opportunities for women to earn university degrees, work outside of the home, obtain jobs in non-traditional fields, and become financially independent. She acknowledged however, that despite legal reforms, some traditional attitudes linger in “developed” countries, resulting some degree of occupational segregation, and women assuming the primary responsibility for child-rearing on top of employment outside of the home.
Critique of Liberal Perspectives

Liberal perspectives on gender and development are often based on “Western” ethnocentric conceptions of development and gender-equality, which may exacerbate perceptions of difference between Majority World and Minority World countries. Liberal theorists typically view development as synonymous with modernization, economic growth, and/or economic freedom. These perspectives negate other potentially equally valid conceptions, such as happiness, social equity, contentedness and belonging (Fry & Martin, 1991), and may not be consistent with values associated with development in other contexts.

For example the Centre for Bhutan Studies constructed the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index, based on former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck’s conception of development, which includes Buddhist values such as psychological and spiritual wellbeing, time use, community vitality, preservation of cultural values, conservation of the environment, and good governance, as well as more conventional measures such as educational opportunity, physical health and standard of living (Ura, 2008). Indeed there is evidence to suggest that Western conceptions of development may not accurately assess “quality of life” (Fry & Martin, 1991) and the relationship between development and conditions for women may be over-estimated in this regard. Stevenson & Wolfers (2009) claim that despite increases in economic growth and gender-equality, the subjective well-being of women in industrial countries has declined absolutely and relative to that of men in the past forty years. Further, ethnocentric and androcentric methods of assessing “development” may intensify differences between Majority World and Minority World countries (see Waring, 1989). For example, using the GDP as a
measure of development, it also may underestimate productivity, particularly in “developing countries” where production for barter, wages in kind, or production for family consumption may assume a large portion of total income (Boserup, 1970/1989, p. 161).

Conceptions of the conditions for women inherent in the liberal research typically establish contemporary “Western” pattern of gender-equality as their norm, negating other models of women’s empowerment, such as those in which men and women assume complementary, interdependent roles, and women enjoy an elevated status and are not exploited (see Minh-ha, 1989; Shiva, 1989). Ethnocentric conceptions of conditions for women used in cross-national research may heighten the differences between perceptions of women’s empowerment in Minority World and Majority World nations. As Moen (1981) and her colleagues noted:

When the situation of women is considered there is such an “absence of social content” (or construct validity) in the indicators of status that we are lead to believe women in developed nations have a much higher relative status than women in developing nations, and that women in the developed nations have a much higher relative status than they actually do. (Moen et al., 1981, p. 177)

Further, the liberal research often fails to critique characteristic forms of inequality in Minority World countries. For example, violence against women, which may be as prominent or more prominent in Minority World countries as Majority World countries (see Narayan, 1997), was not included as an “indicator” of gender-equality in any cross-national study (liberal or otherwise) included in this review.

In the quest to establish general patterns and causal relationships negative case
examples are often negated by statistical procedures, or dismissed as “outliers,” and much
of the variance regarding conditions for women, particularly differences within cultures,
is obscured (see Tisdell, Roy, and Ghose, 2001; Young, Fort, Danner, 1994). Such
homogeneous representations of conditions for women in different regional areas
contribute to the production of binaries, contrasting dualisms that “limit and constrain
thinking in ways that are oppositional and hierarchical” (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p. 73).
Binaries work holistically to influence meanings and interpretations. As Gannon and
Davies (2007) asserted, “categories tend to slip around and to glue themselves onto other
binaries” (p. 73). Consequently when one term or one dualism is evoked, other related
concepts may also be brought to mind. In regards to the liberal research on conditions for
women and development, equality is commonly associated with “developed” and
inequality is commonly associated with “developing.”

Nowhere is this clearer than in Cohen’s (2006) article in which she juxtaposes
conditions for women in “developed” and “developing” countries. In just one paragraph
she associates violence against women with “Nonwestern” cultures, which she associates
with other related binaries: “primitive,” “developing,” and “traditional.” In doing so,
Cohen (2006) also invokes a set of oppositional dualisms, including civilized, developed,
and progressive, which are then associated with the “Western” culture. As Parpart (1993)
asserts, “dominant meanings are often created through comparison with an ‘other’ which
then defines both itself and the dominant reality” (p. 440). In this publication through the
use of seemingly representative narratives and examples, women in “developing”
countries are constructed as helpless, ignorant, passive, victims, subjugated by husbands,
fathers, brothers, police and the legal system, while women in “developed” countries are
primarily constructed as respected, self-sufficient, autonomous, and resourceful.

Although an extreme example, this article was published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Feminist Perspectives

Mainstream feminist scholars have demonstrated that development has not necessarily benefited women, and that, contrary to mainstream beliefs, sex-based inequities may actually advance economic development (see Boserup, 1970/1989; Kelly, 1984; Kim, 1992; Mitra & Singh, 2007; Moen, Boulding, Lillydahl, and Palm, 1981; Rute Cardoso, 1996; Seguino, 2000a; Seguino, 2000b; Wejnert, 2008). Two views are inherent within this literature: research that focuses on the inherently discriminatory nature of development initiatives, as well as research that focuses on the ways in which gender-based inequities contribute towards development initiatives.

Development as Discrimination

In her much cited text “Women's Role in Economic Development,” Boserup (1970/1989) reported how external efforts to “develop” African, Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries, as well as the shift towards industrialization, did not benefit, or even negatively impacted women. European colonizers pushed women out of agricultural work in predominantly female farming communities in Africa by re/allocating farming technologies, education and control over land to men. As Boserup notes,

European settlers, colonial administrators and technical advisers are largely responsible for the deterioration in the status of women in the agricultural sectors of developing countries. It was they who neglected the female agricultural labour

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27 As of September 18th, 2009 the 2007 edition of this book was cited 3003 times in googlescholar.
force when they helped to introduce modern commercial agriculture to the
overseas world and promoted the productivity of male labour. (p. 53-54)

Prior to colonization, farming provided women with status, economic independence, and
freedom of moment, at least to some extent.

Boserup also established how industrialization, in which factories replaced home
labour, generally resulted in job losses for women due to the preference for male
labourers as well as female workers’ need to work within the home in order to
simultaneously care for children. Economic development did not necessarily produce
advances for women in education, administrative work, or professions outside of teaching
and nursing. She concluded, “economic progress benefits men as wage earners in the
modern sector, while the position of women is left unchanged, and even deteriorates
when competition from the growing modern sectors eliminates the traditional enterprises
carried on by women” (Boserup, 1989, p. 139). Although Boserup documented some of
the ways in which development has negatively impacted women in Africa, Asia, South
America and the Middle East, she did not view economic development as being
inevitably bad for women. Rather she asserted that with access to necessary education
and societal support, women could excel in non-domestic spheres, which would also
benefit economic development. “Recruitment of women to the modern sector helps to
accelerate the growth of the economy beyond the rate attainable by the use of male labor
alone” (Boserup, 1989, p. 211).

Even without intentional sex-based discrimination, development efforts may
result in unexpected negative outcomes for women. Aparna Mitra, and Pooja Singh
(2007) found that Kerala, the Indian State with the highest scores on the UNDP’s Human
Development Index and Gender-related Development Index, also had the highest rates of female suicide in the country. The authors theorized that high levels of development in Kerala, coupled with traditional values regarding gender relations, create cultural tensions, which contributed to social problems including family conflict, domestic violence, and high suicide rates for women. They concluded,

Women in Kerala have high expectations of themselves because they have been imbied with the importance of acquiring education and literacy. Yet the social structure is characterized by the dominance of males who restrict the choices of women in the labor market and in household decision-making processes. This contradiction is absent in most of the states in India, where women have lower educational attainment and fewer choices. (p. 1240)

The feminist critique of the impact of “progress” on women was not specific to development in Majority World countries. Elisabeth Moen, Elise Boulding, Jane Lillydahl, and Risa Palm (1981) multi-disciplinary study assessed conditions for women during an economic boom in two American cities. They found that women suffered more negative consequences than men during times of rapid economic development, including increased responsibility for farms, homes and children when men transitioned from agricultural labour to industrial jobs, particularly when their husbands migrated alone to job sites; decreased status for women who migrated with their husbands who were not able to maintain previous public roles; and increased isolation for women who did not work outside the home once their husbands’ wages increased enough to enable the family to adhere to traditional gender roles. Further, despite the high paying jobs available to men during economic growth, jobs available to women were limited, low paid and low
status. This, combined with the subsequent rise in the cost of living associated with
economic development, was particularly problematic for self-supporting women, who
worked double shifts, went on welfare, or turned to prostitution to make ends meet. The
authors drew many parallels between conditions for women in American boomtowns and
in “developing” countries during industrialization and economic growth. Their findings
challenged assumptions that “equality and modernization go hand in hand” (p. 177) as
well as the “myth of equality” (p. 177) in Western countries, and demonstrated that
despite different levels of modernization in different countries, women are
disenfranchised during periods of economic growth.

Further the feminist critique of the effect of development on women is not
specific to contemporary society. Based on an historical analysis, Kelly (1984) concluded
that eras characterized by profound social, cultural, political and economic development,
such as classical Athenian civilization, the Renaissance, and French revolution, were not
necessarily times of progress for women. She found that, “what emerges is a fairly
regular pattern of relative loss for women precisely in those periods of so-called
progressive change” (p. 2). According to Kelly, some of the “advancements” during these
historical eras can be the very factors that create restrictions for women. “Events that
further the historical development of men, liberating them from natural, social or
ideological constraints, have quite different, even opposite effects upon women” (p. 19).

*Discrimination as Development*

Contrary to research that suggests that gender-equality increases economic
development (Dollar & Gatti, 1999; Klasen, 2002), feminist economist Stephanie
Seguino (2000a; 2000b) found that gender-based inequities (gender wage differentials)
actually advance economic development (GDP), depending on the structure of the economy (also see Rute Cardoso, 1996).

The export-oriented growth and industrialization strategy has been promoted by some as a means to improve women’s well-being. Yet evidence presented here suggests that gender inequality is a causal factor in investment and economic growth for the semi-industrialized countries in the sample used here. (Seguino, 2000a, p. 1224)

Seguino (2000a) theorized that if women are segregated into low paying jobs in the export industry, the increased revenue from exports will indirectly have a positive effect on economic growth. Her results supported this hypothesis within the context of her sample made up of 20 semi-industrialized countries, such as Brazil, Greece, Hong Kong, Mexico, and Sri Lanka, that rely on exports produced in female-dominated manufacturing industries. She concluded that unless there is evidence to suggest that the export-oriented growth and industrialization strategy promotes a more equitable allocation of resources over time, “our work is to define strategies that make it possible to promote both economic growth and gender equity” (Seguino, 2000a, p. 1224).

*Critique of Feminist Perspectives*

While much of the (mainstream) feminist research on cross-national conditions for women critically analyzed the impact of economic development, industrialization and capitalism on women, producing better-contextualized knowledge regarding factors that enable and constrain conditions for women in specific cultures, their analyses left the development project intact. Seguino (2000a), for example, suggested that the goal for feminist economists was to find ways to advance economic development while not
discriminating against women, and Borseup (1970/1989) asserted that incorporating women within development initiatives could advance progress. Further, although this feminist scholarship offers a more nuanced perspective than mainstream theories, exposing andocentric perspectives of development, and disrupting the notion that development affects all people in similar ways, this perspective often universalizes conditions for women, and does not attend to the unique circumstances of differently positioned women (Minh-ha, 1989; Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003). As post-structural and post-colonial theorists have suggested, this type of analysis homogenizes the experiences of different women, “lumping them together” in one category (Carr, 2008), which produces less nuanced understandings of the intersections between different forms of oppression as well as the diversity among women.

Humanist Perspective

Although only one perspective is reviewed in this section, the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) development and gender-related indices are arguably the most well known assessments of cross-national conditions for women. As clearly evident in some of the research described in the previous sections, the UNDP’s data are frequently used in other research reports.

Development as Enhancing Capacities

The UNDP conceptualizes the primary goal of development not as modernization, financial growth, or economic freedom but rather as benefiting people by providing them with the freedoms and basic capabilities to make choices and achieve their potential. “The purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives” (UNDP, 1995, p. 11). Equality is central to the UNDP’s
conception of development. “People must have access to equal opportunities. All barriers to economic and political opportunities must be eliminated so that people can participate in, and benefit from, these opportunities” (UNDP, 1995, p. 12). Equality and development are viewed as mutually reinforcing. Advances in development enable all people to make use of their potential, and gender-equality further enhances development. According to the UNDP (1995), “human development is impossible without gender-equality. As long as women are excluded from the development process, development will remain weak and lopsided” (p. 12). The UNHP (1995) does however assert that level of development does not necessarily ensure gender-equality.

Annually the UNDP amalgamates statistical data on the vast majority of countries to produce development indices, single statistics reflecting the developmental status of the country, including the Human Development Index (HDI), and two indices that assess conditions for women: the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)\(^28\). The HDI is calculated based on what are viewed as the basic essentials for enhancing capacities and increasing human choices: standard of living (Gross Domestic Product or GDP), knowledge (school enrollment and literacy), and health (longevity). Although the GDP is an indicator of development and there is a strong association between the HDI rankings and the GPD per capita\(^29\), the UNDP asserts that the GDP alone does not indicate how a country’s wealth is distributed or priorities created for government spending. The GDI includes all the indicators included in the HDI (education, health, GDP), adjusted for gender-related inequalities. The GEM strives to

\(^{28}\) The fourth index is the Human Poverty Index (HPI).

\(^{29}\) According to my calculations, based on the 2008 Statistical Update (UNDP, 2008a), there is a strong negative correlation between the rankings on the HDI (lower the rankings indicate greater development) and the GPD per capita \(r = -.848\), in other words, the higher the GDP, the lower the ranking on the HDI.
capture women’s political and economic involvement, measuring the number of female parliamentarians, legislators, and professionals and technical workers, as well as the gender disparity in earned income. Consistent with valuing equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women, the UNDP’s indices penalize countries not only where men outscore women, but also where women outscore men on the various measures, which has been a source of critique (Charmes & Wieringa, 2003). UNDP ranks countries according to the HDI, GDI, and the GEM and also categorizes them as high, medium or low based on their scores on these indices.\(^{30}\)

Although commonly misunderstood according to the UNDP, the GDI is not necessarily a measure of “gender-equality,” and is influenced by the national level of development as well as national gender disparities. In this regard, countries that score high on the HDI also tend to score high on the GDI (as well as the GEM to a lesser extent) which creates a positive association between development and gender-equality. Based on my calculations of the data from the 2008 Statistical Update (UNDP, 2008a), there is a strong positive correlation between the HDI rankings and the GDI rankings \(r = 0.998\) and the GEM rankings \(r = 0.732\) (also see Charmes & Wieringa, 2003). Typically the vast majority of the countries ranked in the top ten or even top twenty on the GDI and the GEM are high-income OECD countries.\(^{31}\) (see Table 2.2).

\(^{30}\) In 2009 the UNPD began ranking development according to four categories: very high human development, high human development, medium human development, and low human development, creating a greater distinction between countries formerly categorized as “high human development”.

\(^{31}\) The OECD is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, an organization committed to democracy and the market economy. There are currently 30 member countries including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States. In 2007 Chile, Estonia, Israel, Russia and Slovenia were invited to engage in accession discussions with the OECD.
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Critique of the Humanist Perspective

Theoretically the UNDP challenges typical mainstream indicators of development, such as economic growth. Their assessment of development however, is largely based on GDP per capita, which serves to reproduce associations between development and Minority World nations and underdevelopment and Majority World nations, as well as association between conditions for women and (economic) development.

The UNDP’s gender-related indices have been critiqued on a number of accounts (see Bardhan & Klasen, 1999; Charmes & Wieringa, 2003; Tisdell, Roy, & Ghose, 2001; Young, Fort, Danner, 1994). Of particular relevance to this work are concerns regarding the validity of the measure because of the ethnocentric conceptions of gender-equality, which may heighten the difference between Minority World and Majority World countries. For example, most of the variance in the GDI comes from the ratio of estimated female to male earned income, which may not reflect women’s control over income, does not recognize the non-paid labour of women, and is based on Western ideals of divisions of labour (Bardhan & Klasen, 1999; Charmes & Wieringa, 2003). As Bardhan and Klasen (1999) note:

The focus on inequality in imputed earnings between males and females implicitly assumes that a 50/50 split in earned income should be the goal of all societies. This is also debatable. Some may argue that some form of sexual division of labor is economically advantageous and desired by women and men in many countries; others may argue that a 50/50 split in earned income is a culturally relative goal and is based on Western conception of economic and...
Standardized indicators may not produce appropriate comparisons, and also serve to exaggerate the achievement of development and gender-equality in Minority World countries. For example, the UNDP (2009) does not provide actual male or female literacy rates for most of the countries ranked highest in terms of development, including Canada. Rather a value of 99% is used and no explanation is provided. Yet in the province of British Columbia (which has higher literacy rates than the Canadian average), over one third of working aged adults do not have sufficient literacy skills to “achieve their goals, to function and thrive in the modern economy, and to develop their knowledge and potential” (Literacy BC, n.d., p.2). While the literacy rate may be higher in countries like Canada than in other places, it is clear that the level of literacy is not adequate given the demands of this society.

Further, by representing levels of development and conditions for women with a numerical score out of maximum possible value of 1.00, the UNPD Human Development Indices give the impression that there is a common trajectory, and a shared end point to development and the gender-equality projects. Because Minority World countries typically excel on the indicators, the scores of these countries, for example, Canada scored .956 on the GDI (UNPD, 2008), suggest that efforts to create an equitable society are nearing completion in highly ranked countries.

Even minor adjustments to the method of assessing gender-equality across countries can produce different results. Bardhan and Klasen (1999) recalculated the GDI after making several changes to increase the weight of life expectancy and education, based on their theoretical argument that the estimated earnings of women compared to
men account for too much of the variance of this measure. These adjustments, which are relatively minor, considering that the authors are using the exact same data set, resulted in substantial differences in GDI scores. This adjustment served to increase gender disparities in some South Asian, Eastern European and African countries.

Although the adjustments made by Bardhan and Klasen (1999) did not disrupt mainstream associations between conditions for women and development, other similar measures of cross-national conditions for women have produce very different results. The “Global Gender Gap Index” (GGGI), for example, created by the World Economic Forum ranked the Philippines, (6th), Latvia (10th), Sri Lanka (12th) Lesotho (15th) Mozambique (17th), Trinidad and Tobago (18th), Moldova (19th) within the top twenty countries in relation to gender parity out of the 160 countries included in the assessment (see Table 2.2). Canada, which is typically ranked within the top ten of the GDI and the GEM is ranked 31st on the GGGI. The correlation between the GGGI and the HDI (r =0.492) is not nearly as strong as the correlation between the HDI and the GDI or the GEM. Like the GDI, the GGGI assesses gender “gaps” in relation to economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival, as well as political empowerment. However unlike the GDI, the GGGI measures disparities between men and women independently of levels of national development, countries are not penalized for the “overachievement” of women, and all four indicators are equally weighted (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi, 2008) 32.

32 This research is premised on the ideological position that gender equity can increase economic development. “More than ever, in the current economic downturn we will need the best minds and the best leadership to find the most creative solutions, revive growth and prevent such crises in the future. In other words, we will need to ensure that the minds and talents of both women and men are fully engaged in this process” (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi, 2008, p. v). Interestingly the image featured on the World Economic Forum’s webpage when this report was downloaded depicted five men in business suits and no women, which counters the value placed on gender-equality and for me, diminishes the importance of the
Another cause for concern is the homogenization of conditions within countries based on UNDP Indices. As Tisdell, Roy, and Ghose (2001) note:

Because these indices, like HDI, are aggregate measures, they may conceal significant gender inequalities. It is for example, possible for gross inequality between females to increase and for GDI and GEM to remain constant, other things being equal. This is because gender inequality only relates to the average situation of males compared to the average for females. (¶ 46)

Additionally, aggregate measures can also conceal significant gender equalities, equitable conditions for some women in Majority World countries, which may problematize mainstream assumptions regarding gender-equity in “other” places, and challenge our sense of the superiority of equity in Minority World countries.

Socialist Perspective

Marxist theory (see Bandarage, 1988; Burke Leacock, 1981), as well as dependency theory (a neomarxist perspective) (see Lantican, Gladwin, & Seale, 1996; Marshall, 1985; Shen & Williamson, 1999), has been applied to cross-cultural studies of conditions for women. These perspectives challenge mainstream views of development and typically associate “development” with exploitation.

Development as Exploitive Social Relations

Based on the work of Marx and Engles, some researchers (see Bandarage, 1988; Burke Leacock, 1981), view the relationship between gender and development as dependent upon economic structures and inherently linked with other forms of oppression. Marx (1859/1977), conceptualized development as progressive stages report.
characterized by different modes of production including tribal, ancient, feudal, and capitalist forms, which typically benefited some classes and/or some countries more than others, as well as different forms of social relations, which were typically conflictual in nature. “Since civilization is founded on the exploitation of one class by another class, its whole development proceeds in a constant contradiction. Every step forward in production is at the same time a step backwards in the position of the oppressed class, that is, of the great majority” (Engels, 1884, ¶37).

Although Marx rarely addressed the oppression of women, Engels (1884) theorized about the significance of gender in relation to development. His work was based on Lewis Henry Morgan’s stages of “prehistoric” cultural development, in which societies were classified as representative of lower, middle, or upper stages of “savagery”, “barbarianism”, or “civilization” based on their technology, art and modes of production (see Engels, 1884, Chapter 1). Engels (1884) asserted that when societies transitioned from hunting and gathering cultures (“savagery”) to agrarian cultures (“barbarianism”), women were subordinated. Up until the end of the lower stage of “barbarianism,” production was a collective endeavor, men and women had distinct roles, and each had authority within their own sphere (see Chapter 9). During the middle stage of “barbarianism” the mode of production was primarily agricultural, and unlike the earlier stage of this period, the heads of families, rather than tribes, owned herds.

According to Engels (1984) because men had always served as the providers of sustenance in the family, they naturally assumed responsibility for livestock. Within agricultural communities, it became possible to produce a surplus of commodities, and

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33 Although Engels refers to the stages of “prehistoric culture,” he classified some contemporary cultures (at the time of publication) as indicative of the middle stage of savagery.
men assumed control and ownership over superfluous goods, which resulted in a gender hierarchy.

The "savage" warrior and hunter had been content to take second place in the house, after the woman; the "gentler" shepherd, in the arrogance of his wealth, pushed himself forward into the first place and the woman down into the second. And she could not complain. The division of labor within the family had regulated the division of property between the man and the woman. … The same cause which had ensured to the woman her previous supremacy in the house - that her activity was confined to domestic labor - this same cause now ensured the man's supremacy in the house: the domestic labor of the woman no longer counted beside the acquisition of the necessities of life by the man; the latter was everything, the former an unimportant extra (Engels, 1884, ¶ 9).

During the latter part of the “barbarism” labour became increasingly differentiated and handcrafts separated from agriculture. Productivity increased, requiring slaves and/or wage labour, and resulting in exploitation and increased wealth for head’s of families. Household communities declined, the single family became the economic unit of society, property became privatized, monogamy increased, and so did prostitution. Engels (1884) concluded, “the emancipation of woman will only be possible when woman can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time” (¶ 9).

Researchers from a variety of disciplines have demonstrated how conditions for women have changed with the rise of capitalism (Burke Leacock, 1981) and the imposition of the colonial influence (Bandarage, 1988). For example, according to
anthologist Eleanor Burke Leacock the Montagnais-Naskapi people of Labrador were an interdependent and egalitarian society in the 1630s: leadership was a revolving position and decisions were made by individuals who were the most knowledgeable in regards to the issue at hand or those who were affected by the outcome (Burke Leacock, 1981).

There was “equality” between men and women, and women had authority and autonomy in relation to their labour, products, marriage, divorce, and sexual partners (before and after marriage). Monogamy was not compulsory for married individuals and paternity was not a primary concern, as the community, rather than nuclear families, raised children. Women assumed powerful positions such as Shamans, and matrilocality was common. Typically men and women assumed complementary roles: men hunted and women gathered and prepared food, made clothes and tents and cared for children. These boundaries were not impermeable however, and all people worked in whatever capacity necessary to meet the needs of the group.

The status of women shifted however when the mode of production changed from hunting to trading, as well as a result of the “development” initiatives of Jesuit priests. When Montagnais-Naskapi became more reliant on trapping and trade than on hunting for subsistence the nature of men’s work changed from cooperative to individual labour. Consequently, the nuclear family and monogamy became predominant as individual men, rather than the community, supplied food for their families, and it was viewed as beneficial to have one’s “own” son to help with trapping. Further, Jesuit priests tried to establish, with some success, the man as the authority within the family structure. By the 20th century, the Montagnais-Naskapi culture was still considered “egalitarian;” however, men held more authority and power, women no longer served as Shamans, and
patrilocality was predominant. Burke Leacock (1981) concluded, “as markedly different as the Montagnais-Naskapiculture continued to be from Western culture, the ethnohistorical record makes clear that it had been constantly restructuring itself to fit new situations and that the status of women, although still relatively high, has clearly changed” (p. 62).

Development as Dependency

Dependency theory, a Neo Marxist perspective informed by the work of critical Latin American economists, such as Osvaldo Sunkel, Celso Furtado, Fernando Cardoso, Enzo Falleto, and Teontonio Dos Santos, is another socialist theory that has influenced the study of development and conditions for women. Dependency theorists argue that rather than advancing economic development and equality, colonialism, capitalism, and liberal economic policies such as free trade have perpetuated exploitative relationships and oppression. “The basic message of dependency school was that European development was predicated on the active underdevelopment of the non-European world” (Peet with Hartwick, 1999, p. 107) [italics in original]. Inequitable distribution of resources exists not only at the international level, but also within national and local contexts where a few elites in periphery countries benefit from the financial arrangement at the cost of the majority of workers in the country, particularly women who are largely excluded from the cash economy, confined to the informal economy, and/or treated as casual labour (see Marshall, 1985).

Dependency theory has been applied to the study of gender and development (see Lantican, Gladwin, & Seale, 1996; Marshall, 1985; Shena & Williamson, 1999). In these studies development theory is typically empirically tested against modernization theory
with mixed or inconclusive results. For example, Susan Marshall (1985) attempted to validate assumptions regarding the effects of economic development on gender-equality according to modernization theory (economic development results in more egalitarian conditions for women) and dependency theory (dependent development exacerbates inequities for women). She found that consistent with modernization theory, women’s level of education was positively associated with development but inconsistent with modernization theory, women’s participation in the labour force was negatively associated with development. She also specifically studied the effect of economic dependence on conditions for women, finding that consistent with dependency theory, investment dependency and export dependency were negatively related to women’s educational and occupational attainment, but inconsistent with dependency theory, exports to developed market economies were positively associated with employment rates for women, and that there was no relationship between debt dependency and conditions for women. Her results did not generate strong support for either theoretical framework but rather suggested the importance of regional factors in mediating the effects of economic development on conditions for women. She concluded:

At the very least, the findings of this cross-sectional study challenge the cultural convergence hypothesis of some modernization theorists … that economic development universally Westernizes indigenous cultural institutions. They also lend support to the growing criticism that dependency/world system theory is seriously flawed by its tendency to neglect the analysis of internal dynamics. (p. 232)
**Critique of Socialist Perspectives**

While socialist perspectives challenge mainstream views of development, disrupt the association between capitalist development and equity, and can offer a broader conception of women’s empowerment beyond gender-equality, they run the risk of constructing their own metanarratives. Marx and Engles, paradigmatically, viewed development as a progressive endeavor that typically followed normative stages. Yet there is plenty of evidence to suggest that development and conditions for women evolved in different ways in different contexts (see Marshall, 1985). For example, contrary to Engel’s (1884) theory, men did not automatically assume control over farming in some African communities when societies transitioned from hunting and gathering to agricultural forms of production (see Boserup, 1970/1989). Further, based on her study of upper middle class Korean women, Myung-Hye Kim (1992) found that, contrary to Marxist theory, changes in women’s participation in production during rapid industrialization did not either uniformly improve or diminish their status. In this regard she cited Ueno (1987) who argued “industrialization and modernization are complex processes that provide both liberating and oppressive contexts for gender practices in different ways according to location (e.g., urban vs. rural) and class” (Kim, 1992, p.161). Socialist scholarship in this area however has helped to illuminate some of the ways in which gender intersects with class in relation to development initiatives to produce negative outcomes for women (see Bandarage, 1988).

**Postmodern Perspectives**

Postmodern theorists, including post-structural (Rist, 1997), post-colonial (Said, 2003), and post-development scholars (Shiva, 1989), problematize the mainstream view
of development, viewing it as a strategy of power, control and domination. Often drawing from the work of Lyotard, Foucault, and Dierrida, these theorists question modern assumptions of objective knowledge, universal truths and power of reason, view the construction of knowledge as an act of power, and work to understand how meanings are constructed and identities are made available. “This approach emphasizes local, specific and historically informed analysis of different realities, the importance of difference and the pitfalls of universalizing essentialism” (Parpart, 1993, p. 441). Postmodern critiques challenge the progressive notion of development and in doing so, trouble modernist assumptions regarding the relationship between gender-equality and development, and elucidate the assumptions inherent in mainstream texts on development and conditions for women. Although there is much overlap between post-structural, post colonial, and post-development perspectives and their applications, they are described separately here, in order to clearly identify some of the differences in regards to the ways these theories have been applied to the study of conditions for women.

*Development as Discursive Constructions of Power*

Post-structural development scholars seek to understand how transnational power relations are constructed, and how social realities are discursively produced (see Rist, 2002). As can be seen in the following two post-structural studies of gender and development (Carr, 2008; Klenk, 2004), importance is placed on constructing contextualized understandings of the lives of Two-Thirds-World women that disrupt mainstream homogenous representations.

For Rebecca Klenk (2004), professor of Anthropology and Women Studies, development is a discursive construct that is appropriated in ways that produce new and
complex identities for women. Through her ethnographic study of rural women’s understandings of the “developed woman” in Kumaon, India, Klenk demonstrated how transnational development discourses were reconfigured and integrated with other discourses, such as entrepreneurial discourses. In exploring the different ways in which official discourses were reconfigured by these women, Klenk established her research participants as active agents, creating and critically interrogating mainstream development discourses rather than passively consuming external imposed understandings of development. For example, during an NGO workshop on natural resources and environmental decline, participants defined a “developed woman” as a woman with handicraft skills, the ability to market her goods, and the power to maintain control over her earnings in order to improve her family’s financial situation. In prioritizing generating and controlling income over sustainability, participants “interrogated their marginalization from wider capitalist networks, and suggested that in the material context of their lives, environmental developmentalist discourses on sustainability must be linked to possibilities for market constructions of the ‘developed woman’” (p.75). The participants’ conceptions problematized assumptions regarding the homogeneity of “local” representations, and enabled various, and at times conflicting subjective identities, including entrepreneur, community activist, good mother and wife, self-reliant and confident woman, and an educated and intelligent person. Klenk (2004) concluded, “development … cannot be reduced to a change in material circumstances. Rather, it is also a point of departure for the formation of new subjectivities, subjectivities which simultaneously seem to open some possibilities and complicate others” (p. 76).

Based on his feminist post-structural analysis of crop selection in Ghanaian villages,
Geography professor Edward Carr (2008) asserted that gender has more nuanced and complex implications for development than is typically suggested by “mainstream” feminist studies. Carr (2008) compared the results of a “feminist empiricist” analysis of male and female farmers’ crop selection in two villages in central Ghana, in which women are treated as a homogeneous group, with a feminist post-structural analysis of the same data, in which gendered crop selection was understood in relation to the intersection between gender and class, as well as local constitutions of gender. Carr (2008) concluded that unlike the post-structural approach, which is rarely applied to development projects, the feminist empiricist approach conflated the experiences of different women and obscured some of the vulnerabilities specific to particular groups of women, which may explain why the mainstream development approach has largely failed to address the needs of significant percentage of the population. Carr (2008) concluded “the lessons of the feminist post-structuralists, which highlight the local constitution of gender and the intersection of gender roles with issues such as class, make it clear that analytically useful subdivisions of the categories “woman” and “man” must come from detailed understandings of those categories, in all their diversity, at the local level” (p. 911).

*Development as the Discursive Production of Subjectivity*

Postcolonial theories critique Western notions of development and progress and the effects of imperialism on colonized subjects (Rohmann, 1999). Edward Said’s (2003) influential text established how European representations of the “Orient” (in this case Arab and Islamic societies) worked to define the “West,” asserting its superiority over other cultures, and to legitimize its domination over its colonies. Feminist postcolonial
scholars have specifically addressed how Western feminist work, often populated with ideologies inherent in colonial discourse, has produced specific subjectivities for Majority and Minority World women (see Jayawardena, 1995). For Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) the construction of a distinct “Third World” woman is essential in establishing the subjectivity of “First World” woman (provided it does not threaten the identity of the master). “You and I are close, we intertwine; you may stand on the other side of the hill once in a while, but you may also be with me, while remaining what you are and what I am not” (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 90). Subjectivities are complex, multifaceted, and constantly shifting, and identity categories are always “leaking” (p. 94). Because a sense of continuity of self is desired, the “authentic” and “essential” characteristics are separated from the “false” and “unnecessary” ones in order to produce a unified, albeit fictional subject. Subjectivities however may not coincide with material subjects. “The real, nothing else than a code of representation, does not (cannot) coincide with the lived or the performed.” [italics in the original] (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 94). Minh-ha (1989) also critiques feminist universal representations of “woman” in which referents relevant to “Third World” women are largely ignored, thus perpetuating oppression.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s (1986/2003) pivotal analysis established how the complexity of the lives of women living in “Third World” countries has been “discursively colonized” and reduced to a single monolithic subject she refers to as the “Third World woman,” who is constructed in contrast to the western woman in (some) “Western” feminist texts.

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, domestic, family-oriented, 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. (p. 337)

In the feminist texts she reviewed, women were universalized, and constructed as a coherent analytical category across diverse contexts. In this regard, the world is structured according to hierarchical gender binaries in which women are produced in opposition to men, as oppressed and powerless. This universalized category of women is situated within the context of ethnocentric Western assumptions, ignoring the structures that produce women in specific contexts. This “colonial move” produces what Talpade Mohanty (1986/2003) refers to as the “Third World difference,” a “cross culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy or male dominance” (p. 19).

The construction of cross-national subjectivities for women however, is not limited to the analysis of feminist scholarship. Sociologist Nancy Cook (2005)’s study established how the clothing choices of Euro-American women living in Gilgiti, Pakistan became a text that reproduced imperialist discourses and transcultural power relations. Most of the women interview viewed the shalwar kameez, the traditional Pakistani style of dress, as a symbol of Muslim women’s oppression and their “Western” style of clothes, particularly jeans and t-shirts, as a symbol of their agency, independence, liberation and freedom. In this regard, “a shift from jeans to shalwar signals an embodied passage from a modern, civilized Western culture to a “backward” Islamic one” (p. 360). A minority of the participants used the shalwar kameez to establish a sense of belonging and respect for the Pakistani culture; however, the vast majority of the participants used
clothing styles to differentiate themselves from Pakistani women and to naturalize hierarchical differences among them. Cook (2005) concluded, “by perpetuating dominant discourses of race and culture in these representations, as well as the associated subordinating subjectivity binaries of Self/Other, modern/primitive, and liberated/oppressed, the shalwar kameez becomes the contiguous basis and proof of white women’s racial and cultural superiority” (p. 366).

Development as “Maldevelopment”

Post-development scholars critique mainstream development initiatives, viewing them as tools of cultural domination that have failed to improve conditions for the majority of people in poor countries. For example, Illich (1971/1997) claims “even where per-capita consumption is rising, the majority of men have less food now than in 1945, less actual care in sickness, less meaningful work, less protection” (p. 97) Development has resulted in the loss of sustenance and a reduction in the quality of life for most people, particularly women (Shiva, 1989). As Shiva (1989) asserts “the act of living and of celebrating and conserving life in all its diversity – in people and nature – seems to have been sacrificed to progress, and the sanctity of life been substituted for the sanctity of science and development” (p. xiv). As a result of development, money has replaced human relations as the main source of recognition and survival in traditional communities (Rahnema, 1997). Financial prosperity however, is largely unobtainable for most. With traditional modes of living deteriorating and modern affordances inaccessible for the majority, many people are “are forced to get by in no man’s land between tradition and modernity” (Sachs, 1992, p.3). In this regard, post-development scholars view development as a “poisonous gift” (Rahnema, 1997, p.381).
A concern of many post-development theorists, which often intersects with gender, is in regards to the environmental consequences of development. They have asserted that nature has been exploited in the name of development, and that such “progress” has produced disastrous results (see Shiva, 1989). Indeed the impact on the environment would be nothing short of catastrophic if other countries emulated the consumerism and consumption characteristic of American society (Rahnema, 1997; Sachs, 1992). In this regard so-called modern societies are thought to have much to learn from “traditional” cultures (Rahnema, 1997).

Post-development theorists such as Illich (1982) and Shiva (1989) associate deteriorating conditions for women with mainstream development. For example, Shiva (1989) asserted that under subsistence economies, men and women had distinct but complementary and inter-dependent roles, which were disrupted by mainstream development initiatives. “Maldevelopment militates against this equality in diversity, and superimposes the ideological category of western technological man as a uniform measure of the worth of classes, cultures, and genders. Dominant modes of perception based on reductionism, duality and linearity are unable to cope with equality in diversity, with forms and activities that are significant and valid, even though different” (p.5). Both women and nature’s sustainable systems of reproduction were constructed as unproductive based on Western values of production, viewed as “underdeveloped,” and thus subordinate to the knowledge and power of Western men.

Similarly, Illich (1982) argued that despite myths of industrialized society, conditions for women do not improve with development, and may in fact, worsen. According to Illich (1982) “in every country, discrimination and violence spread at the
same rate as economic development: the more money earned, the more women earn less – and experience rape” (p. 31). Pre-industrial and traditional societies are characterized by what Illich refers to as vernacular gender, that is the gendering of labour, tools, gestures and the like, that are specific to particular cultures. In these societies the roles of men and women are complementary, and women’s labour contributes to the sustainability of the community in unique ways. Consequently there is interdependence between men and women, although often subordinate to men, women are empowered and valued in this regard.

With industrialization, vernacular gender is replaced by what Illich refers to as economic sex, in which men and women are assumed to be asexual and have the same desires in relation to the economic realm. Despite perceptions of “neutrality,” discrimination persists. Under the regime of economic sex women compete with men in the economic realm, but inevitably fail to succeed in this regard. Illich (1982) asserts, “I know of no industrial society where women are the economic equals of men. Of everything that economics measures women get less” (p. 4). In industrial societies women are viewed as doubly disadvantaged as they are discriminated against in relation to paid employment, but also conduct more “shadow labour,” that is, “any labor by which the consumer transforms a purchased commodity into a useable good” (p. 48), than men. Illich differentiates between the shadow labour conducted by the industrial women and the labour of woman in traditional societies in that shadow labour is increasingly mundane, ties women to the home, segregates her from community, and does not enable her to maintain access to resources and skills that allow for sustenance. Further, as gender
is neutralized, women lose their control over the one realm that previously provided them with autonomy and power, the home (also see Shiva, 1989).

Melanie Jansen (2008) drew upon post-development theory to analyze the impact of the development process on women’s knowledge and education in Uganda. Jansen’s (2008) feminist ethnographic study of the Agabagaya Women's Group demonstrated how externally imposed education can disrupt everyday methods of sharing knowledge, serve to devalue local knowledge, and position women as unknowledgeable. As Jansen (2008) notes:

> The underpinnings of development and the subsequent value placed on education offered by external organizations appeared to have become so embedded in the women's understandings of progress and education that I believe it led to placing greater value on the certificates from outside agencies' workshops than on the work that the women did in their own communities. (p. 23-24)

Jansen does not assert, however, that the external educational experiences were of no value to women. She does question what purpose they served and who they benefited. For example, she questioned whether the first-aid training provided by the Red Cross displaced and devalued traditional medical knowledge, and doubted its usefulness in a community where recommended materials such as gauze were expensive and not readily available, and wondered whether it increased women’s responsibility for otherwise costly care related duties that likely should have been assumed by the government.

**Critique of Post-Modern Perspectives**

Post-modern perspectives challenge mainstream views of development, and disrupt the association between development and women’s empowerment. Post-structural
and post-colonial perspectives are particularly useful for illuminating the various realities and meanings inherent within gender and development discourses, and the subject positions made available, as well as how these discourses are produced and re-produced. These perspectives have also illuminated the diversity among women and creating more nuanced (and perhaps pragmatic (see Carr, 2008)) understandings of the realities of different women in relation to development, as well as where and how these diversities have been obscured.

Although post-development scholarship works to disrupt the argument that conditions for women are positively associated with development, this perspective may inadvertently just reverse, rather than reconfigure or reject, mainstream binaries that associate development and equity, suggesting that as societies have evolved or progressed, conditions for women have deteriorated. While they are typically more contextualized and less likely to assert developmental patterns or suggest causal relationships than mainstream theories, post-development perspectives, in particular run the risk of romanticizing traditional contexts for women and overestimating women’s status in these cultures and/or the deterioration of their status in relation to development, as well as negating factors associated with “development” that may improve conditions for women.

As Janzen (2008) asserted, development is constructed in the post-development literature as a “homogenous monster and people as passive victims” (p. 26), a perspective which negates local grassroots development efforts and those of respectful outsiders, as well as the ways in which the goals and values of locals are shaped by locals, and the ways in which locals draw upon development resources to accomplish their own goals.
Janzen concluded, “this false dichotomy tends to set up a good evil paradigm that I find, not only simplistic, but unproductive (Janzen, 2008, p. 27).

**Critique of Literature and Theoretical Framework**

“*Theory is too often used to protect us from the awesome complexity of the world*”

*(Lather, 1986, p. 267)*.

Much of the scholarly literature characterizes the relationship between mainstream views of development and women’s empowerment as inherently positive (as apparent in much of the liberal and humanist publications), or inherently negative (as apparent in much of the feminist, socialist, and post-development publications), and there are concerns associated with the implications of both perspectives. The scholarship suggesting that conditions for women are positively associated with development is problematic in several clearly identifiable ways. When conditions for women are assumed to improve largely as a result of economic, political and/or cultural development, few efforts may be made to assess or improve the status of women. Boserup (1970/1989) for example, clearly demonstrated how any benefits associated with imposed development initiatives or industrialization did not “trickle down” to benefit women.

Further if gender-equity is pursued in the name of development without adhering to underlying principles of social justice, feminist discourses may be co-opted by other, perhaps contradictory ideological positions. For example, a Sri Lankan law prohibiting the employment of women during the night shift, initially implemented to protect women from exploitation and abuse, was overturned to appease transnational corporations and facilitate economic development in the free trade zone. Interestingly, this law was revised
in the name of “gender-equality” (Berkovich, 1999). This is a key point where gender-equality, development and globalization discourses intersect. Here amending discriminatory laws and providing employment “opportunities” for women (to work far from home for low wages) was thought to result in increased economic development in Sri Lanka, creating a “win-win,” but likely this change primarily facilitated the economic growth of transnational corporations.

While feminists may use these development initiatives implementing gender-equality as “policy windows” to advance conditions for women, they may not lead to long-term positive changes because efforts to improve conditions for women are administered as act of compliance rather than done out or respect/regard for women, and are not directed by their own wishes and decisions. Further, they represent simply another form of control by traditional power elites, exercised sometimes against women’s will based on what is declared to be ‘for their own good’ (for an example see Hill, 2001).

When advancement for women is only thought to be possible with the adoption of Western values, development may be justified in the name of gender-equality. Emulating Minority World ideals of gender-equality presents the difficult task of copying something that perhaps never really existed, producing a ‘simulacrum’ (Baudrillard, 1994). As Jayawardena (1986) described, during the turn of the century, some Asian reformers attempted to reproduce what they perceived to be advanced conditions for women in the “West,” as a development strategy. These perceptions however were largely inflated and distorted.

Faced with societies that were sufficiently developed and powerful to subjugate them, and with the need to modernize their own societies, many reformers of Asia
seized on the apparent freedom of women in Western societies as the key to the 
advancement of the West, and argued that ‘Oriental backwardness’ was partly due 
to women’s low status. (Jayawardena, 1986, p. 11-12)

This strategy created a whole class of women and men who were and still are a ‘copy’ of 
the original, never quite matching the original. This kind of ‘simulacrum’ is also evident 
in the Afghan government’s decision, based on the urging of the American government, 
to reserve 25% of seats in the lower house of parliament for women, in the name of 
gender-equality. Interestingly, America has no such policy and as of 2008, women made 
up only 17% of members of the House of Representatives (the lower house of Congress) 
and only 13% of the Senate (the upper house of Congress).

The repeated associations of the vast majority of countries in Asia, Africa, and the 
Middle East with gender disparity, and repeated associations of most countries in Europe, 
North America, and Oceania\footnote{Interestingly regional classifications of countries are often reworked in order to produce heightened differences between Minority World countries and Majority World countries. For example, Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi (2008) categorized Mexico as part of Latin America and the Caribbean, rather than part of North America.} with gender parity is a performative act that reinforces 
power relations among countries. Such associations function to justify international 
development efforts, and reaffirm “Western” values. Assumptions of agency, 
independence and freedom of Minority World women are, from that standpoint, 
constructed based on favourable comparisons with conditions for women in Majority 
World countries and critical assessments of the gendered subject in Minority World 
countries as well as opportunities for improvement are negated. As Young (2003) asserts, 
focusing on the problems of women in other places, redirects our attention from gender-
related issues at home.
Even before the war [on terror] … that feminist focus on women under the Taliban constructed these women as exoticized others and paradigmatic victims in need of salvation by Western feminists, and it conveniently deflected attention from perhaps more intractable and mundane problems of gender-based violence domination and poverty in many other parts of the world, including the enlightened West. (Young, 2003, p. 19)

Likewise, the implications of the scholarship suggesting that conditions for women are negatively associated with development can also be problematic. Rather than reproducing progress narratives, some post-development, feminist and socialist publications may inadvertently construct “declension narratives,” in which women’s status and power are depicted as declining with “development”, such as colonization and industrialization. Such declension narratives “reverse the story claiming that colonized women had status and power which they lost under the white patriarchal rule of colonialists” (Bulbeck, 1998, p.19). Nancy Shoemaker (1991) warns that our historical knowledge of the status of women, particularly outside of that of middle class white women, is often “egregiously undeveloped” (p.39). For example, she found that despite the simplistic declension narratives commonly constructed regarding Iroquois women, prior to colonization these women were likely subjected to some of the same gendered constraints as their Western counterparts (although their roles as wives and mothers were more highly valued), and they retained some of their power and status after colonization. She concluded, “all Senecas lost power as they were confined to ever-smaller reservations, threatening both subsistence and cultural traditions. There is little evidence, however, showing that Seneca women became increasingly subordinate to Seneca men”
Although declension narratives are appealing in that they suggest the possibility of a non-patriarchal society, and they disrupt mainstream notions of development, they are still metanarratives, albeit novel ones, that also can constrain inquiry into and understanding of conditions for women in different contexts.

Although my work is strongly influenced by feminist and post-development theoretical perspectives, in that I am particularly interested in evidence which troubles mainstream views regarding the relationship between development and conditions for women, in order not to reproduce declension narrative (or conversely progressive tales) of the relationship between conditions for women and development, I tried to maintain a dialectical relationship between my guiding theories and my data, as recommend by Patti Lather (1986), which “permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from being the container into which the data is poured” (p. 267).

Further, rather than trying to establish causal relationships between women’s empowerment and development, the goals of this work have shifted to include the illumination of the social realities and subject positions available to women in relation to development discourses and how these are constructed and reproduced as influenced by post-structural (Bakhtin, 1981; Gannon & Davies, 2007; Weedon, 1987) and post-colonial (Minh-ha, 1989; Narayan, 1999; Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003) theories.

My understanding of conditions that empower women has been particularly influenced by the work of some post-development, as well as socialist scholars. My conception of women’s advancement is not limited to liberal understandings of gender-equality, but rather is influenced by Shiva’s (1989) notion of “equality in diversity,” and Illich’s (1982) notion of “vernacular gender.” However, I am also mindful that theoretical
positions that advocate different roles for men and women could easily be co-opted to support, for example, right-wing “family values”. As Minh-ha (1989) asserts, Illich’s theory might just as easily be used to generate support for anti-feminist conservative perspectives, as to disrupt imperialist and/or capitalist notions of sex-based oppression. Further I am aware that typical indicators of gender-equality may conflate similarity between men and women with empowerment (Burke Leacock, 1981). Indeed as Illich (1982) asserted, and Seguino (2000a; 2000b) has demonstrated, evidence that is commonly used to support the advancement of conditions for women with development, such as the increasing number of women entering the formal labour force, can in fact indicate increasing oppression for women.

Influenced by feminist post-structural theory, this work attempts, too, to avoid some of the pitfalls associated with more mainstream feminist analyses of cross-national conditions for women, including universalizing the experiences of women and homogenizing particular groups of women. In this regard, this work is informed by Chilla Bulbeck’s (1998) perspective in which she challenges the dualisms of self and other inherent in many Western feminist perspectives by interrogating our stereotypical views of “other” women, and viewing ourselves through the lens of the “other.” She writes, “a key task is to hold similarities and differences in view at once, to avoid resorting to a simple dualism or a simple universalism” (Bulbeck, 1998, p. 6).

As this critique has established, there are clearly methodological and ethical concerns associated with cross-national research as evident in the liberal research on conditions for women and development (also see the discussion in Chapter 1). Methodologically, it is difficult to make comparisons across cultures due to ethnocentric conceptualizations of
phenomena of interest and lack of transferability of certain conceptions to different cultures. Yet making comparisons can be a useful and important analytic tool (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), enabling researchers to view phenomenon from a different lens, which can be enormously helpful in advancing understanding. As Hirschmann (1998) noted, “it is often difficult to gain a critical purchase on a context from within the context itself; one must often be “outside” it at the same time that one is “inside” it.” (p. 362). Further, juxtaposing conditions for women in Majority and Minority countries can enable connections to be made between issues that are normally thought to be unconnected such as dowry murders in India and domestic violence in America (Narayan, 1997). In this dissertation, a comparative approach will be used to inform Canadian perceptions of cross-national gender-equity and conditions for (some) women in Canada, rather than to construct knowledge regarding foreign conditions for women.

More problematic than the methodological difficulties associated with cross-national comparisons however, is the use of comparative research to construct hierarchies between countries, impose inappropriate interventions, or to construct ethnocentric representations of self and other. In this research, comparison was used not for the purposes of essentializing, classifying, or predicting, but rather to attempt to “make visible” (Despret, 2005) what developmentalism and progress narratives typically obscure, in order to demonstrate possible differences regarding cross-national conditions for women when none are assumed, as well as to draw similarities when none appear to be evident. As this review has established, while many cross-national studies address how conditions for women in Minority World countries can inform the understanding of conditions for women in Majority World countries, few cross-national comparative studies address how
conditions for women in Majority World countries can inform the understanding of conditions for women in Minority World countries.\(^\text{35}\)

**Conclusion**

Contemporary scholarly discourse surrounding conditions for women in relation to development are diverse and heteroglossic (Bakhtin, 1981), that is ideologically stratified, and influenced by a variety of theoretical frameworks including liberal, humanist, socialist, feminist, and postmodern perspectives. Arguments within this body of literature are also diverse: from liberal and humanist assertions that development has a positive effect on conditions for women (and/or that gender-equality has a positive effect on development), to feminist, socialist and post-development arguments that development has a negative effect on conditions for women (and/or that gender-inequality has a positive effect on development), to post-structural and postcolonial theories which view development as a socially constructed discourse that influences social realities, power relations and produces subjective identities for women. Liberal theories however, appear to be more prevalent particularly in the fields of economics and political science, are more likely to guide development projects than other theoretical perspectives (Berkovich, 1999; Carr, 2008).

What this review has shown is that in liberal research, assumptions regarding conditions for women are routinely mapped on to theories of development and linked to geographical regions through metanarratives, generalizations, causal claims, and indirect inferences, and reified through correlation coefficients, regression models, international

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\(^{35}\) One notable exception is a conference paper by Sukumaran, Hartman, and Johnson, (2004) which illustrates how social, cultural, political and economic factors in Kerala, India, enable women to enroll in post-secondary engineering programs in numbers that are unheard of in America.
rankings, comparative descriptive statistics, and narratives, all of which typically mask heterogeneity, inconsistencies, and exceptions within countries and regions. Critical theories of cross-national conditions for women and development, although not without weaknesses, have a greater potential to produce more nuanced and useful accounts of conditions for women across nations, which is why this research is primarily guided by feminist post-structural and post-colonial theories.

As this chapter has demonstrated, there are many different ideologies inherent in scholarly literature regarding the relationship between development and conditions for women and the factors perceived to advance women’s empowerment; however, which ideologies are more prevalent in popular discourse? This question will be explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 3 - Representations of Conditions for Women in Mainstream Media:

*Popular Stories*

**Introduction**

Scholarly literatures encompass diverse understandings of the relationship between development and cross-national conditions for women, as has been detailed in the previous chapter. However, popular media exert their own considerable impact on the ways in which and the extents to which research and scholarship are disseminated, taken up, and interpreted in the ‘everyday’ lived actualities (Smith, 1987) of women and men. Not all the theories available to be taken up from a cultural ‘stock of knowledge’ (Habermas, 1979) will be either equally or well represented within the media-saturated ‘popular imagination’ of communication-rich nations, like Canada. As Weedon (1987) explains, certain discourses are more readily available and are more influential than others.

How we live our lives as conscious thinking subjects, and how we give meaning to the material social relations under which we live and which we structure our everyday lives, depends on the range and social power of existing discourses, our access to them and the political strength of the interests which they represent. (Weedon, 1987, p. 26)

Having reviewed the ideologies regarding gender and development that are discursively available within scholarly literature, this chapter’s task is to elucidate how conditions for women in different countries are represented in popular media, and which ideologies are taken up outside scholarly communities. Although the Internet has enabled public access to many sources of information and knowledge, the vast majority of
university research and scholarship is not freely available within this medium and is largely inaccessible for most people outside of scholarly communities (Willinsky, 2007). Online news sources as well as the electronic documentation of international non-government organizations (NGO)\textsuperscript{36} are two of the more accessible sources of information regarding conditions for women at home and abroad. These transnational “channels” serve to mediate understandings of “self” and “other” (Tvedt, 1998). Textual representations, such as newspaper articles, reproduce cultural discourses that serve to convey knowledge and produce subject positions (Hall, 1997). For example, Elsrud, (2008) found that the representations of immigrants in Swedish newspaper articles were a medium for reinforcing the normative, mainstream “Swedish” identity through the stereotyped and subverted constructions of the “other.”

Development NGOs are transnational organizations which some view as the new imperialistic force (Townsend, Porter, Mawdsley, 2002). Although commonly perceived as fulfilling needs not met by governments or corporations, in most cases the growth of NGOs in donor countries can be attributed to state encouragement to form such organizations in order to channel funds and enact government policies and initiatives (Tvedt, 1998, p. 75). In this regard Tvedt (1998) views NGOs as a “transmission belt of a powerful language and of Western concepts of development, and at the same time as one arena for struggles between different development paradigms and ideologies” (p. 75). Not only do NGOs impose the agendas of donor countries seamlessly across diverse geographical regions and coordinate the actions of local NGO workers in different countries through institutional discourses and practices, but they also serve to construct

\textsuperscript{36} Although NGO is a term that has been broadly applied, and is ambiguous at best, Tvedt (1998) provides this general definition of NGO as “a common denominator for all organizations within the aid channel that are institutionally separated from the state apparatus and are non-profit-distributing” (p.12).
representations of recipients and transmit these representations back to donors (Townsend, Porter, Mawdsley, 2002). “The NGO channel has thus been important for Western images of ‘the other’ and ‘us’ because the reality of the poor and the relationship between donor and the receiver are often filtered through it” (Tvedt, 1998, p. 2).

Often the dominant image the development NGOs relay back to donors is one of passive victims consumed by disaster, tragedy, and chaos (Inter Pares Bulletin, 1999). Other representations, such as the resilience, cooperation and ingenuity of people coping under adverse circumstances are often not transmitted.

Unfortunately poor people are often most impoverished in their lack of power to represent their lived reality themselves, and to use their own voice to try to change their lives and the world they experience. (Inter Pares Bulletin, 1999, p. 1)

Although organizations such as the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC, 2009) provide standards regarding how recipients are represented by NGOs, many international development organizations assume that the ends justify the means in regards to fundraising, particularly with increasing competition between charities for donor funds (Inter Pares Bulletin, 1999).

While this work could obviously not be a comprehensive review of all possible popular publications regarding conditions for women across cultures, it reviews one assemblage of diverse and informative perspectives. The two sources of “popular”

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37 For example, the CCIC (2009) provides the following recommendations:
The Organization shall ensure that images and text included in all communications to the public:
a) respect the dignity and rights of the individuals portrayed and their way of life;
b) are accurate, balanced, truthful and representative of reality and do not generalize and mask the diversity of situations;
c) portray local communities as active agents in their own development and do not fuel prejudice or foster a sense of Northern superiority; and
d) encourage a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence between the Canadian public and the people shown in the image or discussed in the text. (CCIC, 2009, p. 9)
information regarding cross-national conditions for women analyzed in this study included online Canadian newspaper articles and electronic donor information from the “Girl Effect,” a “global” fund raising campaign to improve conditions for girls. This work is illustrative and suggestive; its purpose is to provide insights into the types of representations of this topic considered “newsworthy”, extended by a case study of a particularly intriguing story about conditions for women in “other” places that was constructed for the purposes of raising funds. This exploration revealed interesting differences between representations of gender-equity at home and abroad, and provided direction regarding the ways in which assumptions about gender-equality in Canada are being actively constructed.

**Study 1: News Articles**

**Method**

I searched Googlenews during two different time periods for articles representing conditions for women in Canada, as well as other nations, in online new sources published in Canada during a one month period. Googlenews indexes a wide variety of publications including national (e.g. Globe and Mail, Post), provincial (e.g. Province, Times and Transcript), and local (e.g. Tri-city News, Lethbridge Herald) newspapers, as well as newspapers serving specific Canadian communities (e.g. Capital XTRA, South Asian Focus), and many of these resources are also available in a print-based format for no or low cost. Publications include news articles as well as opinion pieces, such as columns and letters to the editor.

The first sample was collected on May 11th, 2009, and included articles published between April 11 and May 11, 2009. Initial search criteria included “gender equity”,
which produced 23 articles, and “gender inequity,” which produced 12 articles. Due to the limited number of hits, the search was expanded to also include “gender” (producing 490 hits) and “women” (producing 14,492 hits). I organized these results according to relevance, and reviewed the top 100 stories for each search focusing particularly on stories that explicitly or implicitly reported on conditions for women in Canada or in other places.

“Development” was not used as a search criterion as the use of this term, combined with a gender-related term, appeared, interestingly enough, to exclude from the search articles regarding conditions for women in Canada, and other Minority World nations, and produced primarily articles reporting on conditions for women in Majority World countries or in regards to the work of international organizations, such as the United Nations. In this regard, development discourses appeared to be less commonly deployed to construct understandings of conditions for women in Canada than in Majority World countries. As Weedon (1987) suggests the use of particular discourses depends on the availability and force of such discourses, as well as the political interests they represent.

The articles were reviewed and the sample was narrowed down to 33 articles that pertained to gender and development, and/or conditions for women in specific places and

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38 A review of the names of the Government of Canada departments, agencies and Crown corporations (Government of Canada, 2009), as well as a google search for the terms “development” and “Canada” (conducted December 9th, 2009), revealed that the use of the term “development” is primarily used in Canadian contexts to describe the development of economics, investments, exports, or banks (e.g. Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), other nations (e.g. Canadian International Development Agency), skills (primarily in relation to the labour force) (e.g. Department of Human Resources and Skills Development), the military (e.g. Defence Research and Development Canada), or the environment (e.g. Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development). Other than in regards to the environment, the term “development” appears to be not routinely used in Canada in relation to social issues such as poverty, education, gender-equality as identified in the United Nations (2000) Millennium Development Goals.
most directly informed the inquiry (for example articles reporting on gender reassignment surgery wait lists were excluded). This process was repeated approximately five months later (October 8th, 2009), using the same search criteria: “gender equity” (6 articles), “gender inequity” (2 articles), “gender” (most relevant 100 articles out of 615 hits), and “women” (most relevant 100 articles out of 14,492 hits). Search terms, “gender equality” (which produced 28 articles) and “gender inequality,” (which produced 6 articles), were also used because these terms were found to be prevalent in the scholarly literature. I reviewed the articles and narrowed the sample down to 33 articles that specifically pertained to gender and development, and/or reported on conditions for women.

Analysis

The goal of my foray into popular media analysis was to compare representations of conditions for women at home and abroad, to analyze these representations in regards to the scholarly discourses regarding gender and development as discussed in the previous chapter, as well as to learn about how “public knowledge” (Willinsky, 2007) about women’s lives in different countries is constructed in news articles, and by extension, in the popular imagination. Consistent with the general theoretical orientation as described in my first two chapters, analytical strategies were informed by feminist post-colonial theories (Narayan, 1999; Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003) and feminist post-structural (Gannon & Davies, 2007; Plumwood, 1993; Weedon, 1987) theories.

39 Three articles in the initial sample were archived incorrectly and were not accessible for subsequent analyses at a later time. When analyses could not be performed based on notes taken when the articles were originally reviewed, the articles were excluded from the analysis.
I reviewed articles for evidence of development discourses, as identified in Chapter 2, and analyzed the representations of local and foreign conditions for women for similarities and differences (Bulbeck, 1998). Three comparisons in particular were assumed to be potentially generative: the types of conditions reported, the extent to which conditions were represented as ubiquitous or differentiated, and the types of attributions made to explain inequities. Narayan (1997) suggests that certain “Third World women’s” issues, particularly those that are foreign rather than familiar, are more likely to “cross borders” and be taken up in Western discourse. This raises the possibility that reports of conditions for women in “other” places might be more sensational than reports of local conditions for women. According to Talpade Mohanty (1986/2003), Western representations of women’s lives in “developing” countries typically lump all women into the same category, creating the monolithic representations of the “Third World Woman,” which is why it was thought to be important to compare the extent of diversity in the representation of local and foreign conditions for women. Finally, I reviewed the articles for causal explanations regarding conditions for women because Narayan (1997) suggests that (unlike explanations for local inequities) Westerners commonly attribute inequities experienced by women in “Third World” countries to “culture,” which distorts understanding.

The second aspect of the analysis involved attending to the author’s use of parallels and juxtapositions in reporting Canadian and foreign conditions to construct representations of conditions for women in different places. As described in Chapter 2, social realities and subjectivities are often constructed through binaries of self and other, as well as other related dualisms (Gannon & Davies, 2007; Plumwood, 1993). Through
the use of these binaries authors construct subject positions for “other” women as well as for themselves and their readers. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1986/2003) asserts, these textual strategies “codify others as non-Western and hence themselves as (implicitly) Western” (p.18). Even within the seemingly benevolent act of asserting rights for women considered less fortunate, Western women construct their own agency at the expense of the agency of the “other” woman (see Jayawardena, 1995).

The third aspect of the review involved analyzing the articles for explicit references to relationships between “development” and conditions for women, and the relevant discourses evident in the scholarly literature reviewed.

Results

For the purpose of analysis, articles were classified into four primary categories according to whether the article represented conditions for women in Canada or abroad, as well as whether conditions represented were considered equitable (perhaps even privileged), or detrimental (see Table 3.1). Some articles fell into more than one category and were classified as such.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inequitable Conditions for Women in Canada</th>
<th>Inequitable Foreign/Global Conditions for Women</th>
<th>Equitable or Privileged Conditions for Women in Canada</th>
<th>Equitable or Privileged Conditions for Foreign Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample 1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample 2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two samples appeared to be similar, although the second sample contained significantly more articles addressing detrimental conditions for women in Canada. This
was at least partially due to events that inspired multiple articles on similar topics, including vigils held across the nation on October 4th to remember the Aboriginal women who have been murdered or gone missing in the past three decades (4 articles), sex trade workers’ lawsuit challenging prostitution laws on the basis that legalizing prostitution would increase their safety (3 articles), and Diane LaCalamita’s lawsuit against McCarthy Tétrault, one of Canada’s biggest law firms, alleging systematic gender discrimination (2 articles).

In both samples, articles representing detrimental conditions for women in Canada and abroad were far more prevalent than articles reporting equitable or privileged conditions for women. Local and provincial newspapers were slightly more likely to publish articles reporting on inequitable conditions for women in Canada, and national and international newspapers were slightly more likely to publish articles reporting on inequitable conditions for women in foreign countries.

*Representations of Conditions for Women in Foreign Countries*

Most of the articles reporting on detrimental conditions for women in foreign countries described violent or life threatening situations, including the impact of the HIV epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, the preference for male children in China and India, violence towards and exploitation of women in Afghanistan, a new law permitting marital rape in Afghanistan, genital mutilation in Africa and the Middle East, sanctioning of domestic violence by a judge in Saudi Arabia, an acid attack on a woman in Iran, and violence against women in Muslim societies. Only one article, published by the Centre for Research on Globalization, a nonprofit Canadian research and news organization, reported on the relatively more mundane exploitation, discrimination, and harassment of
women working in the garment export industry in India (Singh, 2009, May 7th). All reports of detrimental conditions for women in foreign countries described conditions in countries typically classified as medium or low development except for Saudi Arabia (see Appendix A.)

Most of these articles left me with the impression that large populations, if not all girls and women, in these countries were potentially vulnerable to the injustices described, with few qualifications. Formal and/or official sanctions of inequities most clearly exemplified this observation. Other examples included articles in which mainstream populations (such as school girls), or women identified as “average” were targets of violence or oppression. For example, Shalizi (2009, January 29) reported the following regarding current conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan.

From acid attacks, murder, torching of schools and sexual assault, violence against female students is dashing the dreams of thousands of Afghan girls and women who are thirsty for an education that may help rejuvenate the fractured economy and society of their war-torn country. (¶3)

In another article, a 14 year old girl forced to drop out of school after being “sold” by her father to a middle-aged man as his bride, is described as one of ten “average” women of Kandahar, Afghanistan interviewed as part of an ongoing series of reports (Nolen, 2009, September 12th). (Kandahar however is identified as one of the more conservative and volatile provinces in Afghanistan, which indicates that although this woman’s experiences may be typical in Kandahar, they may not be typical in other parts of the country.)
Not only do most articles homogenize women’s experiences within foreign ("developing") countries, but some of the articles also further generalize the discriminatory and inequitable conditions described within specific or national contexts to larger regions. For example, in an opinion piece published in the Globe and Mail discussing China’s one-child policy, the author extends the cultural devaluation of the girl child, as discussed in the Chinese context, to all of Asia. “Because of the traditional and persistent Asian preference for male offspring, the one-child policy has had a disastrous effect on Chinese girls” (Gee, May 8th, 2009, ¶8). Another clear example comes from an article published in the National Post describing the case of a woman who had acid thrown in her face by a man after she rejected his advances. The author asserts, “Acid attacks on women are common in Muslim countries, often because the victims refuse to marry the assailants or as a way of controlling them” (Wordsworth, 2009, May 11th, ¶24). It is not clear what is meant by the word “common”: “common” as in a regular occurrence, or “common” as in more frequent than in Western countries. This statement leaves the reader (at least this reader) with the distinct impression that horrendous disfiguring attacks, such as the one described in the news report, are an everyday threat for women living not only in Tehran, Iran, where the attack occurred, but indeed in all “Muslim countries”. This is not to deny the occurrence of these events as reported or dispute the seriousness of these incidents; however this extension of discriminatory or patriarchal practices and perspectives in specific location to large geographical areas creates the impression that the reported inequities are not only widespread in specific countries but also prevalent across vast geographical terrain.
Articles reporting on inequitable conditions for women in foreign countries were more likely than articles reporting on inequitable conditions for women in Canada to include some sort of explicit or implicit explanations for the inequities (89% verses 48%). Structural inequities at the national level, including governmental legislation, culture/tradition, and discriminatory attitudes, were the most prevalent explanations provided in articles reporting on foreign conditions. For example, domestic violence in Saudi Arabia was attributed to age-old Middle Eastern/Muslim culture.

The cultural differences between the Western World and those of the Middle East are deeply embedded of course, but the ability of even women in the Muslim world to be exposed to the influence of the West have created an insurmountable barrier to maintaining the controls which were established as far back as the 7th Century. (Swaffar, 2009, May 10th, ¶10)

A few articles attributed the discriminatory events to structural inequities at the institutional level, such as the practices of the Taliban, or unintentional structural events, such as disease and/or war. Only one article attributed the discriminatory event to individual responsibility. Shahina Siddiqui’s (2009, April 26) editorial attributes violence against women within Muslim cultures to “criminal behavior,” rather than religious doctrine.

Only one article that identified structural causes of sex-based discrimination, provided an in-depth exploration of some of the socio-cultural-historical structures that produce sex selection practices among middle and upper class families in India. In an article published in the Globe and Mail entitled Land of the Rising Son, Stephanie Nolen (2009, September 12th) established how modernity, including access to technologies such
as ultrasound (despite the fact it is illegal to use ultrasound to determine gender for the purposes of informing the parents), as well as changing social expectations associated with development (including smaller families and the need to educate daughters), combined with the “traditional” preference for sons, has increasingly impacted the number of female children born. Further, Nolen reported how this issue primarily affects wealthy families, who are not persuaded by government financial incentives to keep female children.

Six articles discuss “global” inequities for girls and women; however, in most of these articles (4/6) examples of such inequities were drawn from India, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. For example, one article that purported to report on “global” gender-based inequities, entitled “Lewis joins global effort against ‘war on women’,” focused on former Canadian Ambassador to the UN Stephen Lewis’ efforts to help women and children in sub-Saharan African affected by the AIDS epidemic (Blackburn, 2009, May 1st). The author makes general claims about global conditions for women, “The rights of women — 52 per cent of the world’s population — are slow to be established” (¶4). Although gender-based inequities are identified as occurring “around the globe,” there was no mention of the Canadian context. The author clarifies that this “global war” is being “fought” — “in countries exhibiting issues from child brides, honour killings, sexual assault and domestic violence” (Blackburn, 2009, May 1st, ¶6). By naming child brides and honour killings (which are not commonly associated with mainstream Canadian culture) as “global issues”, the reader gets the distinct impression that Canada and perhaps other “Western” cultures somehow transcend worldwide gender-related discrimination and their role in regards to these global issues is one of leadership. None
of these articles specifically address conditions for women in Canada; however one article published in e! Science News discussing the global gender gap in employment equity provides examples from a research study conducted in a country typically viewed as “developed,” Switzerland (no author, 2009, May 8th). (The word “global,” however, does not appear in the article).

Three articles reported equitable conditions for women in other places (all typically considered high development countries – see Appendix A), including the Editor’s blog documenting superior child care in France (and Quebec) compared to (the rest of) Canada, and a letter to the editor noting the greater number of female politicians in Scandinavian countries compared to Canada, and the social benefits associated with the greater representation of female politicians. One other article entitled, Women set Nobel Prize record, suggests equitable or perhaps privileged conditions for women in regards to this international competition, adjudicated by a private Swedish foundation (Bellaire, 2009, May 7th). The article reports that there were five female laureates this year, a historic first. There are five Nobel prizes; however, there can be more than one recipient per award. Although not explicity reported in the article, men still received a majority of awards.

One other article reported South African president, Jacob Zuma’s, commitment to “work toward a truly non-sexist, non-racial South Africa, united in its diversity” (York, 2009, May, 9th, ¶22), as exemplified in his appointment of an equal numbers of female and male provincial premiers. I did not consider this article to be a persuasive indication of equity in South Africa however, as the reports of Zuma’s commitment to gender-
equity were situated within the context of his polygamous lifestyle and accusation of rape.

*Representations of Conditions for Women in Canada*

Articles reporting on detrimental conditions for women in Canada described both violent or life threatening issues, as well as more mundane concerns. The severity of the concern appeared to intersect with types of populations at risk. The majority of life-threatening issues were associated with specific groups of women and included the murders of First Nations women, violence against sex trade workers, “honour killings” within sub-cultures that value the sexual purity and subservience of female family members, female foeticide in South Asian communities in Canada, and inadequate medical care for women in impoverished areas of Vancouver. The women vulnerable to these extreme sex-related inequities were not “mainstream” Canadian women, but rather women who are typically marginalized with Canadian society: Indigenous women, impoverished women, women working in the sex-trade, and women associated with immigrant communities. Violence against women was the only life-threatening issue that was associated with the general population of Canadian women, although most articles focused on the vulnerability of First-Nations women or sex trade workers.

Non-life threatening detrimental conditions that were associated with specific groups of Canadian women included discrimination against First Nations women, Muslim-Canadian women forced to wear burkas, the scarcity of female political candidates running in Vancouver Island ridings, the low numbers of girls participating in community sports in the city of Coquitlam, and inequities faced by female lawyers, female news anchors, and female professors. Non-life threatening issues associated with
the general population of Canadian women included the low numbers of women in political office, the inadvertent discriminatory aspects of the federal system which compensates women taking a parental leave, the inadequate childcare in British Columbia, inequities and discrimination in the work force, and girls doing more chores than boys. These types of stories (non-life threatening inequitable conditions) were more likely to appear in local or provincial news sources (69%) than national or international news sources (31%).

Three opinion pieces (one by a journalist and two letters to the editor) were critical of affirmative action programs, specifically the BC’s NDP party decision to target more diverse candidates in the provincial election by limiting the number of white, heterosexual, able bodied male candidates, some suggesting that the policy was discriminatory towards men.

*Parallels and Juxtapositions: Constructions of Self/Other*

There were three different types of comparisons made within the articles. By far the most prominent comparison was juxtaposing conditions in Canada with conditions in Majority World countries and in doing so, constructing Canadian conditions as being more favorable. A minority of articles (four) paralleled conditions in Canada with conditions in Majority World countries, constructing both contexts as discriminatory; or juxtaposed conditions in Canada with conditions in European countries, constructing Canadian conditions as less favourable. These different types of comparisons are described below.

Few articles in this sample explicitly reported on equitable conditions for women in Canada. Rather, equity in Canada was primarily established rhetorically by juxtaposing
conditions for women in Canada with conditions for women in other nations, such as Afghanistan, India, Muslim cultures, African countries or international organizations, such as the International Olympic Committee. This discursive strategy not only disseminated information regarding the lack of equity elsewhere, but also served to construct knowledge regarding equitable conditions in Canada. For example, in an opinion piece, by the Hon. Mary Schryer (2009, May 1\textsuperscript{s}), the New Brunswick MLA responsible for the Status of Women, expressed concern regarding the Shi’a law passed by the Afghan government, which legalized what could be interpreted as marital rape, the marriage of (pre-menstrual) girls, and men’s control of their wives’ movements outside of the home, to name a few of the more controversial issues. In doing so Schryer constructs Canada as a guardian of women’s rights at home and defender of women’s rights internationally; whereas the Afghani government is constructed as the source of sex-related injustices. She writes,

Canada has invested a great deal to help rebuild Afghanistan. Thanks to Canadian assistance, more girls than ever before have access to schooling and women and girls are now recognized as full persons under Afghan Law. The work Canada has done in Afghanistan is a source of pride for all Canadians.

Our government supports Canada's position, which discourages any law that would increase inequality between men and women. This position is consistent with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Canada is signatory. It mirrors Canadian values that underpin our current efforts to work, with other countries including the Afghan
government, to secure peace, human rights and development. (Schryer, 2009, May 1st, ¶ 4&5)

In this article Canada’s commitment to women’s rights is asserted in comparisons with Afghanistan’s lack of effort in this regard. Schryer supports this claim by drawing attention to the Canadian government’s efforts to ensure Afghani women have access to basic rights, and our endorsement of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Interestingly, 185 countries have endorsed CEDWA, including Canada as well as Afghanistan, both of whom ratified the convention in 1980 (United Nations, n.d.). Further, the dismantling of policies, programs and organizations to advancement conditions for women at both federal and provincial levels in Canada that have occurred in the past decade, directly counters the government’s commitment to gender-equality, as outlined in CEDWA, as well as other international policies such as the Beijing Platform for Action (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). There is no mention in Schryer’s article of the role of others in improving conditions for women in Afghanistan, and most notably, no mention of local feminists in Afghanistan.

Similarly in a news article entitled Saudi Judge OK’s Slapping Wives, Gar Swaffar (2009, May 10th) implies men’s derogatory views of women in Saudi Arabia (as exemplified in the opinions of a Saudi Arabian judge) are prevalent throughout the Middle East. Swaffar differentiates “Western culture” from “Middle Eastern culture” asserting that “Westerners”, unlike Middle Easterners, do not blame women for domestic violence, and further establishes the “West” as the savior of Middle Eastern women locked in timeless traditions. This representation constructs the Middle East as static and in contrast, the West as progressive.
Not all articles that compared conditions for women in Majority World countries
disfavourably to conditions in Canada constructed negative representations of Two-
Third World women. Third-wave feminist Naomi Wolf (2009, May 4th), invokes the
binary of self and other, in her Globe and Mail commentary entitled Our Western moment
of feminist leadership is over. In this opinion piece Afghanistan, along with India, is
discursively lumped into the general category of the “developing world,” which is
contrasted with “the West,” where she located herself and her readers.

So the leadership role is shifting to women in the developing world. Their agenda
is more pressing, and their problems, frankly, are far more serious than ours -
which makes it much more urgent for them to develop theories appropriate to the
challenges they face. (¶ 11)

Here Wolf evokes binaries of them and us; East and West; developing and developed;
traditional and modern; and religious and secular. She also establishes a hierarchy in
which gender-related inequities are more severe in other places, which suggests a positive
relationship between development and conditions for women. This is not to dispute the
claim in general but rather to assert that such dichotomies and hierarchies simplify our
understanding of equity at home and abroad by constructing representations that negate
differences within countries, as well as similarities across countries and reify power
relations between countries.

To her credit, Wolf (2009, May 4th) acknowledges the role of Afghan women in
pressuring president Hamid Karzai to amend the Shi’a law that restricted women’s rights,
and constructs Afghan women as brave and powerful. Rather than suggesting that
Western politicians and feminists are the saviors of the Afghan women, as is seen in the
Schryer (2009, May 1st) and Swaffar (2009, May 10th) articles, Wolf (2009, May 4th) emphasized the importance of local feminist movements rather than the imposition of Western feminism in other places, and asserted the usefulness of feminist theory from “more traditional and religious societies” in informing feminism in the “West.”

This version of feminism - the notion that women can claim equality and still have a valued role in the home, prize family above all, and view rights in the context of community and spirituality - seems like a much-needed corrective to some of Western feminism's shortcomings. (¶ 7)

The agency of “other” women is also recognized in a news article entitled *Central Alberta grandmothers helping fight AIDS*. Paul Cowley (2009, September 14th) reports on Canadian grandmothers efforts to support their African peers, burdened with raising their grandchildren after losing their children to AIDS. In this article African grandmothers were depicted as strong, resourceful, and resilient force.

Grandmothers have become key health care and social service providers in many communities. They help orphaned children, offer bereavement support, offer sexual and reproductive health guidance and address gender inequality issues. Grandmothers are even learning to oversee land and inheritance issues to ensure that family lands are not lost when parents die. (Cowley, 2009, September 14th, ¶ 18)

Throughout the article, Cowley draws parallels between the work that each group of grandmothers is doing to meet the needs of others. In regards to the work of the Albertan grandmothers, the author writes, “In one way it mirrors what grandmothers are doing in Africa — coming together” (Cowley, 2009, September 14th, ¶ 17). While this
representation does not reify the representation of Third World Woman as helpless, poor, uneducated, and bound by tradition (Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003), it fails to establish an important difference between the two groups of grandmothers. Unlike the Canadian grandmothers who are involved in community service willingly, perhaps in some cases as a sort of hobby, the African grandmothers may not have much of a choice but to care for their families. Indeed, in the Blackburn (2009, May 01), article Stephen Lewis is quoted as referring to the work of these grandmothers as “conscripted labour.”

A minority of articles constructed different types of representations. The two letters to the editor paralleled conditions in Canada, specifically the NDP’s affirmative action policy, with conditions in Afghanistan, specifically the Taliban’s oppression of women, constructing both contexts as discriminatory. One letter established Canada as a defender of equal rights for women in foreign countries and yet a perpetrator of discrimination towards men at home by equating the Taliban’s absolute restrictions on women with the NDP’s policy to reserve positions for female candidates and other underrepresented groups.

We have troops in Muslim countries to try and stop discrimination against females. Some extremists want to ban females from holding political positions, lawyers, doctors etc. They even go so far as enforcing dress codes and burning schools. Although this is a far cry from what is taking place in the NDP political party they are now discriminating against males. (Lazare, 2009, May 1st, ¶ 1-3)

Two other opinion pieces (a letter to the editor and an editor’s blog, previously described) juxtaposed conditions for women in Canada with conditions for women in European countries, constructing Canadian conditions as less favourable.
Representations of Development and Conditions for Women

Few articles directly addressed the relationship between “development” and conditions for women. Of those that did, the majority suggested a positive relationship between “gender-equality” and development, typically, how “gender-equality” can contribute towards economic or societal advancement. For example Leeder (2009, September 18th), quotes Karen Christie, a senior development officer for the Canadian International Development Agency as saying “Gender [equality] is so important because, especially in a country that’s in a developing stage – which maybe is being generous in the case of Afghanistan – gender [equality] means having all 100 per cent of your human resources available” (¶ 61). Two articles in the sample cited an Ernst and Young (2009) report suggesting that increasing the number of women in the work force, especially in leadership positions, can stimulate economic development and improve corporate performance. The Financial Post quotes Ernst and Young chairman and CEO, Lou Pagnutti as saying: “Investing in women to drive economic growth is not simply about morality or fairness. It's about honing a competitive edge” (2009, May 11th, ¶2).

The Secretary General of the United Nations made a similar statement asserting that “investing in and ensuring human rights for girls and women is not only a legal and moral obligation but is also likely to prevent intergenerational cycles of poverty and yield high economic and societal returns (Howard, 2009, October 5th, ¶6). Another author asserts a causal relationship between conditions for women and societal advancement; however, the nature of the relationship was not clear. “The decline of Muslim societies is closely connected to the decline of the rights, status and security of women” (Siddiqi, 2009, April 26th, ¶6).
Two articles suggest a negative, or at least more complicated, relationship between conditions for women and development. Similar to Seguino’s (2000a; 2000b) argument, Singh (2009, May 7th) asserted that India’s success in the global clothing industry is a direct result of discriminatory practices and the oppression of Indian women, and Nolen (2009, September 12th) (as previously discussed) demonstrated how changes associated with development, combined with “traditional” values, increase sex-selection among wealthy Indian women.

Having reviewed the types of representations of conditions for women in Canada and in foreign countries, as represented in online new reports, the next section of this chapter examines another source of information regarding international conditions for women that is publicly accessible: the donor information of a development NGO.

**Study 2: The “Girl Effect”**

The next section of this chapter considers in greater depth a single case of the ‘popular’ construction of gender/development relations: Nike Inc.’s “Girl Effect” fundraising campaign. The “Girl Effect,” which is defined as the “powerful social and economic change brought about when girls have the opportunity to participate in their society” (see [http://www.girleffect.org/](http://www.girleffect.org/)), appears to enable Nike, who has been accused of exploiting their factory workers (primarily women) in Majority World countries (see Balinger, 1992), to improve their corporate image in regards to supporting gender-equality. The basic message of the campaign, which reifies gender roles as well as heteronormativity, is that by providing girls in the “developing” world with the chance to postpone marriage and motherhood, avoid HIV, and get an education, they will become better wives and mothers, and conditions within their family, community, country, and
indeed, the whole world will improve. The campaign funds microcredit and “entrepreneurship” programs, as well as provides incentives to keep girls out of early marriages and in school.

Although founded by a US based organization, the “Girl Effect” campaign quickly spread to Canada (and other countries) in the Spring of 2009 through ‘borderless’ social networking sites, such as Facebook, and Youtube, and other internationally accessible websites such as the Oprah Winfry Website and in Business Week magazine. This popular campaign also appears to have inspired a similar campaign, “Because I am a Girl,” (see www.becauseiamagirl.ca) which is actively fundraising and engaging girls within Canada.

The “Girl Effect” campaign was not only popular within mainstream culture but was also perpetuated within feminist mediums, such as Feministing, an “online community for feminists and their allies,” (Feministing, n.d., ¶5) and at least one university Women Studies email list. I chose this particular campaign for analysis because of its representation of conditions for women and development, as well as its perplexing mass appeal within both mainstream and some feminist communities. Rather than being founded upon an “intrinsic” (Klasen, 2002) justification, such as girls as human beings are entitled to particular rights and resources, the “Girl Effect” campaign is based the “instrumental” (Klasen, 2002) justification that ensuring that girls have access to resources makes good economic sense. Girls are viewed as being in a unique position to advance development because they are more likely than boys to reinvest their resources in their families and communities. This argument is similar to assertions inherent within the Summers (1994) publication. The Girl Effect documentation even
quotes Summers, reporting, “Lawrence Summers, economist and Harvard University professor, has argued that girls’ education yields the best investment returns in the developing world” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 55). The Girl Effect constructs Majority World girls as commodities, and governments, donors, NGOs, and employers are offered “investment opportunities.” This reallocation of resources appears to be self-serving, as the exclusion of girls in “developing” countries is “costing us” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p.3) and giving girls in “developing” countries a chance purportedly has the potential to impact “the future of humanity” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p.1).

The Girl Effect fundraising campaign clearly establishes a positive relationship between advancing conditions for girls and development. Although often articulated in more general terms, the campaign focuses on improving conditions for girls in “developing” countries. What is meant by the “developing world” is never explicitly defined although it appears to be consistent with the UNDP classification of low or medium development (see Appendix A), including countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, India, Bangladesh, Paraguay, Tanzania, and Uganda, to name a few.

“Third World” Girl: Construction of the Monolithic Subject

The Girl Effect campaign emphasizes the high numbers of girls, reportedly 600 million, living in poverty who are potential “investment opportunities,” as well as their significant representation within the world population, purportedly ten percent. The number 600 million, and the statistics “one in ten people” are repeated throughout their documentation. The campaign however seems to conflate the 600 million girls living in the “developing world” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 18), with the number of girls (600 million) who are “living in poverty” (ibid, p.4), “overlooked” (ibid, p. 33) and, “starting
behind and staying behind.” (ibid, p. 59).” The campaign appears to be suggesting that all of the 600 million girls living in the “developing world” are poor, and that all 600 million impoverished girls in the world live in the developing world, which creates a homogeneous view of girls’ lives in Majority World countries.

The description of the prototypical girl in the “developing world” further contributes to the construction of the homogeneity of the lives of girls in these countries. For example, the Nike Foundation claims that, “for girls living in the developing world, the forces of poverty will try to pull her out of school, expose her to early marriage, childbirth, sexual violence and HIV, and change her life forever” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 14). We are told that the “Third World” girl is “less likely to be in school than a boy,” “at 15 she can’t read,” is “on the road to early marriage” and more likely to be at risk for HIV infection (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 62). The poverty cycle for girls in the “developing” world is exemplified through the description of a typical girl who is burdened with domestic chores, is pulled out of school because her family prioritizes her brother’s education, gets pregnant, becomes HIV positive, passes the disease on to her children, and, along with her family, becomes a burden to the healthcare system. The Nike Foundation concludes, “This scenario repeats in all developing countries” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 59), emphasizing the homogeneity not only within countries but also across “developing” nations. These types of statements serve to construct girls in Majority World countries as monolithic subjects (Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003), all of whom are viewed as impoverished, illiterate, uneducated, covered in flies, enslaved, passive, damaged, and (unless governments, NGOs, and employers intervene) helpless victims.
Ambivalent Constructions: She’s got the Whole World in her Hands

Although depicted as helpless and passive, the Girl Effect campaign simultaneously constructs girls in “developing” countries as responsible for the well-being of her nation, as well as global conditions. For example, girls in “developing” countries are referred to as “the most powerful force of change on the planet” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 61). In this regard girls living in “developing” nations are ascribed complete agency. Sponsors are assured that if they “invest in a girl,” she will “do the rest” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 31). Overall it is girls who are held accountable for the ultimate success or failure of their countries in regards to the way in which they “drive economic loss” or “deliver economic growth” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 60 and 61).

In Kenya, 1.6 million girls are high school dropouts. If they could finish their secondary education, they would make 30% more money – and contribute $3.2 billion to the Kenyan economy every year. Or – they could become one of Kenya’s 204,000 adolescent mothers instead, and lose the economy $500 million a year. A three billion upside against a half billion downside. (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 58)

The Girl Effect campaign goes as far as asserting that, “girls will decide four of the ten Millennium Development Goals: universal primary education, gender-equity, maternal health and the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases” (Girl Effect Team, n.d., p. 19), as if a group of Majority World girls would get together one day and decide (decide!) to just say no to premarital sex and stop the spread of AIDS.

These seeming contradictory representations of “Third World Girls” as simultaneously helpless victims, as well as capable agents who are in some ways
responsible for the problems of the world, are consistent with post-colonial concept of ambivalence, which describes the complex nature of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as characterized by both repulsion and attraction (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2004). The Girl Effect campaign appears to benevolently empower much deserving girls in so-called developing countries while discursively constructing them as subordinate others living in substandard conditions who will ultimately be held accountable for global failures. The ambivalent constructions of the “Third World Girl” serve to disrupt the neo-colonial undertone of the text.

Discussion and Conclusions

“People do not invent the world anew each day. Rather they draw upon what they know to understand what they don’t know” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 75).

Given the pervasiveness of positive associations between conditions for women and development inherent in the liberal mainstream scholarly literature, it was expected that Canadian news articles might be more likely to represent Canada as an equitable place for women and “developing” countries as inequitable places for women. Although the vast majority of articles focused on inequitable conditions in both Canada and in foreign countries, the ways in which inequities in “developed” and “developing” countries were represented differed in three ways. First, the inequities reported for women in foreign countries appeared to be more extreme; whereas many of the “inequities” for women in Canada, particularly conditions associated with “mainstream” Canadian women, were typically more mundane. This may be attributed, in part, to the nature of news reporting. It is not surprising that reports of local conditions generally reported more moderate everyday inequities than reports of foreign conditions because
typically only the most extreme (or locally relevant) international stories are included in local, in this case Canadian, newspapers. However, the international stories typically reported on issues that were not only more extreme but also more “exotic.” As Narayan (1997) suggested, issues that seem “Different,” “Alien,” and “Other” (p. 100) are more likely to cross international borders. These types of issues become “iconic” in Western discourses, popularizing them, as well as distorting understanding as a result of the lack of contextual information necessary to comprehend the local implications of such inequities. For example, dowry-related harassment is much more pervasive in India, as is non-dowry related domestic violence, than dowry related-murder, and yet these issues are less likely to “cross borders,” and be readily identified as feminist issues in India (Narayan, 1997). Narayan (1997) believes that these decontextualized constructions of “Third-World issues” result from more than just racism or ethnocentricity. She concluded, “Western feminists interested in the ‘problems of women in Other cultures’ need to think about: (1) the kinds of Third-World women’s issues that cross Western borders more frequently than others; and about (2) the effects of ‘editing’ and ‘reframing’ such issues undergo when they do cross borders” (Narayan, 1997, p. 100)⁴⁰.

Second, inequities for women in foreign countries, as represented in the news articles, appeared to more pervasive and were sometimes generalized across broad geographical regions; whereas many of the “inequities” for women in Canada,

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⁴⁰ It is interesting to imagine what Canadian news stories cross borders, how issues typically perceived to be “isolated incidents” in Canada, such as the heinous murders (primarily of sex trade workers) that occurred on the Pickton farm outside of Vancouver, British Columbia, or reports of the women (primarily of indigenous ancestry) who have disappeared hitchhiking along the “Highway of Tears” (Highway 16) in Northern British Columbia, have been represented in the foreign press, and how they have shaped foreigners’ beliefs regarding conditions for women in Canada, as well as their perceptions regarding conditions for women in their own countries. Interestingly, renowned filmmaker, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy’s film “Highway of Tears,” which documented the case of the missing women, was funded by Al Jazeera International, a English Language News Channel based in Qatar, after the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation did not respond to requests for funding.
particularly the most extreme inequities appeared to effect specific populations of women. These different types of representations contribute to the homogenization of the “Third World Woman” as described by Talpade Mohanty, (1986/2003), in which women from “developing” countries are constructed as monolithic subjects (passive, poor and dependent, especially compared to their “First World “ counterparts), and the structures that produce women in specific contexts are largely ignored (see Chapter 2). Similarly, the Girl Effect” campaign, which describes the trajectory of one girl in the “developing” world (poor, uneducated, illiterate, diseased, violated, and a burden to society) to represent conditions for all girls in these regions, serves to homogenize the diverse conditions for girls and women within and among Majority World countries, constructs them in binary opposition to women in the “developed” world, and reifies transnational power hierarchies (Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003).

Third, explanations regarding inequitable conditions for women were more likely to be provided in news articles reporting on events in foreign countries than in Canada, and explanations of foreign conditions were more likely to ascribe those conditions to structural inequities at the national level; whereas explanations of local conditions affecting “mainstream” Canadian women, were more likely to be attributed to institutional or individual causes. The findings of this study suggest that problems in foreign countries may be more likely to be viewed as systemic issues, attributed to leaders or governments; whereas Canadian problems may be more likely to be viewed as isolated incidents, attributed to organizations or individuals. Further, inequities for women in “developing” countries were more likely to be attributed to “tradition” or “cultural” than inequities for women in Canada, although this type of attribution was not
common in the sample. The only articles in which inequities for women in Canada were attributed to “culture” were the articles on honour killings (Keeping, Oct. 13th, 2009) and female foeticide (Rao, 2009, Oct. 8th), issues constructed as external to Canadian society. Attributing sex-related inequities in “developing” countries to “culture”, “tradition” or “religion” provides foreigners (in this case Canadians) with a plausible explanation for such acts, given their lack of contextual information, yet misrepresents these cultures as static and “backwards” (Narayan, 1997).

Although few articles reported directly on issues of equity in Canada (or in other countries), Canada was constructed as an (relatively) equitable place for women primarily indirectly, through the juxtaposition of conditions for “Canadian” women with conditions for women in “developing” countries, as well as immigrant cultures. As Elsrud (2008) found, unfavourable descriptions of the “other” culture in newspaper articles serve to construct positive images of the dominant culture. Sets of binaries related to concepts of self and other (Gannon & Davies, 2007) worked within the intertextual contexts of articles to help the reader to fill in the gaps, so to speak, equating Canada and other “developed” countries with equity, progressiveness, humanitarianism, freedom, and benevolence; and Afghanistan India, China, Iran, and other “developing” countries with misogyny, traditionalism, barbarism, oppression, and helplessness. Even if authors do not make such comparisons explicitly, as is the case in the Girl Effect documentation, readers, who bring their own discursively constructed meanings to the reading, may make their own intertextual comparisons (Hall, 1997).

Such binaries can contribute to generalizations, over-simplifications, misconceptions, and worse. For example, understanding knowledge of cross-national
conditions for women as situated within a set of interrelated binaries of self and other helps to explain why Schryer (2009, May 1st) reported that Canada was a signatory of CEDAW, implying (erroneously) that Afghanistan was not, as well as why I thought I “knew” something about conditions for women in Botswana although my only knowledge of the country was its geographical location. As the quote at the beginning of this section indicates, people interpret new information in relation to what they already know. These binaries regarding equity and development activate other binaries that enable people to quickly make assumptions based on very little information.

The construction of dire conditions for women in “other” places may also impact Canadian women reading these accounts in other ways. The repetition (Butler, 1997) of women’s oppression elsewhere re-brutalizes even those not initially brutalized, in the form of a kind of sly ‘reminder’ that “this could be you” so remember how lucky you are. Indeed, in regards to the Shi’a law passed by the Afghan government, Schryer (2009, May 1st) provides the following warning, “this regressive law is a reality check, and reminds us that not all women have the freedoms we enjoy” (¶6). All women know that they will always be targets of male violence, whether actual or just ‘potential’, and that is true no matter what society, economy, condition or level of development. In this regard, “othering” may encourage women in Minority World countries, especially “mainstream” women, to differentiate themselves from “other” women at risk of the most life-threatening gender-related injustices and serve to make them more complacent regarding the seemingly more mundane inequities they experience.

As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the concerns associated with the scholarship asserting a positive relationship between development and conditions for women is that
feminist discourses can be co-opted and laminated on to contradictory ideological positions. Indeed, news reports of “global” inequities (other than perhaps the gender income gap) appear to evoke a feminist discourse, however in fact served to reproduce the superiority of Western nations and the deficiency of other nations. Sex-related inequities appeared to be “global” only in that “developing” countries were typically constructed as the sites of such inequities and “developed” countries were typically constructed as the defenders of gender-equality. Similarly, the mainstream development discourse was seamlessly integrated with the feminist discourse of ‘empowerment,’ in the “Girl Effect” donor information, creating a double-voiced discourse (Bakhtin, 1981), which masked the more unsettling neocolonial ideologies inherent in publication, rendering them largely invisible even to a women studies professor, who disseminated this information.

Read as a whole, these “popular” accounts suggest that conditions for women are largely deplorable in “developing” countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia and at least somewhat better in Canada and other “developed” nations, at least for mainstream women. Profound and pervasive sex-based inequities are associated with “developing” countries, as well as sub-cultures typically “marginalized” in Canadian society. According to some accounts, (some) Canadian women may even be privileged. Consistent with the typical liberal scholarly perspective, development was positively associated with conditions for women. In most articles in which the relationship between development and conditions for women was specifically addressed, gender-equality was discussed primarily in relation to how it could contribute to development. This is not surprising considering this discourse is prevalent, not only within the scholarly literature
(see Chapter 2), but also within the United Nation’s Millennium Declaration, the policy framework that guides international development work. The UN asserts, that “to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable” (United Nations, 2000, ¶ 39).

This analysis provided an exploration of “popular” accounts of equity issues and women’s lives in different places, as represented within a diverse collection of online newspaper articles, as well as the donor information produced by a development NGO. What kinds of stories would people from different countries tell about sex-related issues in their own countries, particularly in relation to development? This question is explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 4 - Bubble Dialogues as Cultural Artifacts: Fictional Stories

“Fiction here is likely to contain more truth than fact” (Woolf, 1929/1957, p.2).

Introduction

Having explored representations of local and foreign condition for women as depicted within popular media, this chapter investigates constructions of gender and development, as well as some of the subject positions discursively available to women of different ethnicities, inherent within the “fictional” creations of participants from four different countries. The goal of this chapter is to learn more about what stories we “Canadians” tell ourselves about local and foreign conditions for women, as well as the stories that others tell about themselves and about us, and to compare and contrast the discursive realities inherent within these constructions.

Participants included male and female university students from Sri Lanka, Canada, Norway and Botswana, who were asked to complete bubble dialogues (McMahon, et al., 1992), cartoon depictions of scenarios in which participants construct the spoken words and the thoughts of the characters. The cartoons used for this study included two scenes: one depicting an international women’s NGO meeting, and one depicting a coeducational classroom conversation regarding women’s education. It was hoped that the bubble dialogues would reveal implicit and explicit cultural expectations and assumptions, as well as some of the culturally prevalent discourses regarding gender and development. As Virginia Woolf (1929/1957) indicted, in some cases “fiction” may be more revealing than “fact”.
This chapter begins with a “snapshot” of each of the countries in which data was collected including general demographic information, mainstream assessments of “development,” as well as gender-equality, and average conditions for women in each country. An explanation of the guiding methodology is then provided, followed by a description of the method of data collection and analysis. The findings for each scenario are reported and discussed separately. This study revealed some interesting differences between samples regarding typical representations of development, as well as some insightful similarities regarding gender-relations across cultures.

Country “Snapshots”

The following section provides a “snapshot” of each country from which participants came: Canada, Sri Lanka (the primary sites) and Botswana and Norway in order to provide some context for understanding and interpreting participants’ “fictional” constructions (as reported in this chapter) and “factual” accounts (as reported in the following chapter). Topics discussed included general demographics (geography, population, and government), mainstream assessment of “development” and gender-equality (GDP, HDI, GDI, and GEM) (see Chapter 2), and general conditions for women (laws, education, income, health and violence). Some issues are discussed in greater length for some countries than others because they are more pertinent or because more information was readily available. When possible, information was taken from local sources. It is important to be mindful that much of the cross-national comparative data, particularly the information reported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is subject to the ethnocentric conceptual, ideological, and methodological issues discussed in Chapter 2.
Canada

Canada is the second largest country in the world (9,984,670 km²) with an estimated population exceeding 31 million (Statistics Canada, 2006b). That works out to approximately 3 people per square kilometer, but most of the population is concentrated in the southern part of the country, and particularly in urban areas. Women and girls represent 50.4% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2006a). In terms of ethnicity, the majority of the population is Caucasian, approximately 4% are Aboriginal, and 16% are visible minorities, primarily of South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino or Latin American, or Southeast-Asian descent (Statistics Canada, 2000b). Canada has a large immigrant population (19% percent of women living in Canada were born in another country) and 14% of Canadian women self-identify as ‘visible minorities’ (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Canada’s population has been characterized (Dewing & Leman, 2006) as being influenced by three major “forces.” The first force is the Aboriginal peoples, the second is descendants of British and French colonizers, and the third is immigrants from other countries. It was not until 1996 that “Canadian” was an option for ethnic origin on the Canadian census (Dewing & Leman, 2006). Over 200 ethnic origins were reported on the 2006 Census, and one-third of Canadians identified their ethnicity, at least in part, as “Canadian” (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Canada has two official languages, English and French. Approximately 60% of Canadians speak English, 23% speak French and 18% speak other languages, primarily Chinese (Statistics Canada, 2006b).

Canada is a parliamentary democracy, a federation, and a Commonwealth realm that became a self-governing dominion in 1867. It has a GDP of $1,180.9 billion United

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41 Approximately 40% of those who self-identified as Canadian also listed at least one other ethnic origin.
States Dollars (USD) or $40,329 USD per capita (UNDP, 2009). Canada is considered a “very high human development” country (UNDP, 2009), consistently scores high on the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (see Table 4.1). Yet Canada is a country is full of contradictions. According to Patricia Leidl (2007), (former) Media Advisor and Senior Editor for the United Nations Population Fund, Canada’s poorest neighbourhood, Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, has a hepatitis C rate of 70% and an estimated HIV infection rate of 30%, which is comparable to Botswana. The shortage of social housing in this neighbourhood is so dire and government initiatives so limited that a University of British Columbia Professor and his students filed a human rights complaint with the United Nations that was subsequently assumed by three organizations (Impact on Communities Coalition, the Carnegie Community Action Project, and the Pivot Legal Society) (CBC, April, 13th, 2008).42 “High levels of violence, homelessness, addictions and poverty characterize the Downtown Eastside community, and women and children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, injustice and injury” (the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre, 2009, ¶1).

Gender-equality is protected under section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a constitutional document that guarantees civil rights to all Canadian citizens.

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion,

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42 Jean Swanson, coordinator of Carnegie Community Action Project, went as far as to ask the United Nations if another country could donate housing to Canada (Swanson, October 18th, 2007).
sex, age, or mental or physical disability. (Department of Justice Canada, 1982, clause 15.1)

This act however does not prohibit affirmative action programs that have as their object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability” (Department of Justice Canada, 1982, clause 15.2). In 1981 Canada ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the UN assembly in 1979. In 2005 Canada legalized same sex marriage.

Canadian women (15%) are slightly less likely than Canadian men (16%) to have a university degree but are currently more likely (57%) to be enrolled as full-time university students than men. They are less likely to hold a masters (44%) or a doctoral degree (27%) than men. Women are statistically underrepresented in mathematics, science, engineering and applied sciences (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

Canadian women make up 58% of the paid work compared to 68% of men. Women are more likely than men to be employed part-time: 27% of the employed women work part time compared to 11% of employed men (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Women’s pre tax earnings are 62% of men’s, and women employed full time make 71% of the salaries of their male counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Lone parent households headed by women are some of the poorest families in Canada, with nearly 40% of lone parent households headed by women being considered “low income” (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

\[43 \text{ Families or individuals are classified as “low income” if they spend, on average, at least 20 percentage points more of their pre-tax income than the Canadian average on food, shelter, and}\]

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Life expectancy at birth in Canada is 81 years (82 years for women and 79 years for men) (Statistics Canada, 2006a). The fertility rate (per woman) is 1.5. The Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births) is 7, and the infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) is 5 (WHO, 2008). The World Health Organization (2008) estimates that between 43 000 and 110 000 people in Canada are living with HIV. Women make up 9% of all AIDS cases in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

Canadian women make up approximately half of the victims of violent crime, are six times more likely than men to be the victims of sexual assault, are three times more likely than men to be criminally harassed, and are more likely than men to be victimized by someone they know than by a stranger (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Although roughly equal numbers of men and women report experiencing some form of spousal violence, women experience more extreme forms of violence and are more impacted by violence than men in terms of physical injury and/or emotional trauma. Women are half as likely to be murdered than men but more likely than men to be murdered by someone they know. Nearly all (97%) of homicide-suicide victims are women (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

**Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is a relatively small country (65,610 km2) with a relatively large population. The Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka (2001) estimates the 2001 population to be 18,797,257, and the UNDP (2009) reports the 2007 population to be 19.9 million. The population density is over 300 people per km2. The sex ratio is listed as

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*44* Compared to 13% of lone parent households headed by men and 7% of two parent families.
99.2, presumably the ratio of males to females\textsuperscript{45} (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2001). In terms of ethnicity, the majority of the population (82\%) is Sinhalese. Other ethnic groups include Sri Lankan Moors (7.9\%), Indian Tamil (5.1\%), Sri Lankan Tamil (4.3\%), Burgher\textsuperscript{46} (0.2\%), Malay (0.3\%) and other (0.2\%) (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2001). Sri Lanka is a multilingual country with two national languages: Sinhalese, which is the mother tongue for the majority of the population (74\%), and Tamil, which is the mother tongue for 18\% of the population (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). English is commonly spoken, particularly in government and business.

The government of Sri Lanka is a Democratic Socialist Republic and is a mixture of the presidential and parliamentary system. Formerly colonized by the Portuguese, then Dutch and finally the English, Sri Lanka declared independence in 1948, after which it remained in the Commonwealth until 1972 when it became a Republic. Since 1983, the country has been embroiled in a civil war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighting for a separate state, and the government. The LTTE was officially declared defeated and the war at an end by the government in 2009, but post-war conditions continue, including the plight of displaced persons living in camps, many of whom are women. The country is also recovering from the 2004 Tsunami which devastated some coastal areas and killed over 30 000 people. Again, many of those affected are women.

The GDP PPP in Sri Lanka was estimated to be $84.9 billion USD in 2007, approximately $1,616 USD per capita (UNDP, 2009). Sri Lanka is considered to be a

\textsuperscript{45} The CIA reports a ratio of 0.97 male(s)/female.

\textsuperscript{46} People with mixed Sri Lankan and European ancestry.
“medium human development” country (UNDP, 2009), is ranked “medium” on the Gender-related Development Index and “low” on the Gender Empowerment Measure (see Table 4.1). In 1981, Sri Lanka was one of the first countries in South Asia to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However international policy is not legally binding in Sri Lanka unless it is also represented in national law (Goonesekere, 2000).

The Sri Lankan Constitution protects citizens from discrimination and inequality, but these terms are only enforced in the supreme court in relation to offences committed in the public sector, and offences committed by administrative and executive bodies, which is problematic since much of the discrimination against women occurs in the private sector (CEDAW, 1999). In 1993 the Sri Lankan government adopted the “Women’s Charter” in order to eradicate sex based inequalities and discrimination. The Charter established women’s rights within seven areas including: the right to education and training, economic activity and benefits, healthcare and nutrition, protection from social discrimination, protection from gender based violence, rights within the family, and political and civil rights; however no provisions are made for affirmative action programs. The National Committee on Women was struck to monitor these rights. The Sri Lankan criminal code criminalizes homosexuality, but was recently revised to include sexual acts among women. Interestingly, “the rationale for this change was that when the sections of the Penal Code were amended and presented to parliament, the reference only to males, as in the original definition of the offence, would be challenged as an unconstitutional infringement of the right to equality and non discrimination!” (Goonesekere, 2000, p. 14).
Since Independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has had a strong history of female heads of state. Sri Lanka elected the first female prime minister in the world, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, in 1960. She was elected to the position after the death of Prime Minister, S.W.R.D Bandaranaike, her husband, and served three terms as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Subsequently her daughter, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, became President of Sri Lanka from 1994 until 2005. (The prime minister was the head of government in Sri Lanka until 1978, at which time the president became the head of government). Overall however, women are poorly represented in government at the national and local levels (Leitan, 2000). Women make up 5% of members of parliament and 10% of ministers (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2007).

Women (89%) in Sri Lanka are slightly less likely than men (92%) to be literate, and girls’ (49%) enrollment is nearly equal to boys’ enrollment in grades six to eleven (Gunawardena, 2005). Women make up 54% of university students and are overrepresented in arts (70%), and education (79%), under represented in engineering (11%)\(^{47}\), and similarly represented in commerce/management studies (50%), architecture and quantity surveying (44%), science (48%), medicine (47%), dental science (54%), veterinary medicine (56%), law (48%), and agriculture (52%).

Women are more likely to be unemployed than men and the higher their educational achievements, the greater the gender gap. For example, in 2003 2.5% of women with less than a grade four education were unemployed compared to 1.3% of men; whereas 26% of women with a GCE or higher were unemployed compared to 10% of men (Gunawardena, 2005). Female university graduates are overrepresented in the

\(^{47}\) Women however make up 18% of those accepted to engineering programs and 18% of those competing engineering programs.
lowest pay categories (less than 7000 Rs per month\textsuperscript{48}) and underrepresented in the highest pay categories (Jayaweera & Sanmugam, 2002). (Jayaweera and Sanmugam considered 7000 Rs a reasonable starting salary for a recent university graduate at the time the study was published).

Life expectancy at birth in Sri Lanka is 72 years and the fertility rate (per woman) is 1.9. The Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births) is 58 and the infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) is 11 (WHO, 2008). The World Health Organization (2008) estimates that between 2800 and 5100 people in Sri Lanka are living with HIV.

Comprehensive information regarding the prevalence of violence against women in Sri Lanka is not available\textsuperscript{49} due to lack of national self-report studies, limited reporting of such incidents to authorities, as well as the lack of systematic documentation and sensitivity within Sri Lankan institutions dealing with victims of crimes. There is evidence to suggest however that gender-related violence, or perhaps the reporting of such violence, is on the rise (Wijayatilake, 2000). According to the Sri Lankan Women’s Manifesto (Women’s Political Forum, 2005/2006), “it is well known that that many women and girls in all parts of Sri Lanka have to face forms of violence ranging from harassment, assaults, rape, and incest, to torture, ‘disappearance’ and killings” (p. 10). As reported by Goonesekere (2000) in 1995 and 1998 many legislative reforms addressing gender-related violence were made, included changing the age of statutory rape from 12 to 16 years (only in cases of non-Muslims however), no longer requiring physical evidence as proof of rape, harsher punishment for more serious rape offensives, and the criminalization of sexual harassment, as well as ‘ragging’ (acts of violence and/or

\textsuperscript{48} Approximately $70\textendash\text{CND.}\n\textsuperscript{49} Interestingly, despite the dearth of statistics available through United Nations organizations, cross-national statistics regarding violence against women is not available.
intimidation on university campuses, similar to ‘hazing’ which are often sexualized in the case of female students (see Wijayatilake, Wickramasinghe, Samarasinghe, Liyanage, & Abeywardena, 2000)). Many women however find it difficult to obtain justice in regards to gender-related violence (Goonesekere, 2000).

Norway

With an area of 305 470 km2 and a relatively small population (4.8 million), Norway has one of the lowest population densities in Europe (approximately 16) (Statistics Norway, n.d). Women made up 50.1 per cent of the Norwegian population (Statistics Norway, n.d). Bokmal Norwegian and Nynorsk Norwegian are the official languages and in some areas, Sami is also an official language. Immigrants and their Norwegian born children make up approximately 10% of the population, and the majority of immigrants come from Poland, Sweden, Germany and Iraq (Statistics Norway, n.d). The Sami, indigenous people in Northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, also inhabits Norway; however since there is no general official registration of Sami, the number of Sami residing in Norway is unknown (Statistics Norway, n.d). There are three Sami languages: Northern Sami, Lule Sami and Southern Sami (Statistics Norway, n.d).

The government is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democratic system of governance. Norway experienced rapid economic growth after the Second World War, primarily as a result of the discovery of large oil deposits. The estimated GDP PPP in 2007 was 251.6 billion USD, and their GDP per capita was $59,300 USD (UNPD, 2009). Norway is considered to be a “very high human development” country (UNDP, 2009), and consistently scores high on the Gender-related Development Index.
and the Gender Empowerment Measure (see Table 4.1). Norway ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981.

In Norway the Gender Equality Act of 1978 prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender with the goal of “improving the position of women” and “promoting gender equality in all sectors of society” (Borchorst, 1999). The Gender Equality act does not preclude affirmative action and quota systems for hiring practices particularly within public institutions, and more recently within the private sector have been institutionalized as part of the government’s action plan for gender-equality.

Women account for 63% of students enrolled in Bachelor degrees and 50% of students in Master degree studies. Even after sex-differences in education, hours worked, and occupation and industry are taken into account, there are sex-related pay inequities in Norway. Women make approximately 86% of men’s salaries (Kristiansen & Sandnes, 2006). Further, women’s average gross wealth (registered owner of various assets) was less than half (NOK 260 000) of the average gross wealth of men (NOK 540 000). More women (43%) work part-time than men (13%) and the labour force is clearly gendered.

Typical female professions are teachers in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, nurses, cleaners and secretaries. Typical male professions are craftsmen, building and construction workers, drivers and engineers. In some professions, e.g. postmen and marketing and advertising staff, the numbers are approximately equal for women and men. (Kristiansen & Sandnes, 2006, p. 13)

Women make up 47% of the labour force but are less likely to be political representatives (38%), managers (29%) or board members of public corporations (19%) (Kristiansen & Sandnes, 2006). The percentage of female board members of public companies has
increased from 9% in 2005, due to government initiatives to achieve the target of a minimum of 40 percent board representation by both by both men and women by 2005 (Kristiansen & Sandnes, 2005).

Life expectancy at birth in Norway is 80 years and the fertility rate (per woman) is 1.8. The Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births) is 7 and the infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) is 3 (WHO, 2008). The World Health Organization (2008) estimates that between 1700 and 5000 people in Norway are living with HIV.

Both men and women are equally likely to become the victim of violence or threats of violence (about 5%). Women however, are more likely than men to experience violence in intimate relationships, and more often (13%) report being more fearful of becoming a victim of violence than men (3%) (Kristiansen & Sandnes, 2006).

Botswana

Botswana, a landlocked country of approximately 581,730 sq km (Botswana Tourism Board, 2006), has a relatively small population, reported as 1,680,863 million in 2001 by the Botswana Central Statistics Office and 1.9 million by the (UNDP, 2009), with a population density of approximate 3.3 per km2. The majority of the population (79%) is Tswana (or Setswana). Other ethnicities include: Kalanga (11%), Basarwa (3%), and “other” (including Kgalagadi and white) (7%) (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). Setswana is the national language spoken by the majority of the population (Botswana Tourism Board, 2006), although English is the official business language and is spoken in urban areas.

The government is a parliamentary republic that gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1966 after 80 years as a British protectorate (Botswana Tourism
The estimated GDP PPP in 2007 was 25.6 billion USD, $6,544 per capita USD (UNDP, 2009). The discovery of diamonds in 1967 greatly contributed to Botswana’s economic growth (Botswana Tourism Board, 2006). Botswana is considered to be a “medium human development” country (UNDP, 2009), is ranked “medium” on the Gender-related Development Index, and “medium” on the Gender Empowerment Measure (see Table 4.1).

The official policies and symbols of Botswana provide a rich representation of equity, multiculturalism, community, and empowerment. The black and white stripes in the Botswana flag symbolize pluralism and racial harmony. (The other colour in the flag, blue symbolizes water, which is considered such a valuable commodity that the currency of Botswana is also called “pula” meaning water.) Botswana has five national guiding principles including Democracy, Development, Self-Reliance, Unity, and “Botho,” meaning “respect, good manner” and entails fulfilling individual potential as well as and service to community (Government of Botswana, 2009).

The past fifteen years have been a time of change in regards to gender relations and greater awareness of conditions for women in Botswana. Botswana ratified the United Nation’s Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1996, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Declaration on Gender and Development in 1997, created the National Policy on Women and Development and amended discriminatory federal laws in 1996 (Government of Botswana, 2004).

Gender-equality is articulated as a goal in the Vision 2016 policy, a national manifesto that identifies a long-term vision for the 50th anniversary of Botswana’s
independence.

No citizen of the future Botswana will be disadvantaged as a result of gender, age, religion or creed, colour, national or ethnic origin, location, language or political opinions. The future Botswana will have eradicated negative social attitudes towards the status and role of women, the youth, the elderly and the disabled, and will be free from all forms of sexual harassment. (Presidential Task Group, 1996, p. 12)

A gender-based analysis is integrated throughout the seven strategic goals of “Vision 2016.” Some of the gender-related goals addressed in this policy include: ensuring equal access to economic resources, amending discriminative laws and policies, increasing women’s participation in decision making at all levels through affirmative action programs, encouraging women’s enrollment in vocational training as well as science and technology education, ensuring women’s access to quality healthcare, and eradicating violence against women (Presidential Task Group, 1996).

These reforms are not necessarily reflected in customary, common and statutory law however (Presidential Task Group, 1996). For example under Botswana customary law, women were considered minors, and although this law is no longer a formal policy, it continues to influence social relations (Exner & Thurston, 2009). Indeed, official documents from both public and private institutions may still discriminate against women (Government of Botswana, 2004). “The substantive challenge lies in bridging the gap between progressive policy and legislative reforms on the one hand and tradition and deep-seated institutional cultures that stand in the way of equal rights of citizenship for men and women on the other” (Government of Botswana, 2004, p. 11).
In Botswana literacy rates for adults over 15 years of age were 82.8% for men and 82.9% for women in 2007 (UNESCO, n.d.). The primary net enrolment ratio (NER)\(^{50}\) was 83% for boys and 86% for girls in 2002, and the secondary NER was 58% for boys and 64% for girls in 2002. The primary gross enrolment ratio (GER)\(^{51}\) was 109% for boys and 108% for girls in 2002, and the secondary GER was 58% for boys and 64% for girls in 2002 (UNESCO, n.d.). Women hold 11% of seats in parliament, and one-third of legislators, senior officials and managers are women (UNDP, 2009). The UNDP (2009) estimates that women make approximately 58% of men’s wages.

Life expectancy at birth in Botswana is 52 years and the fertility rate (per woman) is 3. The Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births) is 380 and the infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) is 90 (WHO, 2008). The World Health Organization (2008) estimates that between 280 000 and 310 000 people in Botswana are living with HIV.

During the time of the data collection for my own study there was much press and discussion in relation to “passion” or “love-killings,” an institutionalized form of violence thought to be caused by changes resulting from globalization, loss of the traditional patriarchy, and/or family problems (Tsayang, Weeks, & Ndobochani, 2008), in which men murder their partners and sometimes themselves. Livingston (2009) argues that the so called “passion killings” are influenced by modernization, the “pressure of investment commodified love” (p.667) and the advancement of women’s rights in Botswana. Resulting from the perception that wealth is required to secure a relationship, men may overextend themselves purchasing gifts for their partners. In this regard the relationship

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\(^{50}\) The NER is the “number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for that level of education” (UNESCO, n.d., ¶3).

\(^{51}\) The GER is the “number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for that level of education” (UNESCO, n.d., ¶3).
may be viewed as an “investment,” which is threatened as a result of the recent advancement of women’s legal rights in Botswana, and the man may become enraged if the woman decides to end the relationship. At the same time couples are increasingly free to navigate romantic relationships without the formal exchange of bride wealth, independent of the guidance of their families. “This sense of investment that animates many relationships is part of a set of novel and complicated trajectories in which lovers seek a precarious balance between older and newer forms of sociality and economic success meant to mitigate against the potential alienation and loneliness of modern life” (Livingston, 2009, p. 666). The economic vulnerability of women in Botswana, particularly in regards to the HIV epidemic, may also exacerbate domestic violence (Livingston, 2009).
Table 4.1 Scores and Rankings on Development Indices for Norway, Canada, Sri Lanka and Botswana

<table>
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<th>Norway</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Sri Lanka</th>
<th>Botswana</th>
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<td>4/182</td>
<td>102/182</td>
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<td>Rank</td>
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<td>4/155</td>
<td>83/155</td>
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<td>GDI</td>
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<td>(0.756)</td>
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<td>Rank</td>
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<td>12/109</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>GEM</td>
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Methodology and Method of Bubble Dialogue Study

In order to learn more about the construction of social realities, gendered, racial, and national power hierarchies, as well as subject positions for women from different countries, university students from four countries, Sri Lanka, Botswana, Norway and Canada, were given bubble dialogues, blank cartoons in which participants construct the spoken words and the thoughts of the characters (McMahon, et al., 1992). The cartoons used for this study included two scenes: one depicting an all-women international NGO meeting and one depicting a classroom conversation regarding women’s education. It was hoped that the bubble dialogues would reveal implicit and explicit cultural expectations and assumptions, as well as some of the culturally prevalent discourses regarding conditions for women and development.

Narrative devices such as the bubble dialogues can provide insight regarding cultural values, expectations and assumptions (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Kohler Riessman, 2008), and may reflect scripts, a type of schema containing stereotypical
knowledge of what typically happens (Mandler, 1984). I believed that asking participants to tell stories would be a useful strategy methodologically in that “fictional” accounts might reveal more about material conditions than self-report data because participants may be unable to articulate the social forces that impact their lives or they might censor opinions/experiences perceived to be unfavourable. The bubble dialogue method was a particularly appropriate type of narrative construction for this research because it allowed the participants to differentiate between discourses that are publicly voiced versus those that may be privately thought (see McMahon et al., 1992) and tensions between different discourses. Consequently this method can “make visible” (Despret, 2005) socially undesirable, yet prevalent discourses, or cultural values that are implicitly known but rarely communicated overtly (especially with foreigners), and which for these reasons, may not necessarily be disclosed during standard interviews or traditional questionnaires.

Authors construct different narratives depending upon their subject positions, beliefs, and experiences, however narrative possibilities are constrained by the discourses that are culturally available. As Bakhtin reminds us, it is difficult to say something truly original as language is "over populated-with the intentions of others" (1981, p. 294) and we get our words from “other people’s mouths” (p. 294). Utterances have histories and these histories resonate in the voices of the speakers who may have no knowledge or investments in them (Wertsch, 1991). In this regard the bubble dialogues are not an original creation but rather discursive sites in which old ideologies are reproduced and projected into the future (Butler, 1997). That is not to say that narrative constructions, such as the bubble dialogues, are limited to the reproduction of hegemonic discourses.
They may also provide communicative sites of resistance in which participants can contest ‘typical’, normative, or hegemonic ideas and imagine future possibilities. However (as discussed in Chapter 3), certain discourses are more prevalent and carry more weight than others (Weedon, 1987) and consequently may be more likely to be reflected in the bubble dialogues.

As Woolf’s (1929/1957) quote at the beginning of this chapter indicates, “fictional” accounts may be more informative than “factual” accounts. While self-reports and observations are seemingly more “real” compared to the bubble dialogues, they may not necessarily be more “true” than these narrative constructions. Bubble dialogues may be autobiographical and reflect they may accurately express the lived experiences of the participants. McMahon and colleagues (1992) found that school children based some of the characters’ conversation in their bubble dialogue on their personal experiences. “In a very real sense the statues were made to talk and think the way the children wanted to talk and think themselves” (p. 48). Even if the creators of the narratives do not subscribe to the character’s position, or believe that their narratives reflect current conditions, the repetition of particular “stories” can accurately portray ideas that, whatever their epistemic status, nevertheless impact on and effect respondents. “Rumors told and retold make the world of today remarkably like the world of yesterday. They reconstitute us” (McDermott & Varenne, 2006, p. 9). They serve to reproduce stereotypical construction of gender and international relations and our subject positions within these relations.

Participants

Participants in the ‘bubble dialogues’ study included 127 university students from institutions in major cities in Canada, Norway, Botswana and Sri Lanka. The number of
participants from each country was roughly equal: 25% of the sample were Canadian, 23% Norwegian, 24% Batswana, and 28% Sri Lankan. The majority of participants were undergraduate students, but some participants in the Norwegian sample were masters students (n=11). Two samples came from traditionally “male-dominated” fields (Fishery Science in Norway and Computer Science in Botswana) and the other two samples were from traditionally “female-dominated” disciplines (Education in Canada and English in Sri Lanka). More than half of the participants (68%) were women but gender ratios were different in each sample. Women were predominant in the Canadian (81%) and Sri Lankan (97%) samples, but minorities in the Norway sample (35%). The percentage of men and women was approximately equal in the Botswana samples.

The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 46 (\(\bar{x}=25\)) and there was a greater range and higher average age in the Canadian and Norwegian samples than the Botswana and Sri Lankan samples. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 46 (\(\bar{x}=28\)) in the Canadian sample, from 20 to 43 (\(\bar{x}=26\)) in the Norwegian sample, from 22 to 26 (\(\bar{x}=24\)) in the Sri Lankan sample, and from 19 to 28, (\(\bar{x}=23\)) in the Botswana sample.

Participants were asked to provide their nationality and their ethnicity. The vast majority of the participants listed their nationality as consistent with the country in which they resided; however there were three exceptions: one man from the Canadian sample listed his nationality as Greek, one man from the Norwegian sample listed his nationality as Dutch, and one man from the Botswana sample listed his nationality as Nigerian. Their

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52 The plural demonym of Botswana is “Batswana” and the singular is “Motswana.”
questionnaires were included in the analysis. Two women in the Canadian sample reported dual nationality (“Filipino/Canadian” and “Canadian-Chinese”).

Sri Lankans reported their ethnicity primarily in terms of their cultural background. Thirty participants referred to their ethnicity\(^{53}\) as Sinhalese or Sinhala (these terms are used interchangeably to refer to both ethnicity and language), one reported her ethnicity as “Burgher” (mixed European and Sri Lankan heritage), and one woman reported her ethnicity in relation to her religion: “Muslim”. Participants in the Botswana sample described their ethnicity in terms of their tribal affiliations. Participants were from the Molete tribe (3), Mmirwa (2), Mohurutshe (2), Mokgatta (2), Moksatla (2), Mongwato (2), Morolong (2), Motswapong (2), and one from each of the following: Mokalaka, Mokgalagaoi, Mokmurutshe, Mokwena, Mopedi, Ngwakette, Shona, Suoazi and one from the Nigerian Yoruba tribe. Most Canadians described their ethnicity either in terms of their race or in terms of family heritage: 11 participants self-identified as “Caucasian”/”white”, 7 as of European (French, English, British, German, Italian) descent, 1 as “Asian,” 6 as of Asian descent (Chinese, Taiwanese, Singaporean, Filipino), 1 as “Black”, 1 as “East Indian”, and 1 as of Chilean descent. Only one participant described her ethnicity as “Canadian.” Most Norwegians (17) reported their ethnicity in terms of their nationality (“Norwegian”, “Norway”, or “Nordie”) and one person reported

\(^{53}\) The common term used for ethnicity in SL is ‘race’ (Dr. Kumari Beck, Personal Communication).
\(^{54}\) Interestingly, Muslim is considered a racial category in Sri Lanka. It is possible, theoretically, for a Muslim to take up a different religion, Christianity for example, though rare (Dr. Kumari Beck, Personal Communication).
his ethnicity in terms of a particular area of Norway: “Tronder”). Others from the Norwegian sample (9) reported their ethnicity in terms of race: “Caucasian”/“white.55

Process

Ethics

Written informed consent did not appear to be a common research practice in Botswana or Sri Lanka, and other legal agreements and waivers that are typical in Canada are unusual in these countries. For example, in Sri Lanka, people are not expected to sign legal waivers when they join a gym or participate in an extreme sport. Asking participants to sign legal consent forms (if unfamiliar) may have caused confusion and/or suspicion in these countries. With the approval of the SFU Ethics Board, the professors who administered the bubble dialogues to their students in these countries were given the option of using written informed consent forms. Written informed consent was provided in all countries except Botswana. In Botswana (as well as the other countries) participants were given an information sheet that provided details about the nature of the study and how their information would be used. They were told that they could discontinue at any time and that their responses would be anonymous and confidential.

Bubble Dialogues

The bubble dialogues consisted of two cartoons drawings with blank callouts for informants to represent characters’ spoken words and thought (see Figure 4.1). The first cartoon entitled “NGO meeting,” depicted a white NGO worker sitting at a private desk

55 It is interesting to note the different ways in which ethnicity was reported by the participants. Differences that appeared to be significant or important included: ethnicity in Sri Lanka (a country in the midst of an ethnic conflict), tribal affiliation in Botswana (a country in which the racial diversity of the nation is represented in the colours of its flag), familial heritage and race in Canada (a country known for valuing multiculturalism and yet where racial discrimination is not uncommon), and race and nationality in Norway (a country in which was traditionally perceived as homogeneous).
and a diverse group of women of colour sitting around an adjacent table. The second
dialogue depicted a single scene of a coeducational classroom in which a female teacher
is saying, “It is really important for girls to get a good education. The more years of
study, the better their lives will be.” Participants were asked to determine what the
characters were thinking and saying.

The bubble dialogues used in this research were designed to be culturally specific:
that is, the characters in the cartoons were drawn so as to represent in general terms the
people and conditions within respondents’ differing cultural contexts. Bubble dialogues
were reproduced in black and white. In Norway, the Sri Lankan version of the education
bubble dialogue (see Figure 4.3) was accidentally administered rather than the Western
version (see Figure 4.4). In order to determine if the different cultural representation had
an effect on the responses, approximately half of the Canadian sample (44%) was given
the Sri Lankan version and the remainder received the Western version of the education
scenario. There did not appear to be significant differences in the responses of the
participants between the two versions of scenarios in the vast majority of representations.
Several Norwegian participants made references within the bubble dialogue that indicated
that scenario may be occurring in a foreign country; but other participants clearly
depicted this scenario as occurring in Norway. The possibility that the scenario could
have been considered a foreign classroom in the Norwegian sample, and half of the
Canadian sample, was taken into account during the analysis, in that the implicit or
explicit references to the perceived nationality of the characters noted and was carefully
considered when constructing possible interpretations.

56 The Sri Lankan bubble dialogues were likely more culturally specific because I was more aware of this
cultural context and the artist was Sri Lankan.
The instructions for the bubble dialogues and questionnaire were in English, although participants were invited to respond in their first language. A few Botswana respondents in Setswana and these responses were subsequently translated. Spelling mistakes were corrected in the representations of the bubble dialogues.

**Analysis**

Bubble dialogues were read with particular attention to the types of stories that were told about gender and/or development, how the characters were represented, what subject positions were constructed, what power relations were reified or disrupted, and what discourses were prevalent. Representations were examined for consistencies and inconsistencies between characters, as expressed by comparing their public statements with their ‘private’ thoughts, as well as tensions between characters and how conflicts and tensions were constructed. If thoughts and spoken words contradicted each other, the character’s thoughts were taken to be a “truer” representation of the character’s beliefs. Typically thoughts are considered a more accurate account of people’s perceptions of reality than their speech if there are deviations between the two, such as in the case of deception. Rarely would spoken words be considered a more accurate representation of reality than thoughts except perhaps in the case of mental illness, in which thoughts would still be considered a more accurate representation of a person’s perceptions of reality. Microsoft Excel was used to facilitate the coding process. Representations constructed by Canadian, Sri Lankan, Norwegian, and Botswana participants were compared for similarities and differences (Bulbeck, 1998).

There are many possible ways of interpreting these scenarios, and they may be read differently depending on the reader’s contextual knowledge, purpose, and subject
position. While it would be highly desirable to generate, analyze, and represent multiple interpretations of the bubble dialogues, particularly those that might be expected to arise from within diverse cultural perspectives, generating so extensive a set of interpretations was beyond the scope of this study. Although limited, my interpretations of the bubble dialogues served the purposes of this study as my goal was primarily to advance my understanding of conditions for women in Canada through the comparative method, rather than generating insights about conditions for women in other countries.

**NGO Bubble Dialogue**

The first bubble dialogue, entitled “NGO meeting.” (Non-Government Organization) was drawn to provide a discursive site in which participants could take up issues of gender, race, development, and/or international relations. As discussed in Chapter 3, international NGOs serve as powerful transnational “channels” which often transmit Western values and enact Western policies and initiatives (Townsend, Porter, Mawdsley, 2002; Tvedt, 1998). The cartoon depicted a racial/cultural power hierarchy in which a white woman was positioned in the centre of the scene, sitting at her own separate desk, and the characters of colour assumed more peripheral positions around a shared table (see Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2). The NGO designation on the white woman’s shirt provided further clues regarding her role and clearly marked the development theme. The other members of the group were drawn to depict a diverse group of Sri Lankan women, including Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim representatives. This version of the scenario was given to all Sri Lankan, Canadian, and Norwegian participants. The

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57 Many many thanks to Neil Ranasinghe for producing these images.
Botswana participants received a similar cartoon except that the white NGO worker was surrounded by a diverse group of African women, rather than Sri Lankan women. The women-only nature of the meeting was intended to encourage participants to create scenarios in which gender was a central theme in some way. What would a multiethnic group of women at an NGO meeting discuss?

“NGO Meeting”

Figure 4.1 - NGO Meeting Bubble Dialogue given to Sri Lankan, Norwegian, and Canadian participants.
The “NGO meeting” scenario was interpreted in many different ways within and particularly across countries. As can be seen in Table 4.2, the samples varied dramatically in regards to the incorporation of the NGO theme and the gender theme (dialogue related to the women only nature of the scenario) in their representations. Consequently the data was analyzed primarily by country and then compared and contrasted for similarities and differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of NGO Theme Explicit</th>
<th>Percentage of Gender Theme Explicit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>82% (almost exclusively regarding “gender-equality”)</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 – NGO Meeting Bubble Dialogue given to Botswana Participants

Results – NGO Bubble Dialogue

The “NGO meeting” scenario was interpreted in many different ways within and particularly across countries. As can be seen in Table 4.2, the samples varied dramatically in regards to the incorporation of the NGO theme and the gender theme (dialogue related to the women only nature of the scenario) in their representations. Consequently the data was analyzed primarily by country and then compared and contrasted for similarities and differences.
Canadian Sample

The predominant theme among the Canadian sample was a scenario that depicted collegial, cooperative working relations among the multiethnic women, based on shared goals and values, as evident in both thoughts and spoken words. For example, one character says, “Great work ladies! Now let's develop our next plan of action!”; while thinking, “I love my job”. Her colleague says, “Perhaps we can begin with a brainstorming session…,” and thinks, “I wonder if we can match the last job!” Terms indicating group cohesiveness, such as “team,” “work together,” “sharing,” “happy to be a part of this,” and “learn ... from each other,” were typical in these scenarios, and for the most part, characters appeared to value the contributions of the other members. Generally speaking these scenarios were very positive and characters used terms like “progress,” “empowerment,” “exceeded,” “really getting some where,” “big changes,” and “making a difference” to indicate the success of the projects. In the majority of the Canadian scenarios there was little, if any, indication that the NGO character was external to the group and some participants specifically depicted the characters as sharing a common culture, for example as indicated by the phrase “our nation.” Based on the multiethnic make-up of Canadian society, particularly the community from which this sample was drawn, these scenarios could just as easily represent a national, as an international group. Alternatively, these types of depictions could represent a multiethnic “United Nations” type of organization made up of representatives from many countries working internationally outside of their home countries.

The ethnic differences between the characters were largely ignored by the Canadian participants and were only addressed in the thoughts of a few characters. In one
of these scenarios, the diversity of the women was celebrated (NGO workers says “This is great, we have a variety of women here to speak their minds today”). In the other bubble dialogue in which ethnic differences were acknowledged, they were a source of tension. The author of this dialogue, a Caucasian woman, depicted the one woman of colour saying to another, “That sure is a pretty flower Kyssi!,” but thinking, “That flower is lame, go back to Hawaii.” The white character says, “I'm glad you all did the readings for today!” while thinking, “They better not be lying b/c I'll figure it out”. Outwardly the character of colour complimented her colleague on a personal artifact that culturally sets her apart from the others and may indeed symbolize her ethnicity, but inwardly she disparages the flower and perhaps, foreigners who do not assimilate to Canadian culture. It is perhaps significant that the participant represented a visible minority character as shunning the foreigner, rather than the white character as shunning the foreigner. This discursive move places the responsibility for regulating assimilation on the visible minority character, perhaps an immigrant herself, rather than a member of the dominant culture who is portrayed as privately suspicious of the other characters but not publicly racist.

The specific focus of the meeting was vague in most of the Canadian bubble dialogues, and few participants specifically addressed themes related to international development. Participants discussed issues including “our nation’s rights,” “feminine issues,” a rally, funding, guest speakers, setting goals, working hard, as well as procedural issues (such as starting and adjourning the meeting, agendas, lunch breaks,

58 Racism expressed by visible minorities may be more accepted than racist acts committed by visible majorities in that visible minorities may be perceived to be more entitled to these opinions or not capable of racism. Recently a friend of Middle-Eastern descent experienced horrendous abuse by a police officer in the States. In her account of the incident she said, “I would have thought that he was racist except that he was Asian, likely Japanese.
and promotions). These scenarios could have represented an NGO meeting or other types of meetings. Three participants conceptualized the scene as an education scenario (which is perhaps not surprising given that the participants were education students) and one participant created a scene that was business related. The lack of specific development themes in the scenarios created by the Canadian sample was so profound that I double-checked to make sure that the NGO title and logo were visible in the photocopies given to this group of participants. Perhaps this group of students knew little about the activities of NGO workers, or the political controversy surrounding international NGO work. Alternatively, meaning of “NGO” may not have been familiar to some of the participants in the Canadian sample.

There was only one bubble dialogue that represented the NGO meeting as having a clear “development” focus. In depiction, produced by a 31-year-old Caucasian woman, the NGO worker says, “Okay ladies, today we are going to talk about the spread of AIDS” and she thinks, “Hopefully we can get somewhere soon.” The woman of colour says, “I am really excited about this meeting,” and thinks, “I hope I will learn something to help me.” This dialogue appears to depict collegial international relations in that the women are working towards common goals. However, consistent with liberal perceptions of the positive relationship between development and conditions for women, it serves to reproduce cultural hierarchies. This depiction mirrors the representations of charitable Canadians helping the unfortunate women suffering as a result of AIDS in Africa, as reported in the news articles (see Chapter 3). Consistent with Talpade Mohanty

59 Once when I was presenting these results to a group of Education masters students who were practicing teachers, I was asked, “what does NGO stand for?” This came as a great surprise to me, as the term was one I was certainly familiar with and became very significant for me during my time in Sri Lanka. I think it is rather ironic that the clearest example of my “ethnocentric bias” affected my own culture! (Questionnaires and interviews were pilot tested only in Sri Lanka).
(1986/2003) theory of the production of the Third World” woman, the Caucasian character in this dialogue is portrayed as knowledgeable, powerful, and generous; whereas the character of colour “is portrayed as uninformed, dependent, and grateful.

Several dialogues depicted a “mutual disconnect” between the characters, as evident in the thoughts of the women. For example, the NGO worker says, “Together we can make a difference!” and she thinks, “I hope they will do something with all this information.” The woman of colour says, “Where do we start?,” and thinks, “What am I supposed to do with all this information?” In this scenario, the NGO worker publicly speaks of working collaboratively as a group but privately places the responsibility on the other women, which she differentiates from herself with the use of the pronoun “they.” These scenarios could be interpreted as somewhat critical of development projects if the scene is thought to represent an international NGO meeting.

The majority of Canadian participants did not create scenarios in which international power hierarchies were explicitly critiqued, nor however did they create scenarios that disrupted the inherent racial power structure. The white woman was always portrayed as the leader when a group leader was clearly identifiable (as determined based on the character who was directing the conversation). This is not surprising given the central position of the white character, seated at the head of the table at her own private desk; however few participants depicted scenarios in which the power structure was challenged. A 23-year-old woman of Chinese ethnicity was the only participant to question the power differential within the scenario. She depicted the woman of colour as thinking “Why aren't we all at the same table?”
Seven (approximately 20%) of the scenarios depicted situations in which there were tensions between the characters, (as identified primarily through the thoughts of the character of colour), but many were mundane or jovial in nature. For example, in one of these scenarios, the white woman says, “Alright, so what do we want for lunch,” while thinking, “Don't say pizza. Please don't say pizza.” The woman of colour says, “How about pizza?” while thinking, “I am really only saying that because she hates pizza.” Ordering pizza because your boss doesn’t like pizza appears to be as subversive as most of the Canadian participants would get! Three of the scenarios, the character of colour expressed unhappiness concerning a lack of recognition or excess responsibility in her thoughts (“I hope she realizes how much time I put in,” “I hope I don't have to do all the work again this time,” and “why do I have to be the one responsible for them”). The NGO worker appeared to be oblivious to her colleague’s concerns. Although it is unclear whether the dissatisfaction of the character of colour is related to her racial status or her subordinate position, it is perhaps significant to note that unlike the other scenes depicting tensions, only female participants of colour created these types of scenarios.

Despite the fact that all the characters in the scenario were women, and the majority of the participants were female, gender issues were rarely explicitly addressed in the Canadian sample. There were however, notable exceptions, however these depictions did not intersect with the development theme. In one bubble dialogue produced by a female participant, one character is depicted as saying, “I think women should be allowed to hold any job they want - even NHL goalie on men's team” and her colleague replied “yes but who would let that happen?” Here the characters publicly draw attention to a gender barrier for women in sports, specifically the exclusion of women at the highest
and most prestigious level of hockey, which, from the standpoints of Canadian nationalism and identity, is arguably one of the most significant Canadian subcultures. The character’s assertion that women should be able to hold any job they want, seems a bit frivolous and demanding, perhaps suggesting that women’s desires to play in the top hockey leagues in Canada are unreasonable, and women’s rights have gone too far. The character’s assertion is further weakened by her thoughts: “Oh God. I don't want to get rid of Roberto Luongo!” (the team captain for the Vancouver Canucks and one of the most talented and popular goalies in the NHL). The character’s private thoughts contradict her public statement asserting the rights of women, indicating that she does not really embrace what this change might entail. Her colleague expresses doubt that her assertion will ever be realized, “yes but who would let that happen?” while her thoughts turn to perhaps more personally relevant gender issues of unpaid labour, “man my kids better not mess up the house while I am gone.” This is a very complex heteroglossic discourse (Bakhtin, 1981), that is a discourse housing many different “voices” representing competing ideologies: the public assertion of women’s rights conflicting with the private desire to maintain the status quo, as well as the public expression of doubt regarding the possibility of female athletes being granted equal rights, overshadowed by a preoccupation with perhaps the more personally relevant everyday gendered issue of housework. (This theme of women’s private preoccupation with the burden of housework was evident in another Canadian bubble dialogue as well as a Sri Lankan one, both produced by women).

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60 Only one woman, Canadian Manon Rhéaume, played in the NHL for the Tampa Bay Lightning in 1992. However she was only played twice during preseason exhibition games and her inclusion is commonly thought of as a publicity stunt.
In two other bubble dialogues in which gender is a predominant theme (one created by a 24 year old man and one created by a 22 year old woman) the ‘women’s only’ nature of the meeting is challenged and disrupted. In the female participant’s bubble dialogue, the woman of colour openly challenges (what she construes as) the white woman’s preference for a female only environment, and this is one of the few scenes in which a character of colour expresses dissonance. In the male participant’s scenario, the white woman was depicted as saying, “We can make our own lives,” and as thinking, “As long as men don't interfere. The other woman says, “My husband needs to be here,” and thinks, “So he can hear what we are talking about.” The opinion expressed by the white woman indicates that women want to be independent and perhaps rid themselves of men altogether; perhaps this is an implicit assumption about images of women-only settings for some readers. This theme is more explicitly expressed in the Botswana sample (particularly by male participants). The other woman does not seem to disagree with the white woman’s statement; however, she wants to include her husband in the dialogue (perhaps to educate him or perhaps she is drawing in the type of “interfering” man that would threaten the nature of the meeting). Either way, the agency of this character is contested.

Summary
Themes of gender and development were largely absent in the Canadian bubble dialogues. The one representation that built on both these themes constructed a hegemonic depiction of the relationship between development and conditions for women. Canadian participants typically created scenes depicting collegial and cooperative relations between women of different ethnicities, and, for the most part, racial/national
power differences were normalized. In the few bubble dialogues in which gender issues were addressed, they were typically brought up only to be dismissed.

Sri Lankan Sample

Unlike the Canadian NGO scenarios, the vast majority of the Sri Lankan bubble dialogues built on the development theme, portraying the NGO worker as there to “help” with everything from general development, to brokering peace, to “empowering” women and advancing/protecting their rights, to supporting victims of the tsunami and the civil war, to population control. This is not surprising in light of the influx of international NGOs that flocked Sri Lanka in relation to the war and the tsunami. For example in this bubble dialogue the NGO worker says: “I am here to help you obtain better and equal opportunities in life,” and thinks, “I hope I get paid well for this…when is the tea break?” Sri Lankan woman says, “Yes I am so glad you have come from overseas to help us. I believe in gender equality,” she thinks, “Hmph, what does she care about us? Only here to create trouble and make money.” As evident in this scenario, there was often (but not always) a clear separation between the interests and conditions of NGO worker and the other characters. Sometimes the NGO worker was clearly identified as a foreigner, (as in the bubble dialogue previously described), but more frequently, the NGO worker was established as an outsider through pronouns, such as the use of the exclusive third person (they) to refer to the other, rather than the inclusive first person plural (we) to refer to both parties.

Many of these bubble dialogues (38%) featured conflicting positions between the women in which neo-colonial power struggles were evident, primarily in the private

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61 An article in the Asia Tribune (Shyamalee, July 16th, 2005) suggests that there are over (national and international) 1000 registered NGOs (or NGOs seeking registration) as of 2005.
thoughts, rather than the public speech of the characters. The NGO worker was
commonly portrayed as self-serving, lazy, cunning, ignorant of the local context, baffled
by the lack of gratitude, doing nothing more than “pretending” to solve problems, and/or
having ulterior motives. For example, one respondent’s bubble dialogue the NGO
workers says, “We really want to develop Sri Lanka,” but thinks “then we can spread our
religion.” These types of “fictional” depictions are consistent with many factual accounts
of international NGO workers in Sri Lanka. For example, Darini Rajasingham-
Senanayake (2005) writes the following in regards to the aftermath of the Tsunami, “the
conflict and tsunami affected areas seemed flooded by waves of aid and INGOs (some of
which were converting souls while saving bodies and fuelling ethno-religious
nationalism), international disaster experts who know very little about the country,
culture and conflicts” (p. 112-113).

The NGO character was portrayed as the leader of the group in all the scenarios in
which leadership was inferred, and in some bubble dialogues the NGO character was
referred to as “madam” by other character, indicating that the NGO worker had a higher
status than the other woman. The Sri Lankan characters in these types of scenarios were
typically depicted as wise to the false pretenses of the NGO worker, but they rarely
addressed them directly. Instead the authors commonly utilized the private thought of the
characters to express challenges to power relations. There was one notable exception,
however. In this scenario the NGO worker says, “We would like to work closely with
your women’s development society,” and thinks, “I hope they agree because we need to
have the ‘gender’ component in our work.” Sri Lankan woman responds, “Only…if we
get the responsibility and ownership of our project,” and thinks, “we are stronger than
they think and better than any man!” Here the Sri Lankan woman demands control over the project, disputing the typical power relationship, making clear that she knows the NGO worker is dependent on the Sri Lankan women to fulfill her mandate.

Slightly less common (32%) than these conflictual dialogues, were scenarios that depicted the women working together towards shared goals, such as the empowerment of women, supporting traumatized members of the community, establishing peace, combating ethnic discrimination, and assisting victims of the tsunami. The lack of conflict between the women, as well as the consistencies between their spoken words and thoughts, indicated sincere cooperation between the characters. For example, in this bubble dialogue created by a Sinhalese woman, the NGO worker says, “We all must accept our differences and work together,” while thinking, “They are from different races.” The other woman replies, “Of course we are like sisters,” while thinking “Sinhala, Muslim, Tamil, Burgher. Why should it matter?” In these types of dialogues however, many of these relationships appeared to be one of social worker/client, or boss/volunteer rather members of a “team” as portrayed in the Canadian sample. As evident in this bubble dialogue, the ethnicity of the characters was more likely to be addressed than in the Canadian sample.

Gender related themes were also prominent (approximately 30%) in the Sri Lankan sample. The women at the meeting discussed gender-equality, women’s rights, and empowerment, as well as specific issues concerning women such as education, job-training, violence, and family planning. In the Sri Lankan sample, the themes of gender and development often intersected. Within the critical representations in which gender was salient, the Caucasian character was portrayed as imposing beliefs regarding
women’s rights and roles without adequate knowledge of local contexts, implementing equity project to meet foreign development mandates, or working on gender-equality projects to meet personal needs, as communicated through the private thoughts of the characters.

In approximately half of the scenarios in which gender themes were prominent, there were no conflicts expressed between the characters and no tensions evident between the private thoughts and the public speech of the characters. In the other half there were identifiable tensions between what the cartoon characters ‘said’ and what they ‘thought’. There were bubble dialogues in which the respondents showed the characters as publicly supporting gender-equity but privately doubting the realization of such goals, and/or experiencing disconnect between their beliefs and their experiences. For example, in one such bubble dialogue, the NGO worker says, “women have equal rights with men. Men don't have the right to harass women,” but is thinking “It's not possible to make it realize(d).” The other woman agrees, “Obviously!” but thinks, “he always scolds me for not having kids. How can he do so?” In another bubble dialogue the NGO worker says, “You can lead a better life if you don't have to depend on your husbands. We'll provide job training and financial assistance for any of you who wants to participate in our programme”. The local woman says “Yes I want to do a job and not to ask for money from my husband all the time”, but is thinking, “I wish I have time for all these what with the kids and the house work, it is difficult to get away from home.” In these types of scenarios, doubt and dissention were only expressed privately.

Summary
Most Sri Lankan participants explicitly built on the development theme, and many produced critical accounts of foreign development, often reflecting post-development
(Esteva & Suri Prakash, 1998) perspectives. The gender theme was also predominant in this sample, and in the critical representations of development, gender-equity was largely imposed from by foreigners to meet development goals, facilitate the personal needs of the NGO workers, or implemented with little knowledge of local conditions and desires. In more cooperative representations, although equity goals were publicly supported, one or both characters were often portrayed as privately doubting the reality of such change.

**Norwegian Sample**

The NGO theme was much more explicitly obvious in the Norwegian sample than in the Canadian sample, but not as prominent as in the Sri Lankan sample. Over 30% of the Norwegian sample explicitly incorporated the NGO theme. Topics of discussion included alleviating the suffering of children, reducing childhood illness, building a girls’ school, establishing women’s rights, microfinance for women, and ensuring democratic rights. Most Norwegian scenes involving a development project emphasized conflict between the characters or tensions within the characters; however the representations of the self-serving white woman and the savvy woman of colour were much less prominent in the Norwegian sample than the Sri Lankan sample. Rather, some of these bubble dialogues, including the ones in which themes of gender and development intersected, depicted scenes that appeared to be a matter of mutual incomprehension, such as the clueless (but often benevolent) NGO worker and the local who is unable or unwilling to benefit from the “aid.” For example, in this bubble dialogue the NGO worker says “My organization would like to contribute to the building of a new school for girls in this town.” The local woman replies, “Yes, that is good,” but thinks “Who does she think she is?? Come here and tell us how to live…my girl must stay with me at home.” The NGO
worker is thinking, “These poor women … We have to give them inputs to change this male dominated society…..” In another similar bubble dialogue, the NGO worker says, “Today we will look at microfinances and how females can make use of it,” and the local woman replies, “Yes, it's important that we get money and credit to build a future but…”, while thinking “…if only my husband didn't drink it up.” The NGO worker, perhaps sensing the local woman’s hesitation thinks, “How can one not want microcredit.” This scenario appears to be critical of microcredit projects, a common liberal development strategy for emancipating women, and highlights the ethnocentricity of the NGO worker. It also appears to reproduce the typical subject position of the “Third World” woman (Mohanty, 1986/2003) as a passive, compliant, oppressed victim.

Other representation depicted a (private) mutual cynicism and/or self-serving intentions where development projects are nothing but a farce or a means of self-advancement. In one bubble dialogue the NGO worker says, “NGO's are important to ensure that democratic processes in a country are ensured,” while thinking “But what they don't know is that most of the money goes to government officials,” and the local woman replies, “I want to improve the life quality of my people”, while thinking I want to go to a better country.” The representative from the Norwegian university who administered the bubble dialogues later explained to me that their university sponsors many students from low income countries to come and study at their institution in the hope that these students will take the knowledge and skills back to their home countries upon completion, but many of the students never in fact return home.

Like the Canadian sample, explicit thematizing of gender issues was not as prevalent in the Norwegian sample as the Sri Lankan or Botswana samples. Exceptions
included general references to women’s rights, micro-credit for women, and the building of a girls’ school, as well as women’s positions in the labour force. In a bubble dialogue created by a woman, parallels are drawn between gender inequities at home and in other countries. The NGO worker says “We must make sure women really have the same opportunity of paid jobs as men” but she thinks “When will women be leaders of big businesses in our country?” At the time in which this data was collected the Norwegian government was taking action against private companies that did not meet government mandates in regards to the percentage of women on boards, which is perhaps reflected in this depiction. This scenario troubles hierarchical views of gender-equality across cultures, emphasizes the irony of international organizations imposing gender-equity standards that have not been met in the “helping” country, and presents the difficult task of copying something that perhaps never really existed (see Baudrillard, 1994).

Another less prominent but significant theme, evident across countries and in both the NGO and the classroom scenarios, was doubting the realization of equality. For example, in one bubble dialogue the woman of colour says, “Yes, if we all stand up for our rights we can make an improvement for our children,” but thinks, “I really want to fight for what I believe in, but it feels hopeless sometimes.” In another similar representation, the white woman says, “We make a difference!” but thinks “…or do we?”

Also noteworthy in this sample were depictions constructed by Norwegian men in their twenties that sexualized or stereotyped female characters. For example, a 25 year old Norwegian man portrayed the scenario as a classroom scene in which the Sri Lankan woman asks, “When is this lecture finish?” but is thinking “ohh. I’m so horny, I want to
Another created a scenario in which the white woman says, “I'm the big Lahuna” while thinking “I wish I was pretty”.

Summary

Typical representations of development within the Norwegian sample, including those in which involved both themes of development and gender, tended to depict a mutual disconnect between the understanding and/or the goals of the characters (typically through the thoughts of the characters), or represent both characters to as using the development project as a means to personal advancement. The ability to achieve development goals, including those related to gender-equity, were privately doubted in several scenarios. In general, development projects in the Norwegian sample appeared to be little more than a farce in most representations.

Botswana Sample

The primary theme within the Botswana sample was that of gender. Approximately 89% of the sample explicitly referred to gender issues including equal rights, empowerment (social, political and economic), discriminatory laws (marital laws which deem a woman a minor), as well as violence against women (including domestic violence and “passion-killings”). Many of the bubble dialogues (30%) depicted the collaborative empowerment of women, in which the characters shared common values, and their thoughts were consistent with their spoken words. For example, one 25 year-old woman created a scene in which one character says “Women! You and I have been faced with so many challenges! I think it’s high time we fight for our own rights!!” and thinks “Viva women power VIVA!!!” The other character agrees, “That's a very good idea,” and thinks, “She is very right! I also want to be PRESIDENT!!!”
Although most of the bubble dialogues portrayed the women as advocates of women’s rights (at least publicly), many of the bubble dialogues were wrought with tensions, including privately doubting the realization of such goals, and/or articulating a disconnect between values and experiences. For example in this scenario, one woman gives a very inspiring speech. “We as women need to start believing in each other. We need to stand together & encourage each other. Together we stand… Divided we fail!!” but wonders, “How do we survive in the male dominated world?” In another example, a character says, “Let's start by changing marital laws regarding the fact that a woman is termed "minor" in marital terms,” but at the same time is thinking, “My husband says women are inferior.” Female participants typically constructed these types of representations.

In several scenarios, despite the characters’ public commitment to women’s rights, they privately communicate their lack of intention to disrupt gender relations in their personal lives. For example, in one dialogue created by a male participant, there was dissonance between public statement and the private thoughts of the women. In this bubble one woman says, “We need to stand up against those who undermine women. Women have to take action against those men who think they are bosses,” but thinks, “I love my husband. I won't do anything to hurt him. He is the boss of my family.” Her colleague agrees, “Yes ladies, let's stand up and fight against those who abuse women. Women need to take action,” but thinks “She should start with her husband. I won't do that to my husband.”

Other tensions involved unspoken jealousy, competition, and suspicion between women, despite their public collegiality and shared feminist values. For example, in this
bubble dialogue one woman says, “We need to have our stand ladies, we have to be recognized in this country, we can do a lot for our nation!” and thinks “Hey, will they really do anything these ones, I tend to have doubt in them. Anyways we'll c!” The second woman says, “You are right! We will draw up a plan to see those things we can do!” but thinks, “Ah, you should practice what you preach lady, you allow men to trample on us at times.” Other scenarios depicted private petty jealousies between women, and in one dialogue, a character was portrayed as thinking “Women always get intimidated by other women leaders. I hope they listen to me with interest not jealousy.” Female participants created most of these types of dialogues.

A significant portion (over 30%) of dialogues in the Botswana sample depicted scenarios of powerful women, some of which seemed (to me) almost misandristic in nature. The characters were portrayed as publicly recommending harsh punishments for offenders (e.g. “Whatever woman abuse, the man should be hanged”), asserting rights that seemed perhaps frivolous especially compared to other sex-related injustices (e.g. “Drink as much as we can go wherever we want to go”), and establishing power over men invoking militant language, such as “fight the battle”, “beat these competitor males,” and take over the industry.” It is interesting that many of these representations were constructed by women. Similar scenarios created by male participants tended to be more extreme and less nuanced. For example, in this dialogue created by a 23 year old Motswana man, the NGO character says, “Gender equality implementation has been successfully implemented. Is there more that can be done to make it more fruitful?” while thinking, “We are now on the top [x] (illegible), they are down there, how do they feel

\[62\] Interestingly misandry and misandristic are not words included in my spell-check although misogyny and misogynistic are.
now.” Her colleague says, “We have come up with more strategies to make us get recognition I don't think that enough has been done” while thinking “Check it out! The board is full of women only, we have power now.” Other similar scenarios created by men also contained a sexual element (e.g. the NGO character says, “I am the boss here. Everyone be silent and listen. Men are all waste,” to which her colleague replies, “not mine. He is only good in bed”), or suggested that women involved in equity work were undeserving of their positions or merely self-serving (e.g. one character thinks “How can I get more money for this NGO so that I can be rich?” while the other thinks, “How can I get a top position in the organization though I don't qualify?).

Besides gender-equality, no other issues relating to social development were prominent, although there were several dialogues depicting unspecified “NGO” work. In most, if not all, scenarios the characters used the inclusive “we” to refer to the group (unlike the typical representations in the Sri Lankan sample) and in some representations the white character explicitly referred to “our nation” or “our country”, indicating a shared culture. Because Botswana’s population is racially diverse, the scene could have been read as a national meeting. As in other samples, the white woman was commonly portrayed as the leader of the group (when a leader was evident) and was sometimes referred to as “chairlady,” “miss,” or “madam.” The race and/or ethnicity of the characters was never explicitly referred to and the white character might have not always been perceived as such. Indeed she might have been perceived as a black woman in a wig. For example, one respondent depicted the Botswana character as thinking, “She thinks she is beautiful with that fake hair piece uxa!”
Summary

In the Botswana sample, the gender theme was particularly dominant, and although participants often built on the NGO theme, most appeared to interpret the scene as a national meeting rather than a site of international development. There was much dissonance and conflict between characters regarding the rights of women, as well as tensions between the speech and thoughts of some characters. This was likely in part related to the recent legislative reforms in Botswana (as described above) as well as the tensions between women’s rights according to statutory law and (former) customary laws (see Exner & Thurston, 2009).

Discussion: NGO Bubble Dialogue

Although there was much diversity within the samples, as clearly demonstrated in the description of the results, distinct general patterns regarding representations of development were evident within samples. Representations of gender and development seemed to be greatly influenced by the cultural contexts of the participants. The Canadian sample typically told an a-political tale of women working across cultures to accomplish goals, or, less typically, reproduced a story of the helpful, educated white woman rescuing the grateful, uneducated “Third World” woman, consistent with mainstream development perspectives. In the Sri Lankan sample, stories consistent with post-modern perspectives of development was prominent, in which the privileged, ignorant, selfish white woman takes advantage of the powerless, yet intelligent and savvy woman of colour. Within the Norwegian sample, many depictions were critical of development projects, and in many representations one or both characters were portrayed as unaware, corrupt, self-serving or disillusioned. Typical stories told in the Botswana sample
involved the tale of the independent woman struggling with gender-inequity in her own life or the power hungry bitch oblivious to the lived realities of other women. These differently patterned depictions represented, it can be reasonably inferred, differently patterned realities, as well as subject positions, for women across the four countries in which the data was collected.

What this study demonstrates is that the stories that others tell about us are not necessarily the same stories we Canadians tell about ourselves, and that much can be learned from engaging with alternative representations. Just as Richardson’s (1994) metaphor of crystallization (described in Chapter 1) suggests, different representations of the same information provide a complex but partial understanding. Consequently “we know more and we doubt what we know” (Richardson, 1994, p. 522). Some of the representations, particularly in the Sri Lankan bubble dialogues, highlighted the ways in which gender-equality projects, typically assumed to promote social justice, are seen as having been co-opted to serve ulterior motives and primarily benefit others besides the intended “victims.” Recall here Illich’s (1982) argument that the only people who benefit from gender-equity initiatives are the gender-equity workers themselves.\(^{63}\)

Personally I was very much affected by the Sri Lankan representations. These discourses interpellated (Althusser, 1995) me - they simultaneously produced what they named, disrupting and altering my sense of self. Not only could I see how others likely

\(^{63}\) As I realized when donating to local charities in Sri Lanka, the Canadian government encourages its citizens to support Canadian NGOs rather than make direct donations to organizations in other countries through tax incentives (only donations to registered Canadian organizations are tax-deductible). Further other government initiatives, such as matching programs, also encourage donations to Canadian organizations. For example the Canadian government offered to match all funds donated to Canadian Red Cross Tsunami fund between January and March of 2005. (As of March 2008, $200 million of the $360 million donated to this Canadian Red Cross fund has reportedly still not been spent (Brennan, March 3\(^{rd}\), 2008)). These policies encourage citizens to filter donations through Canadian organizations, which keeps INGO workers employed, and increases the control that INGOs have in foreign countries.
perceived me as a white woman working on a “modernization” project with a hefty paycheque by Sri Lankan standards, but I came to learn how I would not want to see myself. In this regard, perhaps the knowledge of the different stories told and the different realities and subjectivities available can help us to think and act more ethically. Canadians working on international projects in low income and/or previously colonized countries would likely benefit from the awareness of alternative narratives told about Western development projects by citizens in countries where international development projects are prevalent, such as Sri Lanka. I hope to be able to formally share these bubble dialogues with members of our university community who work on “development” projects in the near future.

Although not necessarily “comparable,” there is much to be learned about conditions for women in Canada from viewing the Canadian representations in light of the cartoons constructed by people from different countries. It could be argued that many Canadian participants re-constructed a scene which visually depicted a racial/ethnic power hierarchy to instead represent a scene of equality and cooperation, perhaps an idealized and depoliticized vision of what Canadian society could be, in which race and ethnicity are truly not relevant, mirroring Canada’s multicultural policies. Canada, the first country to enact a federal multiculturalism law (Dewing & Leman, 2006), has two primary national acts that recognize, protect, and value its multicultural heritage: the Canadian Charter of Rights and the Multiculturalism Act. One element of the Multiculturalism Act specially identifies the government’s policy to “promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and

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64 Not only could I “see” myself in these depictions, the NGO worker was literally a depiction of me. The friend who created the cartoons decided to construct the white character to look like me.
communities of different origins” (Department of Justice Canada, 1984, p. 3). It seems that many of the participants created scenes consistent with government multicultural policy and in doing so normalized harmonious race relations within multicultural environments, albeit ones in which white people are in positions of power.

These types of depictions however, lacked criticality regarding racial power hierarchies. Like other participants, few if any Canadian participants constructed the woman of colour as the group leader; however unlike participants in other samples, particularly the Sri Lankan sample, few Canadians questioned or subverted the authority of the white character in meaningful ways. By not “seeing colour, only people” in these scenarios, the political aspects of race were ignored. Canadian respondents’ common depictions of racially and/or culturally ‘neutral’ power differences served to reify multicultural environments in which whites are, as a matter of fact, most commonly in charge. Racism, is here masked however, by the utopian construction of international/racial relations. As Minh-ha (1989) asserts, “today hegemony, is much more subtle much more pernicious than the blatant form of racism once exercised by the colonial west” (p. 98).

Feminist discourses (as well as “backlash” discourses) were extremely limited in the Canadian sample, especially compared with the Botswana sample. Some might argue that these ‘de-gendered’ representations are empowering for women, as they do not construct the women as gendered beings. Alternatively, it could be argued that the absence of gender ‘issues’, particularly among female characters and as constructed primarily by female participants, is a sign that the gender-equality project is nearing completion in Canada. In this regard the Canadian sample is different from the other
samples, particularly the Botswana sample in which gender was a predominant and highly charged theme, possibly reflecting the multiple recent efforts to infuse equity issues within the public discourse.

Is it also possible however, that the absence of gender discourse in the bubble dialogues is not a sign of the irrelevance of gender to our society but rather of its “erasure” of gender within Canadian discourse. This interpretation is consistent with Broide and Bakker’s (2008) recent observation that the gendered subject has largely disappeared in federal policies of the Harper government. These “erasures” have perpetuated gender inequities. The disappearance of gender within discourse is problematic in that without a public discourse on gender, sex-based inequities are not made visible and cannot, therefore, be addressed. As Illich (1982) asserts “the ordinary speech of the industrial age reveals itself as both genderless and sexist” (Illich, 1982, p. 5). According to Bakhtin (1981) culture consists of two competing forces: centripetal (the “official” forces, which attempt to maintain cultural hegemony) and centrifugal (the “unofficial” diverse forces which attempt to disrupt the status quo). With the disappearance of gender discourses, language becomes increasingly monoglossic. This is problematic in that the greater the heterogeneity within discourse and the more differentiated are the voices articulated around us, the greater the chances for individuation (Bakhtin, 1981).

**Education Bubble Dialogue**

The second bubble dialogue, as already mentioned, depicted a coeducational classroom setting in which a female teacher says, “It is really important for girls to get a good education. The more years of study, the better their lives will be,” emphasizing the
role of education in improving conditions for women (see Figure 4.3, Figure 4.4, and Figure 4.5). Women’s education is a commonly viewed as catalyst for improving conditions for women. As discussed in Chapter 2, increasing female enrolment and/or educational attainment are common measures of advancing gender-equality. One of the primary targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to promote gender-equality and empower women, is to “Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015” (UNDP, n.d., ¶2).

Education is also thought to improve the lives of women in Minority World countries. In Canada, women’s earnings increase as a function of their level of education, and women require more education to generate the same income as men (Statistics Canada, 2006a). For example, women employed full time with some post-secondary education make approximately the same income ($31 500) as men employed full-time ($31 200) with less than a grade nine education (Statistics Canada, 2006a, see page 153).

Education for women however, can be a double-edged sword. “For women, education has been primarily a site of regulation and rebellion” (Rockhill, 1991, p. 333). For example, Kumari Jayawardena (1986; 1995) has demonstrated how education in the context of colonialism, as well as in the context of nationalism, has both enabled and constrained opportunities for Asian women.

Education for women in Asian countries thus has had a dual function. It brought Bourgeois women out of their homes and into various professions, into social work, into the political sphere claiming the right of suffrage. … On the other hand, as national reformers took over, education also became a conservative
influence; it began to hark back to traditional ideal, to emphasize the role of women as wives and mothers. (Jayawardena, 1986, p. 19)

For some women schools are a safe haven to escape violence and for others they may be the sites of harassment and violence (Wijayatilake, et al, 2000). Further, the process of becoming “educated” can deteriorate conditions for some women (Rockhill, 1991; Horsman, 1999). Canadian researcher Jenny Horsman (1999) found that for women in abusive relationships, enrolling as a student could result in increased domestic violence65.

Women may have decided to return to school in order to prepare their escape from violence, but the immediate result is often that the man becomes more violent. As the woman grows stronger, the man tries to assert his control, to dominate her and escalate the violence. (p. 76)

It was hoped that including a depiction directly connecting gender and development with education would contribute salient insights regarding both agreement with but also contestation of the value of education in promoting improved conditions for women.

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65 Like the other educators described in Horsman’s (1999) book, I too have experienced how violence is interwoven in some of my female students’ experiences of education.
It is really important for girls to get a good education. The more years of study, the better their lives will be.
Results: Education Bubble Dialogue

This bubble dialogue proved less open to interpretations than the previous scenario because the teacher’s spoken words were provided. Across countries the vast majority of participants constructed dialogues in which the male and female characters debated the teacher’s statement, or debated women’s education in a more general sense. Male characters in all samples were commonly portrayed as directly challenging the teacher’s claim or redirecting the conversation away from women’s education, or ignoring the conversation; female characters, on the other hand, were commonly portrayed as affirming the teacher’s statement in some way. The ways in which the characters were portrayed as affirming or dismissing teacher’s statement, however, differed according to country. Because the vast majority of the scenes across all samples depicted the boy and girl responding to the teacher’s comment independently of the
comment of the other student, the responses are analyzed first by character and then by country.

Male Character

Most male characters across all sites were portrayed as disputing or dispelling the teacher’s statement, either by disagreeing with her, redirecting the conversation on the needs of boys or men, dismissing the conversation, disengaging from the discussion, and/or devaluing women or gender-equity in general (see Table 4.3). When boys were portrayed as disagreeing with the teacher’s statement, reasons were almost always provided (approximately 90% of the time). The most common reasons included: (ongoing) education for women is not compatible with traditional gender roles (e.g. “no they have to stay home and cook then look after children”), that women do not have the desire or ability to study (e.g. “I know girls are not very good when it comes to education”), that educating women creates a threat to men or society (e.g. “If girls are get educated than boys (men) they will undermined boys/men”), women are not entitled to or do not need an education (e.g. “Why girls. It is more than what they deserve. Nonsense”).
Another common response of male characters was to redirect the conversation to a related but androcentric topic. This included refocusing the conversation on the educational needs of boys (e.g. “What about boys?”), the impact of women’s education on boys (e.g. “What will happen to our lives if women's lives improve?”), the privileging of girls (e.g. “Why do the girls always get special attention”), as well as personal concerns (e.g. “Who's gonna make my dinner). *Disengaging* involved portraying characters as being completely “off task” and thinking or talking about topics that were unrelated to the teacher’s statement, such as sports, fights, cars, spit balls and the like (e.g. “Hey did you see the game last night?”). Bubble dialogues in this category also included objectifying and sexualizing the teacher (e.g. “the teacher is hot”). *Dismissing* included both disregarding the topic (e.g. “this is boring”) or the teacher’s credibility (e.g.

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**Table 4.3 - Frequency of Comments in Bubble Dialogues (n=127)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Character</th>
<th>Female Character</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy thinks</td>
<td>Boy says</td>
<td>Girl thinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redirecting</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreeing</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematizing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaging</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devaluing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified agreeing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejecting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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66 Although male characters were portrayed as “applying” what the teacher said to themselves, these utterances were also considered “redirecting” since the topic of conversation/thought was shifted away from women’s education.
“she is only advocating that because she is a girl”). Some responses in this category were extreme and perhaps even misogynistic (e.g. “You are a bitch”). Devaluing involved degrading women in some way (e.g. “I hate educated women”), asserting superiority of men (e.g. “we are the bosses. We are superior than them), or affirming patriarchal values and/or practices (e.g. “these females obey if they know their place is in the kitchen”).

Some male characters were depicted as saying that they agreed with the teacher’s statement; however, the vast majority of these claims were contradicted by the boys’ depicted thoughts (e.g. boy says: “Yes I agree that women should get educated,” boy thinks: “Not really”), which were qualified (e.g. “Girls should be educated but they should learn household activities as well”), or were in the best interest of others (e.g. “girls should be well educated so children will have a good guidance”). Few participants depicted the male characters as providing genuine support for women’s education.

Cross-national Comparisons
In the Canadian sample, the most common response (approximately half of the sample) was to redirect the conversation to boys’ educational needs or the male character’s own personal concerns. No male characters were portrayed as sincerely agreeing with or supporting the teacher’s statement. Few Canadians (approximately 12%) however portrayed their male character as publicly or privately disagreeing with the teacher’s statement, and of those who did only one participant provided a specific reason: girl’s education is not necessary given that most women are primarily mothers. Approximately 12% of the sample portrayed their male character as questioning the teacher’s statement, asking how long or how much education is required, but only one participant provided a critical analysis of the claim stating that his mother was not educated and that she had a “good life.”
In the Sri Lankan sample, the most common response (approximately half of the sample) was to disagree with the teacher either privately or publicly, primarily on the basis of maintaining women’s traditional roles in the home. Another common response (approximately 30%) was to redirect the conversation to boys’ educational needs or the male character’s own personal concerns. Only a few male characters were portrayed as sincerely supporting the teacher’s statement (about 10%); however this was typically on the basis of the presumption that more education would allow women to become better wives or mothers. A Sri Lankan woman made the most notable exception (boy says: “You know, she kind of has a point,” boy thinks: “Yeah I mean why not? Education is the right of all humans isn't it?”).

In the Norwegian sample, the most common response (approximately 30% of the sample) was to redirect the conversation to boys’ educational needs or their own personal concerns. Only a few male characters were portrayed (by either male or female respondents) as sincerely supporting the teacher’s statement (about 6%); however no explanation was provided. Two male characters were portrayed as genuinely questioning how education improves girls’ lives but only one (male) participant provided a critical analysis of the claim, stating similar to the Canadian participant, that his mother was not educated and that she has a “good life”. Also although not overly common (13%) four male participants constructed sexist or misogynistic representations in which the male character sexualized (“The teacher is hot!”) or demeaned (“You are a bitch”) the teacher in his private thoughts.

In the Botswana sample, the most common response (approximately 75% of the sample) was to disagree with the teacher either privately or publicly, primarily on the
basis of the value of maintaining women’s traditional roles in the home, and the fact that men, not women, require education to support their families. Only a few male characters (about 10%) were portrayed as sincerely supporting the teacher’s statement, however this support was typically on the basis of women contributing to the household expenses.

**Female character**

Most participants depicted the girl in the scenario as affirming the teacher’s statement by agreeing with her, applying what she said, extending the conversation to include more general issues regarding gender-equity, or communicating her appreciation for the teacher, the topic or the opportunity (see Table 4.3). When a character agreed with the teacher, reasons were less likely to be provided than when a character disagreed with the teacher (60% of the time compared to 90% of the time). Common justifications included the presumption that education empowers women and improves their lives (e.g. “we will make good money with a good education”), that education is a necessity for women (e.g. “girls need to be educated cause they should not rely on other people but take care of themselves. That’s how it is nowadays”), and that education creates equity and ends oppression (e.g. “I agree mam. To promote equality we must all be educated both boys and girls”). Another way in which participants depicted the female character as affirming the teacher’s statement was by having the female character apply the statement to herself (e.g. “I am going to be educated and take care of myself. I don't want to rely on anybody”). Common applications included professional goals (e.g. “I want to be a doctor”), the desire to be educated (e.g. “I don't want to be an uneducated housewife”), financial incentives (e.g. “I want to study so I can get a job I want with good pay”) and the need to put forth effort (e.g. “I should work hard”).
Other affirmative comments included extending and appreciating the idea expressed by the teacher. *Extending* the conversation involved articulating more general issues related to gender-equity such as the recognition of current inequities (What has the girl done to deserve this? Why are we inferior?), the emancipatory role of education (e.g. “Education gives us good opportunity to defeat man”) and plans for political action in this regard (e.g. “As girls we should get together to gain our right for education”). *Appreciation* involved voicing approval of the topic (e.g. “this is really interesting material”), the teacher (e.g. “my teacher is so encouraging”) or the opportunity (e.g. “That sounds wonderful”).

Female characters were also depicted as problematizing and questioning the teacher’s statement. Girls in the bubble dialogues *problematized* the teacher’s claims and wondered if they were possible given the cultural norms (e.g. “will I be able to achieve my goals in this man dominated society”) and attitudes (e.g. “I would love to study further but my family doesn't support me”). Female characters also *questioned* the relationship between education and quality of life (e.g. “how will it improve my life?”) and the extent of education required (e.g. “how long do we need to be in school to better our lives?”). Although not common, some participants depicted their female characters rejecting the teacher’s statement. Rejecting involved frivolous or strategic rejection of extended education (e.g. I don't want to go to school anymore - I just want to be taken care of like the princess that I am”).

A few female characters were portrayed as *disagreeing, dismissing, devaluing, disengaging or redirecting*. Interestingly most of these types of bubble dialogues (approximately 80%) were created by participants from the Norwegian and Canadian
samples and proportionally more men created these scenarios than women. Norwegian men created the only bubble dialogues in which women degraded themselves (e.g. boy thinks “I'm a man I'm smart woman stupid,” boy says: “Yahoo,” girl says: “I'm bored,” girl thinks: “I'm dumb Man smarter”).

Cross-national Comparisons

Most of the female characters in the Canadian sample were portrayed as applying the teachers’ statement to themselves (approximately 37%), or agreeing unconditionally with the statement (approximately 32%). Few reasons were provided in regards to why girls’ lives improve as a function of education. Two exceptions included female participants who constructed the girl as saying “I know I'll get a good job and make a good living if I go to university like my mom did,” and “I saw that women with a higher education are less likely to contract a fatal disease.” The latter appeared to be citing a common justification for female education in development programs: educated women are healthier (see Summers, 1994) and was a response produced in the context of the Sri Lankan version of the scenario. This comment was one of the few instances indicating that the participant might have read the scenario as a foreign classroom, rather than a local classroom and constructed her dialogue accordingly. Approximately 17% of the Canadian sample portrayed their female character as genuinely questioning the teacher’s statement, asking how long or how much education is required, but only one participant provided a critical analysis of the claim stating that her mother was not educated (implying that she had a good life without being educated.)

Most of the female characters in the Sri Lankan sample (approximately 65%) were portrayed as agreeing with the teachers’ statement, but unlike the Canadian participants, many Sri Lankans provided a reason: to enable them to have more choice,
opportunity, and fulfillment, independence, to get good jobs or earn a good income, to cope in the modern world, and to “defeat” men. Two participants provided qualified agreements: they supported women’s education provided that there were “suitable” jobs, or unless they would “not be recognized in society.” Many female characters (27%) however problematized the possibility of women’s education. For example, they wondered, would it be possible given the context (e.g. “man dominated society,” “conservative country”), lack of family support or family pressures to marry, and the inability to afford an education.

Most of the female characters in the Norwegian sample were portrayed as accepting the teachers’ statement and applying it to themselves (approximately 30%), and 20% of the female characters agreed unconditionally with the statement. Few if any reasons were provided in regards to why girls’ lives improved as a function of education.

Approximately 23% of the sample (primarily women) portrayed their female character as problematizing the teacher’s statement, wondering if their family would support them in pursuing education, or questioning the possibility of achieving gender-equality. One woman wrote, “But the men does not want us to work in their companies, they think we are stupid anyway.” It is possible of these participants might have interpreted this scene as depicting a classroom in a foreign country where education for women and equality were perceived to be less likely to be supported. However, some of these statements could just as easily apply to Norway. During the time in which the data was collected, the

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67 Unemployment in Sri Lanka is high, especially among women with a GCE or higher (Gunawardena, 2005).

68 I am not sure what exactly this participant is referring to however what comes to mind is that some of the Sri Lankan women I spoke with talked about the importance of marrying up, that is that women must not be more educated or hold a more prestigious job than their husband. Consequently being “overly” educated might result in a lack of social recognition in this regard.
government of Norway was threatening to shut down companies if they did not meet the mandatory representation of 40% women on their corporate boards within two years. Previously companies had been given two years to voluntarily make these changes but compliance was low, and was known to be low (approximately 50% of companies were estimated to have no women on their boards.)

Most of the female characters in the Botswana sample were portrayed as agreeing with the teachers’ statement (approximately 60%); however, unlike the Canadian participants, most Botswana participants provided a reason: independence and the inability to depend on men, a need to become empowered, to create equal opportunity and end oppression. Two male participants depicted the female character as publicly supporting the teacher’s statement because “girls deserve all the comforts.”

Inconsistencies

Both male and female characters were portrayed as having thoughts that were inconsistent with their spoken words. There were differences, however, in the ways in which girls and boys’ speech and thoughts were inconsistent. The most common inconsistency between male character’s thoughts and speech indicated covert sexism in that the boy’s public support of the women’s education was inconsistent with his thoughts (e.g. boy says: “you couldn't be more correct,” boy thinks: “yeah right!”). This depiction was found in all samples and was primarily constructed by women. Other inconsistencies among male characters included surface sexism in which boys publicly ventriloquated a sexist discourse, voicing their lack of support for women’s education but privately supported it in some way (e.g. boy says: “the girls should get an education on the kitchen,” boy thinks: “no the lady is right. Education is important for both men and
women”), or covert insecurity, in which male characters typically dismiss or challenge the teacher’s claim in some way, and privately express their own self-doubt (e.g. “boys says “Who cares? I want to be a profootball player when I grow up!””, boy thinks “But I wish I could answer as well as Tina anyways!”). These themes were not common however so it was not possible to ascertain possible patterns across-nationalities or between male and female participants.

In most cases inconsistencies between the female character’s thought and speech involved public agreement with the teacher’s statement or desire to be (highly) educated but privately **problematizing** what she said (e.g. girl says: “I’m going to be a doctor,” girl thinks “my father won’t be happy”). This depiction was found in all samples but the Canadian sample (however this theme was apparent in NGO bubble dialogue in the Canadian sample) and was primarily constructed by women. Another less frequent inconsistency among female characters involved a “we can but I don’t want to” attitude in which female character publicly supported the teacher’s statement but privately valued or accepted a more traditional role for herself (e.g. girl says: “It is important. It will help us be better people tomorrow and be independent,” girl thinks: “If I don't make it its ok. I will get married and stay home”). This theme was not prevalent enough to ascertain possible patterns across-nationalities or between male and female participants.

**Discussion – Education Bubble Dialogue**

Most male characters across all samples and as represented by both male and female participants were depicted as rejecting, redirecting, or ignoring the teacher’s statement and most female characters were portrayed as accepting or affirming the claim. There were however, differences among samples in regards to the tactics used to support or
subvert the teacher’s claim. Participants from Botswana and Sri Lanka were more likely to portray the male character as publicly disagreeing with the teacher’s statement or publicly agreeing and privately contradicting their statement of support. Participants from Canada and Norway were more likely to portray the male character as publicly redirecting, dismissing, or disengaging from the conversation. If the bubble dialogues were analyzed based on the presence of sexist discourse (traditional conservative perceptions regarding women’s roles and abilities) in general, the Sri Lankan and Botswana samples would appear to be more sexist than the Canadian and Norwegian samples, consistent with the typical liberal perspectives regarding gender and development. If the bubble dialogues were analyzed according to whether the characters supported or subverted the comments of the teacher, the results across samples appear to be very similar, a phenomenon I like to call the SP(oo)DP (Same Poo Different Pile) principle. Interestingly, it appeared to be socially acceptable for male students to challenge the female teacher, an authority figure, in all cultural contexts, although different methods were apparent in different countries. Disagreeing with the teacher in Sri Lanka and Botswana and redirecting in “developed” countries were socially sanctioned public behaviors. However, devaluing, dismissing and disengaging were primarily restricted to the private realm. These findings do not appear to support a progressive evolution of gender-equity between “developing” and “developed” nations, as typically asserted by liberal theorists, but rather differences that are perhaps best characterized by equifinality, a condition in which different developmental trajectories lead to the same outcome (von Bertalanffy, 1968). There certainly are many pathways to
gender inequity. In this way liberal perspectives may serve to mask inequities inherent within the Canadian contexts.

The male characters could not seem to engage with topic of women’s education. They needed either to challenge it or redirect the conversation to focus on boys’ education or themselves, thus creating a subject position for themselves. As Minh-ha (1989) suggests, binaries between self and other are vital in constructing subjectivity provided they do not threaten the identity of the master. In this regard, it would have been insightful to construct a scenario in which female characters are discussing male education. My hunch is that female characters would have been more likely to be portrayed as engaging in the conversation. In extreme cases male characters in this scenario were portrayed as resentful towards the teacher (or women in general), or as sexually objectified her. In these cases the male characters resorted to violence or misogyny when denied the focal subject position and were unable or unwilling to construct an alternative acceptable subject position for themselves. It was surprising that Norwegian men constructed most of these misogynistic representations, given that Norway is commonly assumed to be one of the most gender-equitable countries in the world.

Female characters, typically, unquestioningly accepted the teacher’s statement that education improved girls’ lives, and the more education they received, the better their lives would be, consistent with the argument that education advances conditions for women. While participants from Sri Lanka and Botswana were more likely to portray their female characters as agreeing with the statement, and many times providing their own justifications, participants from Canada and Norway were more likely to portray their female characters as applying the teacher’s statement to themselves, with few if any
justifications, perhaps indicating that women’s right to education or the inherent value of education is more established in these countries. Few characters, male or female were depicted as engaging with the teacher’s statement, and seriously considering the costs and benefits for women, other than a few participants who argued that their mothers had no education and yet had good lives.

Although covert sexism was depicted in bubble dialogues from all four countries, it was not more evident in the bubble dialogues produced by participants from Canada and Norway than in bubble dialogues produced by participants from Botswana or Sri Lanka, as might be expected given the experiences of the South African police detective, discussed in Chapter 1, who reported that sexism and racism were more indirect in her Canadian than in her South African context. Canadians and Norwegians however, did portray male characters as using more indirect patterns of communication (redirecting, dismissing, disengaging) to dismantle the conversation regarding women’s education whereas participants from Botswana and Sri Lanka portrayed male characters as using more direct patterns of communication (disagreeing and devaluing), a finding that appears to be consistent with the experiences of the detective whose story provoked this study.

Female participants across cultures were more likely than male participants to construct bubble dialogues with inconsistent thoughts and spoken words among characters, particularly those in which male characters espoused covert sexism and female characters communicated private doubt. Women across cultures appear to be more aware of the contradictions between official discourses and lived experiences (or were more likely to represent these contradictions). These findings illuminate the complex
discursive terrain where women must decipher and navigate between public utterances and private convictions, as well as ideologies and possibilities, in regards to gender-equity.

Conclusions

In the cartoon dialogues constructed by Canadian participants, many of the discourses appeared to be genderless and raceless, and yet simultaneously power hierarchies of sex and race appeared to be maintained. Depictions created by participants from other countries, especially Sri Lanka and Botswana, were more diverse, representing both feminist and sexist discourses, as well as neo-colonial and post-colonial discourses, and the sexism and racism were readily apparent and could be easily identified. Based on these representations, perhaps it is possible to understand why someone might prefer explicit sexism and racism to the more elusive kinds of discrimination typically experienced in Canada, because explicit discrimination is easier to name, and by naming it, a discursive space is created for resisting it.

A significant theme common across nationalities, although more predominant in the Sri Lankan and Botswana samples, and appearing in both the classroom and the NGO scenarios, was one in which female characters publicly supported the empowerment of women but privately doubted the realization of gender-equity, or experienced discouraging inconsistencies between public expressions of support for women’s empowerment and private thoughts about the inequitable natures of women’s own lives. These types of scenarios, which were primarily constructed by female participants, reflect the “We can but I can’t” phenomenon (American Association of University Women, 2000) in which women experience a disconnect between feminist ideals and their own
personal experience. The fact that these doubts and inconsistencies were rarely publicly discussed, suggests that woman assume responsibility for failing to uphold feminist ideals, and indicates that these tensions will continue to be viewed as personal rather than political issues.

Similarly the doubts, critiques, questions and skepticism surrounding the development projects as expressed by characters in the NGO bubble dialogue (predominantly within the Sri Lanka and the Norwegian sample) were rarely if every publicly voice, but rather almost always privately thought. As Rist (2002) notes, “social beliefs (human rights or ‘development,’ for example) are a kind of collective certainty; their concrete forms may be debatable, and they may even be doubted in private, but it would be improper to question their validity in public” (p. 22).

This chapter has made use of ‘bubble dialogues’ to support considering in depth and detail the types of fictional stories constructed by university students from four different countries. This analysis may provide insight into what discourses are culturally available regarding gender, race, nationality, and power, as well as dominant cultural practices, and these representations should serve, also, to trouble cross-national developmental models of the advancement of conditions for women. What stories regarding cross-national conditions for women are evident in the self-reports of people themselves, as they talk about themselves and their own conditions, challenges, and prospects? This question will be addressed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5 – Self-Reports and Institutional Practices: *Factual Stories*

**Introduction**

This chapter explores some of the factors that may enable and constrain conditions for women in Sri Lanka, Botswana, Norway and Canada, based on self-report data. Participants included male and female university students, who were asked to write about how they would improve conditions for women in their country, as well as women, who were asked to discuss their opinions and experiences regarding conditions for women at home and abroad, from the four countries. Asking groups of students about how they would improve conditions for women in their countries provided an opportunity to survey the opinions of both men and women and allowed for a larger sample of people with similar educational backgrounds, whereas conducting interviews with variously situated women enabled a more detailed exploration of conditions for (some) women, as well as provided a more diverse sample.

The primary goal of the study described in this chapter was to use information regarding conditions for women in other places to make Canadian inequities “visible” (Despret, 2005) and to generate insights regarding conditions for women in Canada. This chapter also explores the “factual” stories told about conditions for women and how these representations are constructed. Because the individual accounts may indeed include the “fictions of life” (Minh-Ha, 1992, p. 165), information was triangulated with other primary data including questionnaire, bubble dialogue or/and interview data, as well as secondary data, including other scholarly publications, and connected to institutional policies and practices whenever possible.
I begin this chapter with a description of the guiding methodology, followed by a description of the method of data collection and analysis. A general quantitative analysis of the responses of university students was carried out, including comparisons by sex and nationality. A more detailed exploration of perceptions of conditions for women follows, organized primarily according to country, with comparison to Canadian conditions throughout. Major themes addressed include safety and security, women’s roles, rights and agency, education, and perceptions of cross-cultural conditions. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of how subject positions may have influenced participants’ perceptions of conditions for women, and the diverse conditions for women within countries, as well as how different forms of patriarchy, although operating in different ways, different institution, and in different places may produce similar lived conditions for women in different places (see Walby, 1990).

**Method and Methodology of Self-Report Study**

The goal of research is to “make the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). However as Despret (2005) asserts, “what makes certain things visible will at the same time exclude others and create new ones” (p. 363). What we are able to perceive through any given lens can only be partial, and qualitative researchers commonly use multiple methods to provide a fuller picture (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In order to broaden what I am able to “make visible” in this study, and to illuminate different kinds of truths, my research design included two different primary methods for learning about conditions for women in different places: the analysis of narrative constructions (bubble dialogues), discussed in Chapter 4, and self-reports (interviews and a brief questionnaire), which I discuss in this chapter.
While self-reports and observations are seemingly more “real” compared to the bubble dialogues, they may not necessarily be more “true” than the narrative constructions. Just as the bubble dialogues have the potential to reveal “factual” information, so too can self-reports contain “fictional” constructions, such as “false consciousness” (Lather, 1986), the use of frameworks to unite unrelated information to produce coherent accounts (White, 1981), and the desire to represent oneself in a particular fashion (Minh-Ha, 1992). Although participants’ accounts inevitably include what Minh-Ha (1992) calls the “fictions of life” (p. 165), these representations can also reveal important information regarding everyday conditions. “The truest representations of oneself always involve elements of fiction and of imagination otherwise there is no representation, or else, only a dead, hence “false” representation” (Minh-Ha, 1992, p. 168).

In order to better understand how various ideologies impacted the lives of participants, wherever possible, I have attempted to corroborate self-reports with other primary and/or secondary data. Interviews with women from Canada, Sri Lanka, Botswana, and Norway, together with male and female university students’ opinions regarding how to improve conditions for women in their home countries provided an entry point for investigating institutional practices, social relations, and lived realities, as well as subject positions. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, situating participants’ experiences and perceptions within institutional practices enables researchers to consider implications of self-reports that go beyond the experiences of the individual (Smith, 1987).
Process: Interviews

As discussed in Chapter 4, informed consent was sought from all participants; however, obtaining written informed consent was not always possible or appropriate. Besides the fact that legal consent was not a common research practice in Botswana or Sri Lanka, some of the interviewees had limited literacy skills and could not indicate informed consent in a written, legal format. In regards to the interviews, verbal consent was sought from participants in Sri Lanka and Botswana, and they were informed about the nature of the study and how their information would be used. They were told that they could discontinue at any time and that their responses would be anonymous and confidential.

Interviews were conducted between the spring of 2006 and the spring of 2007, initially in Sri Lanka, then in Botswana and Norway, and finally in Canada. In Sri Lanka all but one were conducted in the capital city of Colombo. The other interview was conducted in Wadduwa (a small village in the south of Sri Lanka). In Botswana interviews were conducted in the capital city of Gaborone and in Kanye (a rural village approximately 40 km outside of the capital). In Norway all interviews were conducted in Tromsø (a town north of the Arctic Circle with a population of about 60,000, currently ranked the most gender-equal municipality in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2008)). In Canada the interviews were conducted in the Vancouver Lower Mainland, and in Kelowna (a town 350 km outside of Vancouver with a population of 100,000). Interviews were conducted in women’s homes, their place of work, in my home, at my office, and in restaurants and cafes, and one interview was conducted over the phone. I tried to meet the women wherever and whenever was most convenient for them.
The interview included an extensive list of possible questions and prompts designed to engage participants in a conversation about their gendered experiences, and their perceptions of conditions for women at home and abroad. Illustrative questions included: in your own personal life experience, have you found that women are treated the same or have the same opportunities as men?; what do you think are the best and worst places for women to live in the world?; and what specific factors have created more and less equitable conditions for women in this country? (see Appendix B). Questions were selected from this list depending on the experiences of the participant and the time they had to complete the interview. The interview was piloted with a Sri Lankan participant, then revised and translated into Sinhalese (see Appendix C) and Tamil. Sri Lankan participants had the option of being interviewed in any of the three national languages (Sinhala, Tamil or in English). Four interviews were conducted in Sinhalese by a research assistant, a bilingual university student, and translated. All others interviews in Sri Lanka, as well as in Norway, Botswana, and Canada were conducted in English.

Process: Questionnaires

The question asked of university students, “If you ruled the world, how would you make [your country] better for women?” was administered with the bubble dialogues and informed consent procedures in this regard are described in Chapter 4. The questionnaire was left with university contacts in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Gaborone, Botswana, Tromsø, Norway, and Burnaby, Canada to be administered at a suitable and convenient time. They were completed between the autumn of 2006 and the spring of 2007.

Women were also asked to make comparisons of conditions for women over time and across the life span, consistent with the original goals of this dissertation (see Chapter 1).
Participants: Interviews

Interview participants included 14 Sri Lankan women (12 interviews), 13 Canadian women (12 interviews), as well as 4 Botswana women, and 4 Norwegian women. Although it was not possible to conduct extensive research in Botswana and Norway, “impressionistic” data was collected in these countries to provide a greater breadth to the investigation. In order to be considered a representative of a particular country, participants had to be a citizen of that nation and to have lived in that country for five years or longer.

Maximum variation sampling, in which a diverse group of individuals is purposely selected in order to maximize the heterogeneous nature of the sample, and snowball sampling, a procedure whereby initial contacts refer others as potential participants based on their ability to inform the research (Patton, 2002), were used to generate participants for the initial interviews in Sri Lanka. Although the sample was not representative, it was diverse and richly informative (see Table 5.1). Women in the study were from different generations, social classes, and ethnic origins. They had different familial backgrounds, living arrangements, held different occupations, had different educational histories, and came from different areas. Many of the informants had international experience. This was partly due to the fact I was interested in talking to some women who could make cross-national comparisons, and partly due to the fact that women who had lived in different countries were particularly interested in my research.

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71 The Sri Lankan mother and her two daughters and the Canadian mother and her daughter were interviewed together.
72 Establishing the nationality of participants was relatively straightforward in most cases except in Canada due to its large immigrant population.
73 Even with unlimited time and extensive resources it would not have been possible to interview a “representative” sample of women because each woman’s experiences are so unique.
In order to identify a diverse Sri Lankan sample, I asked two Sri Lankan women and one Sri Lankan man to provide descriptions of the different types of women who lived in this country. Various types of women were suggested, including women of different ages, classes, ethnicities (Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim), marital statuses, sexual orientations, and occupations. Efforts were made to interview as many of these different types of women as possible; however, it was not always feasible to locate and recruit particular types of women who would be willing to participate in the study, and language issues complicated matters.\textsuperscript{74}

The Canadian sample also was selected based on principles of maximum variation sampling and participants were chosen to roughly to match the Sri Lankan sample on one or more characteristics. Although no one person could be matched exactly with another, overall, many of the characteristics of the Sri Lankan sample were reflected in the Canadian sample. Norwegian and Botswana participants were selected by local contacts in those countries, due to the limited time spent in these locations.

Table 5.1 provides a description of the interviewees in order to provide the reader with the extent and limitations of the sample, as well as to provide some clues regarding the possible subject positions of the women, based on the interviewees’ self-descriptions, as well as details of their lives which I believe may have informed their perspectives (for example, time spent living abroad).

\textsuperscript{74} For example, despite a recommendation from the informant to interview a “karaoke girl” (call girl) it was difficult to locate a karaoke girl who would be willing to be interviewed. Further complications arose from the fact that I would likely have needed a translator to conduct the interview and it would not have been appropriate to ask my research assistant, a single young woman, to accompany me to a bar frequented by prostitutes and their clientele.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sri Lanka</th>
<th>Canada</th>
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<td>Dinusha: A 26 year old Sinhalese woman who is single and lives with her parents. She had completed three years of post-secondary study in Australia, and was finishing an undergraduate degree, while working fulltime and living at home. Her parents were both working professionals.</td>
<td>Susan: A 22 year old daughter of Egyptian immigrants, both engineers. She grew up in a middle class home, heavily influenced by a Muslim-Canadian culture. She is finishing her undergraduate degree in kinesiology, plans to be a doctor, and played on the varsity softball team.</td>
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<td>Nirmali: A 48 year old Sinhalese woman, who was married at age 14 and had 4 children by the age of 19 when she and her husband separated. She worked for 16 years in the middle east. She has a Grade 4 education, and currently works as a janitor to support herself, several of her adult children, and their families. She describes herself as “someone who suffers a lot.”</td>
<td>Barbara: A 49 year old divorced Caucasian woman with four children. She grew up in a large city in an Eastern province. Her dad was a construction worker and her mom worked within the home. There were “many problems” within her home while she was growing up. She has a high school education, as well as on the job training, and currently works in a secretarial position.</td>
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<td>Malini: A 37 year old Sinhalese mother of two, originating from a village in the south of Sri Lanka. She had completed her A-Levels although did not attend university. She and her husband own a small home in Colombo but were struggling to make ends meet solely on his salary. She is Buddhist and her husband, Christian.</td>
<td>Natalie: A 33 year old Caucasian woman, with a female common law partner and an infant daughter. She grew up in an urban area, has two undergraduate degrees and currently works full time at a university, while her partner is on maternity leave.</td>
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<td>Malai: A 27 year old single Tamil woman. Although she comes from a “good family” she was displaced several times during the war and her family had to work hard to re-establish themselves in different cities. She works at a university and is enrolled in a masters program.</td>
<td>Katie: A Caucasian, “middle class” 23 year old, single woman who was finishing her undergraduate degree and applying to go to medical school. She grew up in a “traditional” farming community in the Prairies. She worked briefly in the USA, Cayman Islands and Brazil.</td>
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<td>Otara: A 69 year old divorced retired professional woman, and mother of three. She attended boarding school in Colombo from age 8-17, and moved with her husband to England when she was 24. She currently divides her time between her home in London, her home in Colombo, visiting her children who live overseas, and traveling with her friends. She is Sinhalese and a practicing Christian.</td>
<td>Jackie: A 78 year old woman who grew up on a farm in a Russian immigrant community in Alberta, who currently lives in Kelowna. She studied to be a nurse but quit when she got married to a RCMP officer and was unable to pursue paid employment once her husband reached the rank of officer. Her husband reached the rank of Inspector, and was transferred to Hong Kong in the 1960s and she lived there for nearly three years.</td>
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<td>Shareena: A 64 year old Sinhalese mother of two, who was widowed when her girls were young. She has an undergraduate degree and worked briefly as a teacher. She lived in a village north of Colombo most of her life but now lives in a flat in the city. She is a practicing Catholic and self describes as a deeply religious woman and a member of the upper middle class.</td>
<td>Candice: A 59 year old divorced Caucasian woman. The daughter of a land developer, she attended a Catholic boarding school from grades 7-12. She was one of the first people she knew to be granted a maternity leave, and be able to continue to work part-time after the birth of her first child. Her husband left shortly after their second child was born. As a single mother she worked part time as a learning-assistant and eventually full time as a teacher. Later she earned a Masters degree and wrote a book based on her research.</td>
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<td>Nilakshi: A 64 year old professional live-in house keeper, who never married or had children. Raised in a small village in the south of Sri Lanka, she has been living in Colombo and has been working for the same family for over twenty years. She</td>
<td>Abigail: An 87 year old Caucasian woman who grew up in a rural community in Nova Scotia, spent most of her life in Halifax, and currently lives with her daughter in the city of Kelowna. She is widowed and has two children and two grandchildren. She worked</td>
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completed her O-Levels, taught herself to read, write, and speak English. She is Buddhist and leads a very religious life. as secretary as a young woman, as well as during the war, and part-time when her children were teenagers.

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<th>Visaka: 45 year old academic with two masters degrees, about to embark on a PhD. She has a passion for learning, teaching and travel. She chooses to remain single, enjoying her freedom and independence, and lives with her sister and her family.</th>
<th>Shala: A married 33 year old woman who grew up in Iran and immigrated to Canada with her family when she was 23. She does not practice Islam. She teaches mathematics at a college and is working on her PhD.</th>
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<td>Dharshini: 65 year old professor, with expertise in gender studies, currently serving as the Dean of Faculty Education at a Sri Lankan University. She was the youngest of five children and the only girl in her family. Her family was not overly privileged and although her father spoke English, her mother was not educated. She is married and has grown children.</td>
<td>Corrine: A 51 year old professional woman with a PhD in Education, who views herself as a very privileged woman. She is white, “middle class,” married to a man and has parented a step-daughter. She was born and raised in the Vancouver area, and worked in the “pink-collar” ghetto after completing high school but returned to university in her 30s. She has an academic background in gender studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramani A 31 year old married, Sinhalese mother of two children. She has an O level education and works at home caring for her family. Her family lives in a make shift home assembled from the ruins of her old home that was destroyed by the tsunami, in a small village near a hotel. Her husband provides financially for the family by selling paintings to tourists and working at odd jobs.</td>
<td>Debbie: A 40 year old widowed Caucasian woman, and mother of a 9 year old. She grew up in a small city in Saskatchewan. She is a self described “traditionalist” and practicing Catholic. She has a high school education and works to support herself and her son by cleaning houses. She also receives some childcare subsidies from the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geetha: A 56 widowed Sinhalese mother of 9 children, and 16 grandchildren. She works in the market with some of her adult children, has a grade three education and cannot read or write.</td>
<td>Kory: A Caucasian married mother of two young children (ages 2 and 4) living in the city of Kelowna. She has a diploma in dental hygiene and worked in this profession until her children were born. Currently she works as a full time mother and wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badra, a Sinhalese retired school teacher and daughter of two school principals, has two daughters: Chandrika, a 26 year old engineer and Nalini, a 21 year old undergraduate student. Both women are unmarried and living at home. The family moved from Matara, a coastal town, to Colombo after the tsunami.</td>
<td>Frances and her daughter, Adriel, who immigrated to Canada from Columbia when Adriel was a baby. Frances is a divorced mother of two and works for the federal government. Adriel is a 23 year old, unmarried, undergraduate student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camilla: A divorced mother who has a Masters degree in sociology with a focus in ethnicity and gender from the University of Washington in Seattle. She worked in Kenya and Ghana with the high commissioner in Africa for several years. She currently works at a university and is involved in many international projects, as well as has been responsible for building up services for refugee and immigrants.</td>
<td>Heidi: A 52 year old widow with 4 adult children. She lives in a village outside the capital city of Gaborone and grew up in a “poor” family. She completed her teaching certificate and worked as a primary teacher. Identified as “outstanding in her duty” she was sent by the government to England to complete an advanced diploma in primary education and subsequently worked as a teacher advisor. She later completed a second degree in England and was recently promoted to “principal education officer.” She is Catholic and very religious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erika: A 40 year old married woman, who came from a “poor” family. She has a Masters in fishery science and worked on a long term project to</td>
<td>Keletso: A 43 year old mother of four children. She spent seven years in America when her husband accepted a job Washington DC working for the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
advance women in the field of fisheries. She has worked briefly in Pakistan and currently is doing contract work at a university.

embassy. She completed her bachelor’s degree during this time. She currently holds a professional position.

Eva: A 33 year old woman with a masters degree in international fisheries management. She lived in Canada for 7 years, completing her high school and bachelor’s degree, a double major in environmental studies and economics. As a result of her time in Canada, some people think she is not a “proper” Norwegian. She has a common law partner and no children.

Athaliah: A 43 year old widowed mother of two grown children. She spent four years in Nova Scotia completing her bachelor of science degree, with a focus on women and health. She left her two boys in the care of her husband and relatives while she was completing her degree. She currently works full time at a professional job and is a practicing Catholic.

Astrid: A 28 year old woman from a “well off” professional family with a master degree in fishery science. She and her common-law partner had a child while she was completing her studies. She did fieldwork in Japan and brought her family with her.

Puseletso: An 18 year old single woman who works as a nanny in the capital city of Gaborone while she waits for an opportunity to enroll in post-secondary education. She grew up in a small village with her parents and brother. Her father has since passed away.

Some of what is Not Visible

It is important to note that despite the diversity of the Canadian and Sri Lankan samples, participants were not representative of all types of women in these countries and consequently, the conditions for women discussed below is not comprehensive but rather restricted to the perspectives and experiences of these participants. For example, I regret that no women with connections to First Nations cultures or from Quebec were interviewed during the Canadian data collection. The importance of ensuring representation from these two types of communities became more apparent after I had finished collecting my data.

Although it was my goal to include women who identified as lesbians in my samples, I did not know of any open lesbians in Colombo and none of my contacts knew of any lesbian locals either. (The only openly queer people I met in Sri Lanka were foreigners and although they were connected with the gay local scene, they did know any Sri Lankan lesbians either.) My inability to locate a Sri Lankan who openly identified as a lesbian is significant in two regards. First, the lack of women who openly live as lesbians in Sri Lanka indicates a constraint for (some) women in this country. Indeed,
according to the Sri Lankan Women’s Support Group (2005), an organization with a “small membership” dedicated to addressing issues regarding lesbians, bisexual women and transgendered persons, “the Sri Lankan legal system makes it extremely difficult for our community to live openly” (¶3). As discussed in Chapter 4, while homosexuality has been long been classified as a criminal offence in the Sri Lankan penal code, “homosexual acts” between women were only included in the code in the 1995 in an effort to make the law more gender-neutral (Goonesekere, 2000). If the subject position of “lesbian” is not culturally visible, heterosexuality appears the only viable option and women’s choices and freedom and sexual agency are limited. Second, “lesbian” is a culturally specific concept (King, 2002), and as a foreigner I may not have had access to the discursive frameworks that would enable me to talk to women from other cultures about their sexuality. My own ethnocentrism may have limited my discussions with women in this regard.

What also impinged what my work makes visible was the fact that I treated women’s sexuality as an identity category, and my aim was to interview different representatives of various categories of women, rather than to explore heterosexuality as an institutionalized practice (see Rich, 1980) that enabled and constrained conditions for women. Instead of focusing on interviewees’ personal relationships, and the experiences of women who were not involved in heterosexual relationships, I should have asked all interviewees what “options” there are for women in terms of relationships, roles, and sexuality; what “choices” are the most common, most desirable, easiest and why; and what types of relationships and roles provide the most and the least freedom for women.

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75 Interestingly, many of the photos on the Sri Lankan Women’s Support (2005) group depicted Western women.
Participants: Questionnaires

Participants who responded to the questionnaires were 127 university students from Canada, Norway, Botswana and Sri Lanka. The number of participants from each country was roughly equal, although, women were predominant in the Canadian (81%) and Sri Lankan (97%) samples, and women were the minority in the Norway sample (35%). The percentage of men and women was approximately equal in the Botswana sample (see Chapter 4 for a full description of the samples.)

Analysis and Reporting

Initially, a general analysis of respondents’ perceptions of how to improve conditions for women in their countries was carried out in order to identify broad patterns and possible areas of interest, and comparisons were made in regards to gender and nationality. Subsequently a more detailed qualitative analysis was conducted in order to identify common themes regarding conditions for women within each sample, as well as unique and insightful responses. Special attention was paid to references regarding laws and typical behaviors, and participants’ concerns were related to institutional policies and practices wherever possible. Interview transcripts were reviewed for beliefs regarding women’s rights, roles, and abilities, and the factors that enhanced or constrained conditions for women were identified. Inconsistencies within and between interviewees’ accounts, as well as conflicts between interviewees’ accounts and information from other sources, were noted in order to identify possible tensions within the beliefs and experiences of individual women (Smith, 1987), generate awareness regarding diversity within samples, as well as to locate where perceptions and realities may diverge. The use of comparisons, as introduced by the participants or by the interviewer, was also studied.
in order to learn about how perceptions of cross-cultural conditions for women are constructed. Similarities and differences (Bulbeck, 1998) were identified and comparisons were made between conditions for women in Botswana, Norway and Sri Lanka with conditions for women in Canada.

The analysis and interpretation of the written responses and the interview transcripts were mutually informative that is, issues identified in the responses to the questionnaire influenced the coding of the transcripts and issues identified in the transcripts influenced the analysis of the questionnaire. In reporting the results, I first present the general analysis of the responses to the questionnaire. Then I present issues articulated by the male and female university students from Botswana, Norway, Sri Lankan, and Canada (subsequently referred to as “respondents”), as well as the issues discussed by diverse women from the four countries (subsequently referred to as “interviewees”), primarily by country. Some data from generated by Botswana, Sri Lankan or Norwegian participants that particularly informed Canadian issues however, are discussed within the Canadian section. Consistent with the goals of this work to use cross-cultural comparison to inform understandings of conditions for women in Canada, the section reporting the Canadian data includes a deeper analysis and interpretation.

Spelling mistakes were corrected in the questionnaires and disfluencies (such as um, uh, you know) were excluded from interview transcripts. All other changes to and omissions from the written responses and interview transcripts are noted.

The major themes regarding conditions for women discussed here include safety and security, women’s roles, rights and agency, education, and perceptions of cross-cultural conditions. It is important to note that many diverse issues, concerns, and
perspectives were discussed during the interviews and written in response to the questionnaire, far too many to be explored and reported in detail here. The issues presented in this chapter are those that were most prevalent within these samples, could be triangulated with other secondary or primary data, and/or were what I found most insightful in informing a critical understanding of conditions for women in Canada.

Results

Differences among respondents

Responses to the question, *if you ruled the world, how would you make [your country] better for women*, were coded according to the following categories: 1) specific recommendations to improve conditions for women, such as “Have more economic incentives for stay-at-home parents”; 2) vague suggestions in which it was often difficult to determine what the change might entail or how the change might improve conditions for women, for example, “give them the proper place”; 3) assertions that no changes are required, for example, “Norway is as good as it gets for women”; 4) endorse gender “neutral” policies, for example, “offers should be given on merit not gender”; 5) support qualified equality measures, for example, “give them better positions if they deserve them”; 6) assert that it is up to women to improve their own lives, for example “only women can stand up and make Botswana better for themselves”; 7) suggest that it is now men who must be protected, for example, “If I ruled the world I would make it better for men too” and/or 8) leave the question blank or state “I don’t know” (see Table 5.2).
Table 5.2 - Types of Response by Country and Sex.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Botswana</th>
<th>Sri Lanka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Suggestion</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>19/26</td>
<td>6/19</td>
<td>9/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague Suggestion</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change is necessary</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Neutral” Policies</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>3/19</td>
<td>2/14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified recommendations</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help themselves</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect men</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank/don’t know</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3/26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Responses were coded more than once if more than one type of response was evident
**Percentages were calculated including non-responses

Although there was a great deal of diversity among the responses of male and female respondents, there appeared to be some general patterns in relation to sex. In all samples (except the Sri Lankan sample, which only had one man), women provided more specific, detailed recommendations regarding how to improve conditions for women in their countries than men (see Table 5.2). Subsequently a word count was performed on the responses and indeed, in all samples (except the Sri Lankan sample), women, on average, provided more lengthy responses than men (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 - Average number of words per response by country and sex.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>76 (one participant)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Non-responses were excluded from the analysis
The comments among respondents in the Botswana sample were very diverse, and suggestions made by men and women were particularly divergent. Many female respondents communicated the need for equality, empowerment, independence and the respectful treatment of women in Botswana. As one female respondent said, “there is a need to challenge gender inequalities, gender stereotypes, biased attitudes and harmful practices against women and all forms of discrimination about women.” Several female respondents (as well as one male respondent) justified the promotion of women to “high” positions based on their “compassion” or because “they are natural caregivers.” In this regard, one female participant felt that women should assume the majority of these positions. Several women made more extreme recommendations regarding women’s empowerment. One woman suggested, “Give them freedom of sentencing men anyhow (who abuse them).” Another woman suggested “removing all the men in order to free women of passion killings, men’s judgment, and jealously between women.”

Male respondents in the Botswana sample were more likely than female respondents to not answer the question, offer qualified support for gender-equality, or suggest gender-neutral policies or ones based on merit rather than gender. One man recommended the reinstatement of women’s traditional roles as solely wives and mothers. “No woman deserves to work and bear children. In my liking all women will be happily married.” Another male respondent asserted that gender-equality policies were “turning the women into oppressors,” and suggested establishing an organization “to monitor the empowerment and make sure it does not oppress man.”

The recommendations regarding how to improve conditions for women made by Norwegian men and women were also divergent. The vast majority of female
respondents (90%) provided specific recommendations regarding how life for women in Norway could be improved. Over 30% of male respondents (and no female respondents) suggested that no changes were needed (e.g. “Norway is already perfect for women”). Two other male participants replied that they had no idea how to improve conditions for women; two men recommended removing affirmative action policies (e.g. “I would remove the sex quotations in Norwegian companies”), although they did not state how this would benefit women, and another man refocused the question to address men’s needs (“If I ruled the world I would make it better for men too”).

While the recommendations of Canadian men and women also differed, it is important to be mindful that men made up only 19% of the sample, making it difficult to make meaningful comparisons. Male respondents were less likely than female respondents to provide a specific response to the question, and more likely to provide a vague response (e.g.” I would change the system so that one person did not rule the world.”) Although most women provided specific suggestions regarding how to improve conditions for women, the Canadian sample was the only sample in which female respondents suggested no changes were needed, made qualified recommendations (e.g. I'd like everyone to have equal rights + opportunities at any thing that they are qualified to do”), or suggested gender-neutral policies (e.g. “Create definition of what a human being is that both males and females can agree to. The fundamental rights”). Few women, however, made these types of recommendations.

Although there were differences between samples, the greatest diversity appeared to be between male and female participants, in that unlike most female participants, many male participants would not or could not provide suggestions about how to improve
conditions for women, provided qualified recommendations, or asserted no changes were necessary. Most interesting was the predominance of the opinion amongst the Norwegian male participants that the gender-equality project in Norway was complete, which is perhaps influenced by cross-national comparisons which typically rank Norway as among the most gender-equitable countries for women (see UNDP, 2009).

Botswana: “The full and active participation of women in leadership is a pre-requisite for positive change and development in Botswana.”

Women's Rights and Agency

Unlike the respondents in the Canadian and Norwegian samples, some respondents in the Botswana sample asserted that women are responsible for improving their own lives. However, male and female participants expressed this theme differently. There was a greater focus on becoming empowered under oppressive conditions (e.g. “get out from under the authority of men and stand for themselves”), or that all people must work hard to succeed, in the women’s comments; whereas among men there was a greater sense that everything that could be done had been done and that women must take responsibility for their own failures (e.g. “Shouldn’t girls wonder why they don’t perform instead of blaming it on men.”) The perception that women shape their own destiny is evident in (former) president of Botswana, Festus Mogae’s (2005) speech to the Women’s Wing of the Botswana Democratic Party in which he suggested that all that could be done to increase the number of female representatives had been done, and female candidates were responsible for their lack of success.
Your response was indeed positive but inadequate, because although I was happy to note an increase in the number of women contestants in Bulela-ditswe\textsuperscript{76}, your numbers were not large enough. … As there are more women voters than men voters, the fact that many of you lose either Bulela-ditswe or national elections, would appear to indicate insufficient or deficient mobilization of women voters on your part. (Mogae, 2005, p.1)

During the interviews, women spoke of the tension between “policy” and “interpretation;” between “laws” and “culture;” and between “rights” and “respect” regarding conditions for women in Botswana. As discussed in Chapter 3, according to Botswana customary law, women were once considered minors, and although customary law is no longer a formal policy, it continues to influence social relations (Exner & Thurston, 2009). Recent policy and legislative reforms enhanced women’s rights, and some participants specifically attributed these changes to “industrialization.” The women explained the two (sometimes) contradictory governing systems, and discussed the limitations for women according to “culture.” According to customary law, women, unlike men, cannot obtain a bank loan or sell property without the permission of her spouse. “We are nothing. We are like a kid,” said Athaliah, who provided a personal example. After the death of her husband, her in-laws decided she would split the marital property with them fifty-fifty; however, with encouragement of her children (who were well aware of her legal rights) she resisted their pressure.

Old men and old women gathered in my yard and told me what to do. I told them I am not going to do that. … The laws say I have the rights to the property because of the marriage. The culture says, no you have to share. How do I

\textsuperscript{76} Primary election system
respond? I was using the law - I walked through. They were using the culture - they couldn’t. But I know many women who kept their profile low who lost their properties because of the culture over and above the law. (Athaliah)

The discrepancy between policy and practice may explain the diverse range of opinions expressed by respondents, particularly between men and women. Both Heidi and Athaliah spoke of men’s stricter adherence to customary practices. The legal sanctioning of women’s rights as compared with more oppressive practice previously sanctioned by customary law might also explain why some respondents ascribed agency to women to empower themselves, particularly if women feel that they are in a position to engage their legal rights. As Athaliah asserted:

But even if now in principle the rights are there for women, there are those that cannot move, where the husband will say, ‘you are not married by the government. I am your husband you abide by what I say.’ In that case it will depend on how assertive that individual woman is. Because if you are not assertive, you will be bottled for good in that cage. If you are assertive then you will move out. Moving out means two things. Either you are divorced or your husband submits. (Athaliah)

One female respondent specifically addressed the relationship between conditions for women and development. She wrote, “[G]ender equality should be promoted as it is a necessary tool for development.” This discourse, consistent with liberal views of gender and development (see Chapter 2) is also evident in Botswana political rhetoric. For example, Festus Mogae said in 2005 during his speech to the women’s wing of the
Botswana Democratic Party, “the full and active participation of women in leadership is a pre-requisite for positive change and development in Botswana” (Mogae, 2005, p. 1).

Women’s Roles

I asked the three mothers I interviewed about the role of the extended family and domestic workers in enabling women’s educational and professional endeavors. All three women had support from extended family when their children were young, some leaving their children with their husbands and relatives for years at a time while completing degrees overseas. All relied on domestic labour when their children were young and continued to employ one or more domestic workers. “Right now we have one the animals, one for the household, and one for the garden” (Athaliah). This support enabled women to achieve their educational and professional goals, as well as ensure that the needs of family members were met (however at the cost of the labour of other women).

The kind of job that I do …. I am always out from the house and to have a maid makes life a lot easier for me because whatever I will be, I will do my job in a relaxed manner if there is somebody in the house who is cleaning. There is somebody in the house who welcomes relatives in the house who visit. (Heidi)

One interviewee who had moved to America as a result of her husband’s job when her children were young, and who simultaneously worked on her Bachelor’s degree, experienced difficulty juggling her multiple responsibilities without the support of domestic workers. “I was a mother. I was everything. It was hard. …It was hell” (Keletso).

As in Sri Lanka, the ability of the extended family to care for children is declining in Botswana, due to changes in family structures resulting from industrialization, and the
availability to recruit local domestic labour is also becoming more limited. Consequently, some families now recruit women from neighbouring countries to work as domestics. As Heidi noted:

The number of … Botswana maids are going down because everybody goes for education. Education is a competition and everybody wants to stand on his or her own … Hence we are starting to get maids from other countries who are stranded in their countries. There are so many, even more educated than myself, but because she doesn’t have a job in her place she has to come into the household. (Heidi).

Cross Cultural Conditions for Women

I asked Athaliah, who spent four years in Canada, and Keletso, who lived in America for seven years to compare conditions for women in these countries with conditions for women in Botswana. The women asserted that there appeared to be more women running small business to sustain themselves and their families in Botswana and other African countries than in Canada and America. “If women do not have a job [in Botswana] they go into business. In North America you are only dependent on a job” (Keletso). Athaliah felt that social services for women in Canada were more extensive than in Botswana, and Keletso felt that American women were more assertive than Botswana women. Both women however, drew parallels between women’s professional attainment in Canada and America, and women’s professional attainment in Botswana. They asserted that in Canada and America, like Botswana, there are fewer women than men in leadership positions. As Keletso stated:

77 For example, women receive 12 weeks of maternity leave not less than 25 percent of their salary or 50 thebe (approximately 40 cents CND) per day (Botswana Export and Development & Investment Authority, 2007).
I find that it is the same everywhere, when you go to North America you find that it is more men than women when you go up. Women will be in middle management, those kinds of duties. To me it is just the same, even if we look at the North American congress. In politics and in the universities you find that there are more male professors than women. (Keletso)

Puseletso viewed Botswana as the best place for women to live in the world because it is a peaceful country; whereas Heidi believed that women were responsible for creating their own best life regardless of their geographical location.

The best place for a woman to live is where she fits in the society. The way you present yourself. You don’t necessarily have to be confined to your home. If I go out to America find a family and stay with them and as long as I show them that I am a human being and do things humanly then I think that is the best place.

(Heidi)

Education

Although education was a less prominent theme in the Botswana samples than the Sri Lankan or Canadian samples, several female participants commented on the importance of education in enabling women’s independence. As Heidi explained:

Ladies have always been dependent. They have always been doing all the household chores and everybody would be looking up to them and they would not be expect to be educated and work. And therefore now we have changed to the trend to make sure that everybody gets educated and is independent, even if you get married, you are still independent in your own right, in terms of work, in terms of what you want to do, in terms of giving birth to children. (Heidi)
Puseletso also discussed the importance of education in ensuring that women are aware of human rights.

Athaliah offered a more critical perspective of education in regards to advancing conditions for women. Using the example of a highly educated lawyer who defends women’s rights at work, but who does not extend those same rights to his wife, she asserted that although education can contribute to change, it does not guarantee understanding and appreciation. “I think education is just a vehicle, but the decision to change lies on the individual.”

*Safety and Security*

So-called “passion killings” were specifically addressed by female respondents and all women interviewed discussed the prevalence of these murder-suicides. Women suggested ways to prevent such killings including helping men to deal with their emotions, removing all the men, and increasing women’s independence. One respondent specifically credited education with enabling women’s independence and escape from domestic violence. “Women need to be considered in terms of employment and education than men, so as to avoid them from depending on men which sometimes ends up causing passion killings.” Indeed as Livingston (2009) asserted, the economic vulnerability of some women in Botswana may exacerbate passion killings.

*Summary*

Based on the opinions of the participants, development, globalization, and industrialization have both advanced conditions for women in Botswana (e.g. the expansion of their legal rights) as well as deteriorated conditions for women in some

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78 “Passion killings” is the name given to murders, sometimes murder-suicides, in which (primarily) women are killed by their male partners (see Chapter 4).
regards (e.g. the changes in familial structures that have limited access to family support for some women). Mainstream development discourses suggesting that gender-equality was a necessary precondition for development were evident in the opinions of Botswana participants, as well as reflected in political discourse. Different affordances were available to different women, for example, the availability of affordable domestic labour from neighbouring countries was one factor that appeared to enable professional women to achieve both family and work-related goals. Some participants emphasized the agency of Botswana women (perhaps as enabled by the new laws and policies) to create better conditions for themselves.

Norway: “As good as it gets for women...”

Women’ Roles

Leadership

A common recommendation (21%), particularly among Norwegian female respondents, was to install more women in leadership positions, specifically as board members in companies and to ensure that they have the same opportunities for jobs as men. As discussed in Chapter 4, during the time in which the data was collected, a controversial law had been passed to ensure that 40% of corporate board members would be women, but many companies were not complying. Interviewees also talked about the difficulties Norwegian women experience in regards to career advancement. Erika and Eva discussed how men in companies were “recruiting each other and helping each other” and “rubbing each other’s elbows”, and felt that the affirmative action policy was justified in this regard. Erika, who worked on a long-term project to advance women in
the fisheries industry, shared this insight regarding why it is difficult for women to advance to the top positions.

We found out that when girls past say 30 or 35, when … the career is supposed to start, when you go from a job in the middle of the factory where you would like to get up in the system, have a leader position or something like that, then you really get to know that it is not that easy. Because when you are young, you are young and funny, and you are not a threat for men leaders. So then it is okay. Then they can accept you and everything is fine. When you [have] learned a lot and you have got yourself experience and feel qualified for discussing with leaders on equal terms, then you are kind of a threat. So that is when problems seem to start. When you are … finished your education and practice and want to get a better position, that is when things start to get more complicated. (Erika)

Several female respondents recommended recognizing and valuing women’s unique skills and abilities particularly in leadership positions (e.g. “Accept a ‘female-style’ of leadership - women don't have to become men to be good leaders”). This issue was also discussed by one of the interviewees. As Eva stated, “I think it is deteriorating now is that in order to be in a high position female, you almost have to be like male. And that makes it very difficult because we are not like males. We are females and we should be allowed to be leaders from what we are.”

**Role Conflict**

Another common recommendation among respondents, both men and women, was to provide women/parents with more support to balance work and family responsibilities, such as full compensation for working part-time while caring for children, high quality government funded daycare, and extracurricular activities
incorporated within the school day. All of the women interviewed spoke of the stress women experience when combining work and familial responsibilities. One interviewee thought that this stress was not necessarily typical of women’s lives in the past, and conditions for women in Norway may have declined in this regard. This tension created a sense of guilt for women for not spending enough time with their children, and a sense of regret in regards to the loss of financial earnings and career advancement.

The ideals of simultaneously excelling at motherhood and career created unobtainable expectations for women. As Erika stated,

I think we have this unrealistic picture of the perfect woman. She is well educated, and very extroverted talking to everyone, and [has] a successful job. It could very well be in a leading position, and also not necessarily in a traditional women’s job. …And it will be possible to have a successful family: children and a nice house. And to manage both perfectly. (Erika)

Camilla, with an academic background in gender studies, reiterated this point and emphasized how important it is that women are conscious of the discrepancies between the ideal experience and the typical lived reality, are aware of the consequences of their “choices,” and are strategic in this regard.

I think the important thing for many people is to understand that there is some kind of consequences of certain choices and also that society sends some strong signals that [have] implications. You have to somewhat try to have a very focused and good discussion on the implications of different choices and then to be able to live with the different choices you make and not to be come a very frustrated person and think that this is only your personal problem. (Camilla)
In this regard Camilla cited the work of Norwegian psychologist Hanne Haavind who found that despite commonalities between gendered divisions of labour and power structures in heterosexual relationships, women viewed these relational patterns as “personal preferences” (see Haavind, 1984).

Several female respondents and interviewees also discussed the importance of men assuming more responsibilities in relation to children. As Astrid, the mother of a toddler, said, “it is actually important that men take the parental leave because they show to the employer that it is important for us to stay at home with our babies.” Unlike most other countries including Canada, Norway offers a parental leave exclusively to fathers in order to encourage men to bond with their children (Bergqvist, 1999). This leave, which was extended from six weeks to ten weeks in 2009, cannot be transferred to mothers, and consequently, it is lost if not taken by the male parent. Astrid felt that this policy was changing men’s attitudes and behaviors. Indeed according to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (n.d.):

In 2008, 90 per cent of fathers used their paternal quota. Moreover, a growing number of men are choosing to take more leave than their quota. In 2008, 16.5 per cent of fathers extended their leave beyond the reserved 10 weeks, compared to 11 per cent in 2000. (¶ 7)

Lone Mothers

Eva, who resided in Canada for seven years, lived with a single mother for a short period during her time in Canada. “I lived with one for one month and then I couldn’t take it anymore. I saw how single mothers struggled. Emotionally they all do. But

79 While this policy may encourage more parental involvement among men and force employers to view parental leave as a family, rather than a female issue, it assumes a heterosexual norm. Such a policy would need to be adapted in order to accommodate Canada’s same sex marriage laws.
financially [in Canada] it is very difficult. … I saw how they struggled compared to Norway. … The fact [in Norway] as a single mother, you will be ok.”

Unlike the Canadian system, the Norwegian government provides lone parents with additional benefits, which enable them to combine benefits with part-time or full time employment, or educational programs, and encourage single parents to eventually return to the labour force (Haavind & Magusson, 2005; Millar & Rowlingston, 2001). Benefits for lone-parents include the transitional benefit, which provides up to three years of financial support (or five if you are enrolled in an educational program) for lone-parents unable to support their families while caring for children, the child care benefit, which provides support to cover the cost of child care for lone-parents who are employed or enrolled in an education program, the educational benefit, which programs grants for three years of vocation or general education training, as well as a removal grant to take up work, which covers the moving costs for lone-parents who need to relocate in order to obtain work (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation, 2009). These benefits provide more options to enable lone-mothers to avoid the poverty-trap, than what is currently available for lone mothers in Canada.

Women’s Rights and Agency

All Norwegian interviewees believed that women had the same legal rights as men in Norway; however, most noted that men and women do not necessarily take advantage of these rights in the same way or have the same opportunities as men. Eva talked about the ways in which the “boys club” restricted women’s opportunities in

80 Lone parents with children over three must be actively seeking employment, employed or enrolled in an education program at least part time.
81 Transitional benefits however are reduced by 40% for every dollar earned over half of the basic amount (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation, 2009).
corporations despite laws to protect women’s interests, and Erika noted that there were forces that unconsciously influenced men and women to continue to make traditional choices, such as more women choosing to become nurses and more men choosing to become carpenters, but she wasn’t sure what those forces were. Camilla spoke of the structural forces that created gender gaps that were often attributed to the personal failures of women.

So I think again, the burden is in a way greater. It becomes a personal success or un-success story. And it is very difficult for many people then. All this ideology to look at some of the deep structures in our society because that is where it is, but it is so ingrained in both men and women that to really be able to detect it is very hard. (Camilla)

**Education**

Although education was a less prominent theme in the Norwegian samples than the Sri Lankan or Canadian samples, several interviewees offered insightful comments regarding the ways in which education may enable or constrain conditions for women. Eva discussed how her education primarily benefited her in regards to the confidence it gave her, rather than the qualifications.

I think it is much more difficult to climb in the system without education for a female than a female with an education…. But I think the most important thing is, it is not that I couldn’t have done without education. I could have done because I am quite a stubborn person but I think the most important thing that university has done to me is to give me self-confidence. I can do these things. I can learn. Give me time I will do it. (Eva)
Erika discussed the importance of her education in enabling her to support herself independent of her husband.

Camilla, who worked in Kenya and Ghana with the high commissioner in Africa for several years, discussed the social fallout of development programs to educate women in Africa.

What I see as the dynamite of Africa is that the girl child education, that the recognition in the World Bank, if you train a woman or a girl you train the society, if you train a man you train a man. You know that is the concept. So all focus on women and girls. Of course that is a bloody burden on society and I had some interesting discussions with the Minister of Education once in Sierra Leone and we were sitting and crying over who are all these educated were girls going to marry. Who are they going to marry? Because already in the West we have a problem with the educated career women, and children and marriage. And in the South, the first generation Muslim girls, because men marry down, women marry up, so who shall all these women marry? That is a big big big big problem.

(Camilla)\(^{82}\).

As Camilla asserts, in some African communities (as well as other places), girls have been educated by benevolent Western donors in the name of “development” and “gender-equality” without consideration for the social implications of “investing” in girls (for example see the “Girl Effect” campaign reviewed in Chapter 3). Because the pool of educated men in these women’s communities who would make ‘suitable’ husbands for them is sometimes limited, women’s choices for companionship, motherhood, and family

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\(^{82}\) Interestingly this phenomenon is not so different from Sylvia Hewlett’s (2002) argument that the more professionally successful American women are, the less likely they will marry and have children; whereas the reserve is true for their male counterparts.
has been restricted. Interestingly in Sri Lanka during colonialism the British educated women in order to produce women who could serve as ‘suitable’ wives for Sri Lankan men in order to prevent them from returning to their “uncivilized” and heathen ways, and subsequently, in some ways, women benefited from these educational experiences (Jayawardena, 1995)\(^3\).

**Summary**

Based on the accounts of the participants, conditions that enabled the advancement of conditions for women in Norway included social benefits that provided support for some of the most vulnerable women, parental leaves that enabled women to receive financial support while caring for infants and encouraged men to assume responsibly for childcare, as well as laws that promoted the inclusion of substantial numbers of women in many occupations, at all levels. These factors were somewhat limited in their impact however, in that compliance with labor laws was problematic, and women were still assuming primary responsibility for childcare. Factors that appeared to constrain conditions for women included the pressure on women to excel in both parental and professional realms, and the inevitable losses that resulted from choosing one path over another. Although women were aware of differences between men and women’s roles, not all appeared to be aware of the systems that govern gender relations.

\(^3\) Thank you to Dr. Suzanne de Castell for drawing my attention to this interesting comparison.
Sri Lanka: “We have a heaven in this country, we have a hell in this country. … You have to live wherever you are living.”

Safety and Security

A common theme among Sri Lankan respondents (35%) involved recommendations to eradicate violence against women including strengthening laws and/or sentencing for perpetrators, changing attitudes towards domestic violence, as well as more general suggestions to stop sexual harassment. This concern was also prevalent within the interviews. Some women interviewed felt that Sri Lankan was safer for women than other countries; however, others viewed Sri Lankan women as vulnerable to violent crimes. When asked how her life would be different if she was a man, Shareena who spent several months in Canada and America on an annual basis said, “I wouldn’t be raped. … If you are a man you are free aren’t you?; whereas, a woman has to be careful. No matter how liberated your society is you are still a woman.” Some believed that violence against women was increasing. “Those days women can go anywhere, anytime, but now its not so. Yes, like kidnappings, sexual harassment” (Nilakshi). Although comprehensive information regarding the prevalence of violence against women in Sri Lanka is not readily available (see Chapter 4), sexual harassment in Sri Lanka is prevalent (Amarasinghe, Appuhamy, Arandara, & Perera, 2005; Wijayatilake, Wickramasinghe, Samarasinghe, Liyanage, & Abeywardena, 2000) there is evidence to suggest that gender-related violence, (or at least the reporting of such violence) is on the rise (Wijayatilake, 2000).

One specific issue that was addressed by many women was the public sexual harassment of women, particularly on buses. Participants recommended making buses
safer for women and free of harassment. In this regard, some respondents suggested female-only buses.84 Dharshini described the prevalence of such harassment, relaying her own experience of being inappropriately touched on a bus when she was pregnant. “It is everywhere. I mean I was 9 months pregnant and I was not a young girl. It happens all the time. They will try to push against you, … do all sorts of things in the broad daylight, in front of so many people.” Malai, a woman of Tamil descent, asserted that this type of harassment was even more difficult for Tamil women to deal with than Sinhalese women, as Tamil women would be more afraid to confront the man.

[Tamil] girls are very shy to talk. And they are scared to talk. If they open their mouth they think ok, if I talk something, he will do something. Next time I come on the same bus he will see me and do something [to] me. Rape me or even kill me. It happens. It happens in Sri Lanka. Specifically Tamil girls. They are scared. (Malai)

As Wijayatilake and colleagues (2000) note, sexual harassment is one end of a continuum of gender-related violence and such harassment is a constant reminder of the possibility of a more serious assault. “Sexual harassment is forced onto women, generating the ever-present implicit threat of rape and violence that is possible in gender relationships” (Wijayatilake et al., 2000, 122).

Indeed, Amarasinghe, Appuhamy, Arandara, and Perera (2005) found that 94% of 200 women interviewed at a Colombo train station had experienced sexual harassment, most commonly unwanted physical contact or obscene gestures, while traveling on public transportation. The vast majority of these women (98%) did not report the harassment to

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84 I experienced this type of harassment while living in Sri Lanka. I was groped several times during an outdoor concert while standing next to my husband and male Sri Lankan friend.
the authorities because they thought it was no use or were not aware that the offender could be punished (60% of the sample did not know that there is a law against sexual harassment\textsuperscript{85}). In order to avoid future occurrences of such harassment women used various strategies including changing their route, changing the time at which they traveled, traveling with others, or avoiding the bus altogether.

Some Sri Lankan families are very protective of their female family members because of the prevalence of harassment and also to protect the girl/woman’s character and the reputation of the family. In these families, girls and sometimes women are rarely alone in public and are often constantly under the watchful eye of male relatives\textsuperscript{86}. (This strategy appears to be at least somewhat effective in that none of the women interviewed by Amarasinghe and colleagues (2005) were traveling with their husbands or boyfriends when they were harassed on public transport.) This practice of constant surveillance appeared, at least to me initially, to be particularly oppressive. Men’s surveillance of and intervention on behalf of their female relatives, however, is a complex practice, which seems to provide some affordances to women that are not necessarily available in Canada. For example, Badra told me about the ways in which her sons’ regulated her daughters’ exchanges with boys, confronting any boy who should interact them in a romantic or sexual way (even the future husband of one of her daughters). Although her daughters, now in their twenties, Chandrika, and Nalini wanted to more freedom to go out in public unescorted, they were sometimes grateful for their brothers’ interventions,

\textsuperscript{85} As Dr. Kumari Beck (personal communication) asserts, involving authorities is likely more hassle than it is worth in these types of situations. As schoolgirls in Colombo, she and her classmates would use other strategies such as poking offenders with sharp objects (or at least threatening to) in order to protect themselves.

\textsuperscript{86} Sexual harassment and abuse however also occurs in Sri Lanka within private domains (Wijayatilake et al., 2000).
and their fierce reputation for protecting their sisters. “Sometimes it is really helpful” (Chandrika). The daughters described the vulnerability of some of their female classmates who did not have brothers: they were harassed to the point of tears, unable to concentrate on lectures and got poor grades as a result, or dropped out of school altogether.

Women’s Roles

Many respondents recommended expanding women’s opportunities in the public sphere, particularly in regards to education, careers, and politics. As one participant said, “women should not be imprisoned in houses as housewives.” Since Independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has had a strong history of female heads of state. Prime Minister Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike, and President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga appeared to be a source of pride, strength, and empowerment for some of the women interviewed. For example, Dinusha believed that having a female head of state was one of the factors that created more equitable conditions for women in Sri Lanka. “I think having the first lady prime minister and a female president, [contributes to] more women getting more power, better jobs, and authority. I think that that is one of the reasons men, everybody takes women’s opinion. They have more regard for women’s opinions and things like that.” Despite the frequency of female heads of state in Sri Lanka, as noted in Chapter 4, women are poorly represented in government at the national and local levels (Leitan, 2000).

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87 Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike, who served three terms as the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, became the world’s first female prime minister in 1960. (The prime minister was the head of government in Sri Lanka until 1978, at which time the president became the head of government). She was elected to the position after the death of Prime Minister, S.W.R.D Bandaranaike, her husband. Subsequently her daughter, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, became President of Sri Lanka from 1994 until 2005.
While some participants commented on the importance of women’s roles in the public sphere, others asserted the importance of recognizing and rewarding the value of women’s work within the home. For example, one respondent suggested paying housewives a salary (“because their service wasn't appreciated at all”), several others suggested asserting women’s authority and power within the household, and a third respondent suggested that women deserved respect on the basis of motherhood (“she is not equal to men but higher than men”). Ramani, who lived in a village outside of Colombo, was one of the few women interviewed who exclusively valued traditional roles for women. In her view, the ideal woman is “educated and at the same time takes care of the house,” and respects her husband and is respected by him.

Some interviewees seemed to successfully combine familial responsibilities and paid employment. For example, Badra, a retired teacher, raised six children while working full time, with the assistance of her mother as well as three household “helpers.” Dharshini, a 65 year old accomplished academic described how relatives and domestics enabled her to achieve her professional goals.

When my children were small, you could always find someone, a distant cousin, someone to come and look after your children. I kept my children with my brother and went overseas because otherwise no one would have been there to look after them. That kind of support, extended family support was there. And of course domestics. We had access to domestics. You didn’t have to clean much at that time, and they are very reliable. They are very loyal. … So that is a big support that will release the women from other household responsibilities, to a certain extent. (Dharshini)
Indeed Sukumaran, Hartman, and Johnson, (2004) identified the extended family structure as one of the factors that enabled women in India to excel in demanding occupations. It is becoming increasingly less common however for (middle class) women in Sri Lanka to have such support. With increased family independence and mobility, grandmothers are less likely to be available to care for their grandchildren, and women such as 26 year old Dinusha, who lived abroad in Australia for three years, believed that the loss of support was a necessary trade-off in order to have more independence. “I think it is a sacrifice that you can make and should make to get this, living on your own.”

Fewer domestic workers are available and they are more expensive than formerly because so many move to the Middle East for higher wages, an effect of globalization. Childcare centres, although they do exist in Colombo, are extremely limited, and so women without extended family members who are able to care for their children or without the means to hire domestics have few options.

Like women in Canada and Norway, Sri Lankan women are increasingly experiencing the pressures of assuming multiple roles. One university respondent described the burden of the double duty now faced by many women who work outside of the home.

In good old days women’s duty confined to homemaking [homeservice] and kitchen. But at present women have been able to expand to the business world as well. In fact they have been able to gain higher positions in the commercial field. However this has not freed them of from their daily household chores. Women now struggle too hard in performing the different roles in their lives.
Of course this tension has always existed for lone-mothers. Nirmali for example struggled to raise her four children after she and her husband separated. “I separated from marriage at a young age of 19 and after that I faced a lot of hardships to bring up my kids. I worked in a sawmill, I made food and sold it, I worked in construction, like that. I suffered a lot to bring up my kids.” When her daughter was eight, she took a job as a domestic in the Middle East, where she worked for 16 years, while her relatives raised her children. While she believed that the financial opportunities available to women, such as working in the Middle East, advanced conditions for women, enabling them to provide better living arrangements for themselves and their families she felt however that “women are actually doing what men should do.”

While some interviewees struggled to combine their multiple roles, others were forced by parents or partners to choose between marriage and motherhood, or an education and a career, or decided themselves to limit themselves in this regard. Malai, described the pressure her father placed on her to choose whether to be an academic or to get married, and Nilakshi did not marry in order to maintain her job as a live-in housekeeper. These pressures were not limited to Tamil women, older generations, or less affluent women however. During my time in Colombo I met a Sinhalese professor who was a at a crossroads deciding whether to marry a man she loved who insisted she must quit her job upon marriage or end the relationship.

Women’s Rights and Agency

While most interviewees believed that men and women in Sri Lankan had the same rights, there were many different opinions about women’s abilities to act on these rights. Some women articulated how, despite men and women having equal or similar
rights in Sri Lanka, parents and later husbands determined girls and women’s ability to act on these rights. Some participants believed that class intersected with gender roles in this regard. For example, Malini, a full time mother, said, “When you become a woman, freedom is given by your husband. Some husbands limit this. Now in higher social class that is not the case.” Malai, a master’s student, also believed that parents and husbands mediated women’s rights.

After marriage in a sense if your husband is good enough with you, you have the same rights. He’s a very good guy. He will help you see the thing in all matters. He will give you the same rights. He will not restrict you. But still … there are some people who will not look after their wives. That is a different story. (Malai)

Badra told a story about how her husband support enabled her to challenge sex-based restrictions in her community. When she was a young mother and working full time as a teacher it was very difficult for her to tend to her children in the mornings and get to work on time by foot. During those days in her village it was socially sanctioned for women to ride bicycles. Her husband however accompanied her by bike and dealt with jeers from male onlookers.

Nirmali, a lone mother of four children, also described how women’s rights were mediated by husbands, not in regards to restricting or enabling their roles but rather by not fulfilling their obligations.

Now these days women do men’s work. Men stay at home while women go to work. The men wait till the women bring money home. Women’s rights mean that we cannot let things like that happen. Because a man is different in thousand ways. He should know not to live off the woman’s salary and do something and
find at least 10 rupees without staying at home and sleeping and depending on the
women’s salary, hitting her and abusing her. (Nirmali)

Shareena, a privileged woman who was widowed when her children were young,
however, believed that young women were very assertive about claiming their rights,
(perhaps even privileged) especially compared to the restrictions on her own life. “I think
now of course there is no difference between the men and the women.” “I think [that
now] women do better than men. …. They are very conscious of the fact that they are
people and need to be treated as such. Whereas in the past I think women were real
doormats.” Otara, however, another highly privileged woman, believed that women could
never really be equal with men within the context of heterosexual relationships. “Men
and women have similar rights but men have more freedom and women are more
responsible for children and their careers are secondary. … I think it gets better but I
don’t know that there is ever going to be an equal unless women are with women and
men are with men. Then there will be some equality between the partners.”

Most interviewees in the Sri Lankan sample felt that dealing with direct sexism
was easier than dealing with indirect sexism. As Dinusha asserted:

If somebody is sexist then you know where they stand and [can] deal with them;
whereas if somebody who says I am not and they really are, it is difficult to
understand where they are coming from or understand what they are really
meaning. … It is definitely easier to manage. (Dinusha)

Some women felt that direct sexism, such as job advertisements that specifically
requested male applicants, was more common in Sri Lanka, and others felt that indirect
sexism, such as hiring practices that favoured male applicants, were more prevalent, and several women thought that both direct sexism and indirect sexism were prevalent.

_Education_

Many participants specifically identified the importance of education in order to increase women’s employment opportunities and enable them to be financial independence, as well as to ensure women have knowledge of their rights. As one female respondent explained, “I would give a good education to all women…. their security will be supplied.” During the interviews many women asserted that education, and the employment opportunities that were enabled through education, were important factors that created more equitable conditions for women in Sri Lanka. Malai, who was completing a masters degree said, “If you are not educated, you would be in a kitchen today. It is the same for every woman, not only you, not only me, but everyone in this world.” Another woman who had completed her A-Levels but had been prevented by her parents from continuing on to post-secondary studies, said, “When women get more educated they become equals.” Dharshini, a Dean of Education, identified free education in Sri Lanka as one of the enabling factors for women.

Since 1945 when we were still under the British, we had not even gained independence. Since then we had free education for all children⁸⁸. Which meant normally if, we don’t have to choose between sons and daughters. …You don’t have to give more weight to a son because everything is free. Whether you send both children, or only one child, it makes no difference. So you don’t have to choose between the son and the daughter. … Also due to the fact of free

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⁸⁸ Free education was introduced at primary, secondary and tertiary levels at this time (Jayaweera, 1999).
education, and with the provision of schools, we have a high percentage of women who are literate, who know the value of education, and they would always support the daughters. … You say, education will allow the child to get a job. That now is foremost because without education and qualifications you cannot get employment. So the major impetus for education is getting into employment. And if you are employed you don’t have to depend on your husband. You can be independent. And that says it all right there. (Dharshini )

Indeed, Sri Lanka (along with the Maldives) has the highest female literacy rates and female school enrollment rates in South Asia (see UNDP, 2009, also see Chapter 4). Although free education may enable some women to pursue their studies, there are other barriers in Sri Lanka that may constrain some women’s access to education, particularly post secondary education. For example, the cost of books, living expenses, and tuition classes (which are often thought to be necessary in a competitive post-secondary system such as in Sri Lanka) may be prohibitive for lower income families.

Currently university admissions are highly competitive and Sri Lankan universities can only accommodate 20%\(^9\) of the students who qualify for post-secondary studies (Jayaweera, 1999). The extent of politics and violence on university campuses may also restrict women’s access to education\(^9\). For example, Malini qualified for post-secondary education but her parents did not allow her to enroll as they felt the university campus was a too aggressive place for girls. During the time I was in Sri Lanka international organizations such as the World Bank were encouraging Sri Lankan universities to charge students tuition fees in order to offset the cost of public higher

\(^9\) This figure was likely closer to 15% during the time I was in Sri Lanka.
\(^9\) Universities closed between 1987 and 1989 due to student unrest during the JVP insurrection.
education. While charging tuition would be considered an economic advancement by the World Bank, such a change may reduce the number of female post-secondary students, proving a good example of a “development” initiative that may result in “maldevelopment” (Shiva, 1989) particularly for women.

Counter to the beliefs of many participants, providing girls with access to education may not necessarily improve conditions for women. Female university graduates are more likely to be unemployed (Gunawardena, 2005), and more likely to earn less than their male counterparts (Jayaweera & Sanmugam, 2002). Further, Jayaweera (1999) describing the ways in which the school curriculum in Sri Lanka reinforced traditional gender roles, asserted that “education at all levels has not empowered the majority of girls and women to challenge social norms and practices that negate human dignity and women’s rights” (p. 178).

Cross-Cultural Conditions for Women

Dinusha, who lived in Australia for three years, specifically talked about the impact of globalization on conditions for women in Sri Lanka. She said:

I think that they talk more about women having equal rights, women having more power. Things like that now. I think that is because, in some sort of way because of globalization. We always think that the Western countries, the developed countries have, women have more power or they are better off than we are. So I don’t know if it is accurate or not but that is the perception that everybody has. (Dinusha)

In comparing conditions for women in Australia and Sri Lanka, Dinusha appreciated the general absence of sexual harassment in Australia, but was surprised by the low numbers
of women in her engineering class, as well as in political leadership positions in Australia.

I went to do engineering so I expected more girls to be there because it is a more developed country, …but there wasn’t. … I think I was the only brown person in the whole batch and there were about three or four other Asians who were girls with us as well. Australian students, there were maybe about three. This is in a batch of about 100 students. And I was very surprised because in Sri Lanka I know lots of female engineers. (Dinusha)

When asked where is the best place in the world for women to live, common responses were “western” countries or “developed” countries, or countries that would typically be classified as such (e.g. England, America). It was believed that women had equal rights with men in these countries. Shareena, who traveled regularly to Canada and the U.S. said, “Whereas in the West, anyone is anyone, you are all the same. But here in SL I think there are differences.” While several women knew that “the West” was the typical or expected response, they wondered if it was really true. Visaka, a university professor, identified Sri Lanka as the best place for women to live. “In my own country it is not a problem. We don’t feel any, being a woman is not a problem.” Most participants suggested that “Middle Eastern” or “Muslim countries” were some of the worst places for women to live: “women have no freedom they are trapped in those countries” (Nilakshi). Interestingly, Nirmali who worked in the Middle East as a housekeeper for 16 years, viewed Arabic countries such as Dubai and Kuwait, as places where women had more power than men. She said, “in those countries men do as women want them to do. If the women says no, the man wouldn’t do it.” Another relatively common response was India,
“Women have to go through a lot in countries like that. There is no equality in those countries” (Malini).

Unlike participants from the Canadian sample, four Sri Lankan interviewees, (as well as one of the two Botswana interviewees who were asked this question) felt that a woman’s self-determination or her position within the context in which she lives determined her chances for a good life, rather than a geographical location. Women stressed the diversity of conditions for women within countries, and asserted it was up to women to create the best life possible for themselves. For example, Darshini, the 65 year old Sinhalese university Dean with expertise in gender studies asserted,

You yourself create the place. There is no place where you are more comfortable, or have more advantages. …It is a complex thing. Some people support you. Some people encourage you. Others try to constrain you. But you have to use all those and create your own niche in the world. (Darshini)

Similarly Malia the 27 year old Tamil student who had been displaced several times during the war commented:

Wherever you go, you are the one who is going. There is no best place to differentiate. … You are the one who has to lead your life. … We have a heaven in this country, we have a hell in this country. It is not like that. You have to live wherever you are living. (Malia)

Another Sri Lankan woman, Nirmali, the 48 year old single mother who worked as a domestic in the Middle East, viewed conditions for women as determined by women’s position in the context in which they live. She said,
As someone who has lived overseas, I know what women have to go through when they go to another country. But in the country you’re born that doesn’t happen. So if you live with determination in your own country you don’t have to go anywhere else. …. Now if a Sri Lankan women goes abroad say as a housemaid, that is not very proper for her because she would not get the same treatment a women in those countries. Too many hardships, no one to care about you, you would be lonely. Anyone in those countries can do anything to her.

(Nirmali)

Some participants specifically addressed conditions for women in rural areas/villages. Several respondents wrote about the need for empowerment and education for women in these places, especially compared to the city (e.g. “Today in Sri Lanka only some part of women are treated well. And especially village women are always trying to be under the control of men because they are helpless”). Several interviewees also commented on inequities in the villages. Dinusha thought that there were equal rights and equal opportunities for women in Sri Lanka, but she thought that there were sex-based inequities in the villages, particularly in poorer families. Badra and her daughters spoke of the more conservative gender roles and increased gender-segregation in their hometown of Matara compared to the more liberal ways in Colombo, particularly in the American school that Nalini attended. Ramani, who lived in a village outside of Colombo, reported that especially when she was growing up, men were more respected, regarded more highly, and allocated more resources than women, because they “worked harder” and were the breadwinners. She asserted however that this is changing to some extent in that women now have a “better place,” are in high positions, and have more
freedom and more rights, depending on the family. Although she believed that in general men were more highly regarded, she spoke of the diverse contexts that influenced conditions for women including the increasing number of female-headed households, as well as the extent to which men respected their wives, and wives respected their husbands, as well as men’s and women’s roles.

**Summary**

Although imperfect, factors that enabled the advancement of conditions for women in Sri Lanka included the free education system, and possibly the predominance of a female Head of State. The ability of extended family members to care for children and the availability of affordable domestic workers also enabled some women to excel as mothers and as professionals; however these opportunities were limited to middle class and upper class women, as well as primarily women of older generations. Factors that appeared to constrain the advancement of conditions for women in Sri Lanka included the prevalence of sexual harassment, and discriminatory employment practices. Male family member’s control over women’ sexuality and women’s choices also constrained opportunities for some women; however, these factors were not ubiquitous and (based on the accounts of some of the participants) may have been more predominant within lower social classes and rural areas. Globalization, and development were viewed as both advancing conditions for women in Sri Lanka (e.g. a greater awareness of women’s rights, opportunities for higher paying jobs for women in foreign countries), as well as deteriorated conditions for women (e.g. changes to family and class structures that have limited women’s access to domestic support, and the vulnerability of women, and their children, who accept jobs in foreign countries).
Canada: “...we are a free country and women, to a certain degree, are treated with respect and are equal. Whereas women in these other countries ..., they are so far behind.”

Safety and Security

Respondents (all women) and interviewees both voiced concerns regarding violence against women, and many interviewees discussed the threat of violence for Canadian women, including abuse, harassment, and sexual assault. Some women specifically discussed how the threat of violence created limitations in their lives. For example, Candice said “[men] can go places that I wouldn’t go, that I would go if I wasn’t worried about my physical safety being a single woman. I wouldn’t go to a bar. I am limited with the traveling I would do. ... You know just didn’t feel safe to do that.” Natalie discussed how she experienced a “huge loss of freedom” when she realized as she matured that she was increasingly a target of sexual violence.

It was just a feeling of, almost feeling threatened. Like being someone I couldn’t control: .... knowing that being a woman was something to be sought after in ways that [were] scary, or that I would be a potential object of attack. That was scary because you know when you watch the news, and rapes, and the women. But I mean there were men attacking men and stuff, but [women] don’t walk alone at night. I felt there were these new rules that applied to me because I was a woman and not a man or a boy. (Natalie)

Some of the interviewees questioned the congruence between reality and the extent of fears commonly experienced by women, and discussed how these fears were imposed, or exacerbated by the media. As Natalie asserted:
Its hard because I want to reject what happens, but the media – women attacked - and well you know just living in Vancouver, and these things happen everywhere and there is going to be a certain percentage of these things that happen. And it doesn’t mean it is going to be, or even likely it will be me, but that is not the experience of the woman who was attacked. It was her, and it could have been me and so you psych yourself out around how much do you really have to be afraid, what is reasonable. (Natalie)

Another woman reported how she, unlike most of her friends in Vancouver, is not terrified to go out at night. She attributed this difference to growing up in a small town where violent crimes against women were not common. She concluded, “We almost impose the dangers on ourselves by becoming so conscious of them” (Katie).

Indeed some women’s fears may not have been consistent with the statistical likelihood of being assaulted, particularly by a stranger. Although women are six times more likely than men to be the victims of sexual assault, and three times more likely than men to be the victims of criminal harassment, they are just as likely as men to be the victims of violent crime (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Further, women are more likely to be victimized by someone they know (70%), particularly current or former partners, than men (46%) and men are more likely to be victimized by a stranger (42%) than women (22%) (Statistics Canada, 2006a). As Walby (1990) notes, “not all men rape, but the fact that some do is sufficient to intimidate all women. This is the effectiveness of sexual terrorism” (p. 135).

The ubiquitous nature of media in Canada enables “factual” and “fictional” reports of violent crimes against women to be transmitted across large geographical
regions. News reports of violence against women, as well as televisions programs featuring stories of “true” (e.g. 48 Hour Mystery) or “fictional” crime stories (e.g. Law and Order)\(^91\), often involving the violent rape and/or murder of women serve to interpellate (Althusser, 1995) their victims and constitute subjects among the television viewing audiences (see Butler, 1997)\(^92\). In this regard, media portrayals of crime not only represent “reality” but also shape reality, encouraging women to limit their mobility within public spheres. The repetitive representation of the threat of violence against women serves to coordinate the behavior of women across diverse geographic regions and regulate our actions (Smith, 1987).

Interestingly, Eva, the Norwegian woman who lived in Canada for seven years, described how her fears regarding the threat of violence changed when she moved to Canada, and more interestingly, remained once she returned home to Norway.

In Canada, maybe it is a North American thing, but you are told that everything is very dangerous. Even in Victoria. It is a small quiet little city. I would walk but I was always terrified to walk because we were told it was so dangerous. At UBC, you know, as a female you never walk anywhere alone. You always have escort services and things. Anyways, and yes bad things happen and you don’t want to take a chance, but I think North American society is so obsessed, and they focus more on the fear than we do here. …It is unheard of in Canada to walk by yourself as a female. Before I went to Canada I was afraid of ghosts (laughing).

When I came to Canada and being in these big cities, of course I was not afraid of

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91 Episode 16 of Season 5 of Law and Order, “Dramma Giocoso,” was loosely based on my own aunt’s murder.
92 There are many threats to women’s well being including heart disease, cancer, and car accidents. Yet these problems seem less likely to be featured on televisions, consume our thoughts, or limit our behavior.
ghosts and I became afraid of people. And when I came back here, I was afraid of people. So my fear of being by myself at night, switched around, the reason for my fear has switched around. … So I think for some reason when you live in a big big society where you don’t have an overview, you take your precautions more serious than small society, although most murders happen between people who know each other. So it is kind of interesting. (Eva)

What is interesting about this account is the fact that Eva felt afraid in the public sphere, although she was aware that violent crimes against women are typically committed by a known perpetrator (typically a current or former romantic partner) than a stranger (Statistics Canada, 2006a), and that after living in Canada, she continued to feel afraid once she returned to Norway.

Women's Roles

Care Providers

Both respondents and interviewees identified how caring for children is insufficiently rewarded or recognized in Canada. Approximately 25% of respondents (proportionally more female than male participants but men made up only 19% of the sample), recommended providing more choices for women about caring for children and working outside the home, such as increased compensation, incentives, recognition for stay-at-home parents, and/or more support for balancing work and family, such as greater availability of day care opportunities to work part-time in professional occupations. Kory, for example, felt extremely privileged to be able to afford to stay home with her young children but recognized that this was increasingly less financially feasible for many Canadian families.
Although the federal government provides parental benefits for nearly one year after the birth or adoption of a child in Canada, many women are not able to take advantage of these benefits. To qualify, parents must work 600 hours in the 52 weeks prior to the leave and benefits are based on one’s average salary (Service Canada, 2009), which disqualifies many women who work part-time, engage in irregular contract work, or are students, like myself. Further those who are self-employed currently do not qualify for this benefit. The amount of compensation depends on previous wages in the year prior to taking the leave and is limited to a maximum of $22,350 of annual income, which is taxable. This amount is insufficient to enable some women to stay home with their child during the first year. More men than women qualify for parental benefits (although they are less likely to take them) and one third of Canadian mothers of newborns did not qualify for parental benefits in 2007 (Hambrook, May 7th, 2009).

Some interviewees and respondents felt that the role of a full-time mother was not valued in Canadian society. Lone mother Debbie commented:

I think that having a child is the most wonderful thing that has happened to me. If I would have had my choice I would just have kept on having babies. Forget work. But certainly nowadays women are certainly expected to work. And if you want to live above the poverty line, you have to have a double income. …. To me it is definitely looked down upon for women to stay at home and raise their children, which I think is extremely unfortunate. Very unfortunate. (Debbie)

[93 Some employers however do provide a “top up” for their employees, which may enable more parents to take advantage of the benefit.) Unlike in Canada, the government pays the majority of the childcare benefits in Norway, making parents less dependent on the benefits provided by individual employers (Haavind & Magusson, 2005).]
Katie also noted how housewives in other parts of the world, garnered more respect, and seemed to have more power than Canadian housewives.

The women in Brazil they ran the household. That was their responsibility but what was most beautiful about that was to see the immense amount of respect that everyone had for them. The lady we lived with, we rented a house from her. Her name was Lydia, but they called her Donna Lydia, which is a form of respect. … She truly was the head of the household. She made the rule and she was tough when she needed to be, but everyone had so much respect for her. And I guess that is different than how we see Canadian housewives as somewhat of a demeaning job or role. And I think it is kinda sad sometimes. (Katie)

Further, a 21 year old female respondent of Chinese ethnicity stated, “Canada is multicultural. Therefore we should respect every culture’s ideal about what women want. Some cultures might want women to spend lots of time with kids.” These perspectives address the ethnocentric nature of Western conceptions of gender-equality, in which sameness is often conflated with empowerment. As described by these participants, women’s domestic roles, which may be a source of happiness and even agency for women in other cultures (see Illich, 1982; Shiva, 1989) are largely devalued and limited in (some) Canadian cultures.

**Lone Mothers**

Insufficient support for lone mothers was also a concern addressed by interviewees and respondents. A female respondent recommended, “more support for affordable housing and access to education for women with children; better enforcement

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94 The term “single mother” has largely been replaced by the term “lone parent” (for example in Statistics Canada reports) in order to be more inclusive to men and parents who are not necessarily single but raising children on their own such as widows like Debbie.
of child maintenance; more scholarships/grant money for only parents; …more
opportunities for women and their children” in order to improve conditions for women in
Canada. The difficulties faced by lone mothers were also apparent during the interviews.
Three interviewees raised their children on their own, one widowed and two divorced.
Two of these women remained single and struggled financially. Barbara, who worked
office administration, was in the process of seeking child support payments for her four
children through the court system at the time of the interview, and Debbie, who worked
as a house cleaner, was in the process of applying for student loans in the hopes of being
able to enroll in a one year diploma program which would enable her to provide a better
life for her and her son. She reported:

The biggest challenge for me, actually I am facing it as we speak, is that I never
got a career before I got a child. …. And getting a career as a single parent is
extremely hard, especially because my son is only nine. If he were older that
would be easier, but when you have to carry an entire load by yourself that is
very, very hard for a single person. (Debbie)

Candice, with her university degree and teaching job, was in a much better situation
financially; however, when she decided to go back to school when both her children were
in school full time to obtain her masters degree, she was devastated when she could not
get a student loan. She was eventually able to convince her father to lend her the money.

Indeed in Canada, single parent families headed by women (40%) are much more
likely to be considered “low income” than other families, including single parent families
headed by men (13%) and dual parents families (7%) (Statistics Canada, 2006a).
Women’s lower incomes and their greater likelihood of heading lone parent families than
men (Statistics Canada, 2006a), as well as the lack of adequate social support for lone parents contribute to the feminization of poverty. As Walby (1990) asserts, “in a patriarchally structured labour market, women, if they have children, are rarely able to earn sufficient to keep themselves above the poverty line. ‘Liberation’ from marriage is then usually a movement into poverty” (p. 89).

The federal and provincial governments in Canada do not offer special benefits to lone parents. All Canadian families with children under 18 qualify for the Canadian Child Tax Benefit, which is a tax-free monthly payment based on family size and family income (Service Canada, 2009). Parents with children under the age of 6 years of age receive the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB), an additional $100 per month per child (also taxable income) (Service Canada, 2009)95. Low income families who net under $25,921 also qualify for the Employment Insurance Family Supplement. The payment depends on family income, as well as the number of children in the family and their ages. The maximum benefit is $447 per week and the level of payment decreases if the annual income of the family rises (Service Canada, 2009). An example on the Service Canada (2009) website indicates that a family with three children (two over the age of 7 and one under), and a net income of $22,000 could receive $71.65 per week. That is $3725.80 of additional (taxable) income annually.

Most provinces offer an additional childcare subsidy, typically only for low-income families who qualify for such benefits. For example, the Government of British Columbia offers low-income parents who are employed or attend school a maximum possible allowance (depending on income and type of care) of $750 a month for a child

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95 Full time childcare at my university daycare is $1,113 for the 3-18th month centre, $1,037 for the 12-36 month centre, and $769 for the 3-5 years centre. The waiting list is approximately 2 years long.
under 18 months in a licensed group daycare facility (BC Ministry of Children and
Family Development, n.d.). The maximum allowance is likely $400 less than the monthly
cost of this type of daycare. The province of Québec is exceptional providing all families
with subsidized daycare at a cost to parents of $7 per day, per child (Gouvernement du
Québec, 2009).

Lone mothers may receive support from their children’s fathers; however they
may encounter difficulties collecting the payments. If a parent does not comply with child
support obligations in Canada, the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP)
can seize federal funds or rebates, such as income tax returns, and/or garnish wages
(Canadian Bar Association, 2009); however if the non-complying parent is self-employed
or quits his job and works for cash under the table, the FMEP may have difficulty
collecting funds.

Women and Work
Like participants in the Norwegian sample, Canadian respondents and
interviewees voiced concerns regarding equity in the work force. Twenty percent of
respondents (all women) made recommendations in regards to pay equity. Indeed,
women employed full time make 71% of the salaries of their male counterparts (Statistics
Canada, 2006a). Some respondents provided very detailed suggestions regarding making
the salaries in typically female dominated industries on par with male salaries (e.g. “I
would raise wages for jobs which are typically occupied by women – i.e. Food industry,
service industry”). Most however provided more general responses that did not
communicate the same awareness of inequities in this regard (e.g. “equal opportunity,
equal pay”).
Enabling women to obtain leadership positions was also a concern voiced by participants in the Canadian sample, but it was not as prevalent as in the Norwegian sample. Some participants valued affirmative action programs to increase the number of women in positions and occupations in which they are underrepresented. Shala on the other hand viewed affirmative action programs as inherently oppressive for women and minorities.

It really bothers me because I think that what if I wasn’t the most qualified person and I was hired because I’m a non native woman basically. So that is something that bothers me here. It is the other way around. It is a more favorable situation and I don’t like that. … I remember when I got hired at college many people in our department … who were in the same program with me in my masters, they said ‘You know why you got hired? It is because you are a woman and you are not white. So that is why they hired you. It was a low blow for me. I was hired because I was the best and I know it, but there is no way to prove that …. That is something I don’t like. I prefer to be hired based on the merit, not on gender.

(Shala)

It appears that in this situation, affirmative action discourse served to interpellate (Althusser, 1995) Shala as incapable and undeserving. As Fraser (1997) asserts, affirmative resolutions of sex-based inequities are problematic in that they leave inequitable structures intact and serve to reify group differences. Because these changes are temporary, they must be constantly redone and this may result in misrecognition.

The result is to mark the most disadvantaged class as inherently deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more. In time, such a class can even come
to appear privileged, the recipient of special treatment and undeserved largesse (Fraser, 1997, p. 25).

While female participants in the Norwegian sample focused on valuing qualities they associated with women in leadership positions, female participants in the Canadian sample focused more on not using different criteria to judge women in power positions (e.g. “I would try to get rid of the stigma that a woman in power is a bitch”).

Education

Another theme addressed by both respondents and interviewees was education. Approximately 16% of respondents (both men and women) recommended making education more accessible for women, more specifically for lone mothers, and low-income women in order to improve conditions for women. Many interviewees spoke of the importance of education for women in terms of “enlightenment,” “awareness,” and ability to make choices, and the necessity of post-secondary education to enable women (unlike men) to earn a decent wage. Several specifically named education as the factor that created more equitable conditions for women in Canada. Most of the interviewees with advanced education spoke of the dramatic impact education had on their lives, particularly in their earning capacity, as well as a sense of entitlement.

When I got my first degree, I couldn’t believe my privilege. It was unbelievable. The difference of how I felt, how much money I got working part time. The money I made as a graduate [teaching assistant] was way more money than I made as a mental health [worker]. I couldn’t believe the autonomy that I had, the freedom that I had, the privilege that I had just because I had a bachelor’s degree.
It was not just because I was educated, I had just burst through a paradigm.

(Corrine)

While many participants identified education as a factor that contributes to gender-equity, few participants explored how education might contribute to inequities. Corrine, who has a background in gender studies, described how early schooling experiences actually brought sexism into her family in profound ways. She has a twin brother who was her best friend and primary playmate until they entered Grade 1, when they were introduced to “boy germs,” “girl germs,” and “girl cooties.” By Grade 2, her brother, a small boy who was constantly under the threat of physical violence by larger boys, was forced to join the “girl-hating league” and had to call his sister names on the playground. “He did it and I was just destroyed. And then he came home, went into his room and wept and cried. We never spoke of it but my parents knew it was a big crisis. …and then we fought for ten years.” Indeed Barrie Thorne (1994) has extensively studied the ways in which both teachers and students in schools create situations where gender boundaries are emphasized and strengthened, which she refers to as "borderwork" (p.64), such as sex-based competitions, as well as “pollution rituals”, such as girl cooties.

Interestingly, only Barbara, who has no post secondary education, questioned the necessity of extended education for women, and wanted to make sure that this point was emphasized in the transcript.

It sure doesn’t hurt, but I think a lot of women are becoming stronger and more assertive. That they are getting ahead without the further education. Like why should they have to get all this education just to prove they can do a job. I think a
lot of women are proving ‘Hey, I can do it without it.’ Put that one down in bold.

(Barbara)

Women’s income increases with level of education and women require more education to make the same income as men (Statistics Canada, 2006a), which is typically used as an argument to support extended education for women. Although it is possible that extended education equalizes the playing field, enabling women to command less discrepant salaries than their male counterparts, it is also possible that women’s extended education may contribute to gender-gap in salaries. For example, more time pursing education results in less time in the labour force and less time to achieve raises and promotions, and advance one’s career. Further more time spent pursuing post-secondary education likely results in more student loans for many women, and perhaps greater pressure to accept lower-paying employment upon completion. Particularly if women plan to take extended leaves from the work force to parent children, it might be more strategic (from a financial perspective) to enroll in educational programs that enable higher incomes with minimal educational investment, such as some of the trade programs.

As several participants noted, despite the growing number of female students, the Canadian education system continues to be quite segregated, which produces a gendered labour force. Indeed, gender segregation in Canadian universities has only decreased by 5% during the past 25 years (Andres & Adamuti-Trache, 2007). Women make up the majority of full-time students in education (78%), health-related programs (75%), fine and applied arts (66%), social sciences, humanities, agricultural and biological sciences (60%), and are the majority of nurses and health-related therapists (87%), clerks and other administrators (75%), teachers (65%), and those employed in sales and service
Women are underrepresented in mathematics and physical sciences (30%), as well as engineering and applied science (24%), account for only 21% of the professionals in mathematics, natural sciences, and engineering, and there has been very little change in this regard in the past 20 years (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Further women account for only 2% of students registered in the 15 trade programs with the largest number of participants, and are primarily enrolled in painter or decorator programs (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

There is less gendered enrollment however, in other countries. For example, the only discipline in which women appear to be significantly underrepresented in Sri Lanka is engineering (Gunawardena, 2005) and in some “developing” countries women enroll in engineering programs in much higher numbers than in “developed” countries. For example, women make up over 30% of engineering students in Kerala India, over one-third more than female students in the USA (Sukumaran, Hartman, & Johnson, 2004). Some of the factors identified by Sukumaran, Hartman, and Johnson (2004) which may explain this difference include the number of single-sex schools in Kerala, the prevalence of female engineering professors, the high rate of unemployment in Kerala except in fields such as engineering, the extended family structure which provides child care to working mothers and enables them to pursue demanding careers such as engineering, and the lack of pressure on girls to date because of the prevalence of arranged marriages.

Other reasons that may account for this discrepancy include different perspectives regarding the purpose and goals of education, different university admissions system, as well as different values associated with various professions. Both Shala, who grew up in

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96 It is difficult to make comparisons between countries because disciplines are grouped in different ways for the purposes of reporting gender-related statistics.
Iran, and Susan, whose parents immigrated from Egypt, provided a similar explanation to account for the prevalence of women in disciplines such as mathematics, science and engineering in their home countries as compared to Canada.

Because mathematics and science in Iran, it’s culturally something that shows you are smart, and if you go to arts, culturally it shows something that you are not smart. You couldn’t get into math that is why you are doing arts. You could get into math that is why you are doing economics even. … Or another [field] that is like that is engineering. Math, and engineering, and medical school. These three are the highest. So if you are good, you will go there. The leftovers would go to humanities or arts.

(Shala)

A similar hierarchy of professions exists in Sri Lanka. According to Dinusha, the top professions are considered medicine, law, engineering, or accounting. In countries such as Sri Lanka and Iran, the students with the highest scores on general entrance exams have the ability to apply to the disciplines that are considered most prestigious. There is little, if any, selection of discipline based on personal “interests” or “innate” aptitudes, as there is in Canada. The goal is obtain the highest score possible on the entrance exam in order to get into the most prestigious discipline possible. Shala explained:

In Iran it is not so much what people like to do as it is ‘I want to go to the best that I can do.’ Basically we write one entrance exam to get into university and then you are ranked. There are one million people writing this exam and ten thousand at most can get into university. Out of these ten thousand at most, two thousand can go to a good university in a good field. So it is more like a fight of survival rather than if they think ‘should I go and study technology or should I go and
study languages.’ It is not a choice. If you can’t do technology you go to languages. That is how it is.” (Shala)

Similarly in regards to the Egyptian system, Susan commented, “You don’t see people trying to explore “what am I good at? How can I serve my community?” It is not the case. In Canada, innate “ability,” “interests”, and/or “personality” are often used to guide curricular and career choices for students. For example, assessments such as the Jungian inspired Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are commonly used match personality type with career choices.97

Interestingly, gender stratification in relation to employment may be more evident in so-called “developed” countries. Robert Blackburn and Jennifer Jarman (2005) found that overall occupational segregation was greater in countries that scored higher on the United Nation’s development and gender-equality indices (see Chapter 2). They explain this paradox by differentiating between horizontal segregation (occupational differences without inequalities, e.g. the concentration of women in particular occupations) and vertical segregation (occupational inequities in regards to pay and promotion, e.g. the inability of women to advance within a particular field). The prominent form of segregation in Canada, the USA, and Britain was horizontal, which they claim may be advantageous for women in that more women are promoted higher in the field because there are fewer men in these occupations. There are still disadvantages associated with horizontal segregation, however. For example, it is problematic if women do not have representation and voice in male dominated fields, such as politics.

97 When I was in grade 12 the guidance counselor at our school administered some sort of aptitude test that provided suggestions regarding careers that suited our personalities. The top career recommendation for me was social director on a cruise ship!
Women's Rights and Agency

Most Canadian interviewees believed that women and men in Canada had equal rights or very similar legal rights (although Shala asserted that women in Canada may be privileged in some regard due to affirmative action programs). Many interviewees however questioned whether women had the same opportunities as men or took advantage of their rights in the same way. Interviewees noted that despite equal legal rights, violence against women in Canada is prevalent, many families continue to follow traditional gender roles, the gender gap in the professions is increasing as is the feminization of poverty, and the political representation of women in Canada is low. Unlike some Sri Lankan interviewees who attributed gender disparities to “tradition” or “culture,” many Canadian women could not explain why these tensions between policy and practice existed.

Only a few Canadian interviewees were able to provide reasons for the disparities, Candice viewed women as influenced by the media in this regard, which degraded their confidence: “I think today women actually have the rights. And we limit ourselves by our own perceptions.” Kory attributed gendered divisions of labour to individual differences in personality or expertise. Corrine, with a background in gender-studies, viewed gender-equity as a very complex issue and identified the decline of gender-related discourse and supportive infrastructures as factors that contributed towards the discrepancy between women’s rights and their experiences.

The thing that really frightens me is that the dialogue about those issues has virtually disappeared. … It seems like we are so caught up in the global crisis.

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98 Shortly before this interview was conducted, due to changes to the mandate of the Status of Women in Canada under the Harper government, many women’s groups were no longer eligible for federal funding, which forced the closure of many such organizations.
that the local issues of what is going on and … we have completely let our infrastructure fall apart. The infrastructure is what women and children rely on, the social safety net. … You have to have that built in if you are going to have equity. (Corrine)

Debbie questioned whether “equality” in which men and women assume the same roles, and have the same rights improved conditions for women.

All Canadian interviewees who were asked and responded to the question believed that indirect sexism was more prevalent in Canada than direct sexism. As Candice said, “I think these gender things are very subtle … They are sort of sneaky like a gas.” Most interviewees believed that indirect sexism was more difficult to deal with because it was more personally damaging, and frustrating. Barbara asserted that she would much rather deal with a male chauvinist than someone who is, but acts like he’s not. Several interviewees thought that both were difficult to address in different ways. As Susan asserted, “They … both put up a barrier. I think it [direct sexism] would be harder to deal with in these foreign countries like Egypt because the woman knows that there is nothing that she can do. Whereas here the woman realizes yeah, it might be a little easier

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99 In many ways I found that the negative, destructive aspects of my life style were much more evident in Sri Lanka than in Canada. In Colombo, uncontained piles of garbage collect in designated areas as garbage day approaches, and the smell and site made me very aware of my (over) consumption. In Canada garbage is neatly contained in bags and cans and discretely disposed of down garbage chutes or mysteriously removed by city workers in the early morning hours. Needy people seeking donations are integrated throughout Colombo rather than confined to particular areas (by merchants, police and government relocation initiatives) as they are in my city. In Sri Lanka our “domestic,” a woman over 25 years our senior, referred to us as master and madam and often stood in the presence of my husband, a constant reminder of the inequities between us. I had detailed knowledge of her salary, expenses, likes, dislikes, and her needs, and tried to accommodate them accordingly. In Canada however, I similarly benefit from the labour of women less fortunate than myself when I eat prepared food, hire agencies to clean my house, and pay the childcare society to care for my son. Yet I am rarely conscious of the inequities that govern these relationships. I have no knowledge of these women’s salaries, expenses or needs.
for a man, but I can still try. If I work my butt off I can do it. I can prove the system wrong; whereas in Egypt they lose hope. ... And it becomes complacency.”

*Cross-Cultural Conditions for Women*

When asked the best and worse places for women to live, all Canadian interviewees evaluated conditions for women based on geographical location, and although some felt limited to respond to the question based on their inadequate knowledge of or experience within other countries. Many interviewees identified Canada as one of the best places in the world for women to live based on the protective laws, as well as the resources and opportunities available to women. For example, Barbara said, “Well our laws. And obviously we are a rich country but we are not a third world country. And the programs that are offered. ... That we are a free country, and women to a certain degree, are treated with respect and are equal. Whereas women in these other countries ..., they are so far behind.” The Middle East and Africa were most commonly identified as the worst places for women to live, as well as Latin America and some Asian countries, including India and Thailand. For example, Katie identified African countries as the worst places to live “because there is a very polygamist relationship between men and women there. To me it is terrifying that a woman can marry a man and he can go out and sleep around bring AIDS and HIV home to his wife because she is obligated to her husband in that way.”

*Dress to im/o/press*

Another theme evident in the interviews that also was apparent in the questionnaires was concerns regarding pressures on Canadian women to conform to culturally imposed standards of thinness, dress, and beauty. Two female respondents (age
21 and 23) recommended combating the pressure on women to be “skinny” or have the
“perfect body.” Katie discussed this issue during the interviews, comparing her feelings
regarding her body to those of women in the remote communities in Northern Brazil. She
said:

> We would go to the beaches there and I would go in a bikini [and I am] not very
comfortable being in a bikini. And there were women two or three times my size
wearing a bikini half the size of the one I was wearing. And they were so
comfortable in their own skin and it was so beautiful. I thought it was so
wonderful that they had not been affected by the things that they see in magazines
and on TV as much as women in Canada have. Maybe if there is something that
holds us back it is that: the consciousness to be perfect or have a perfect body
image. (Katie)

Interestingly, Shala, who immigrated from Iran as a young woman, wore more
revealing clothing in Iran than in Canada because here she felt that women who look
sexy, are judged against a double standard and unlike men, are devalued.

> Even with me, I might like to wear a short skirt. I used to wear short skirts a lot. I
don’t wear them here. Because I don’t want people to think that I am using my
appearance to do anything. So I always wear loose clothes and [am] very covered,
and a lot more covered that what I used to be when I was in a party in Iran.

> Because people just judge you based on how you dress. (Shala)

Further, she never worried about her weight before moving to Canada. While this woman
appreciated the “freedom” to wear what she wanted in Canada (compared to the strict
code of dress in Iran), at the same time, she found the social pressure on girls and women
to conform to sexualized cultural standards of beauty, such as “Britney Spears dresses,” to be oppressive. Although not as prominent, this concern regarding problems associated with beauty and body image was also evident in a minority of comments made by Sri Lankan, Botswana and Norwegian women.

Although the government in Canada does not enforce a dress code for women, as does the government of Iran, women often impose restrictions on themselves based on cultural ideals of beauty. In this regard, as Shala and Katie asserted, women’s abilities to enjoy their bodies is constrained and women’s “choice” of dress becomes a site of the repetition and reiteration (Butler, 1997) of these cultural standards. As Naomi Wolf (1992) asserted, the “third shift” of beauty work is a “political weapon” (p. 10) that keeps women preoccupied and subjugated. Interestingly, according to Wolf, this pressure has increased as gender-inequities have decreased. “The more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us” (Wolf, 1992, p. 10).

Summary

Education was one factor that many Canadian participants identified as enabling the advancement of conditions for women, providing them with opportunities for employment, enlightenment, and a sense of entitlement. In my opinion however the Canadian educational system also serves to perpetuate gender segregation, creating disadvantages for women. While the Canadian welfare system enabled some mothers to say home with young children, this system did not meet the needs of less privileged women, particularly some lone mothers, who found it difficult to provide for their families and create a better life for themselves. The fears of sexual violence, pay
inequities, affirmative action programs, cultural standards of beauty, and the sexualization of women, were factors identified as constraining conditions for women in Canada.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Participants expressed diverse opinions regarding conditions for women and some of these discrepancies, especially between men and women, may reveal more about the subject position of the participants than the “lived experiences” of women. What was surprising to me was the amount of dissonance between the opinions of male and female respondents, and the lack of awareness and support of women’s issues among many men, particularly given the assumption that people who are educated would typically hold more egalitarian perspectives than the general population (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Steel & Kabashima, 2008). Given the predominately heterosexual organization of families, most men have intimate contact with women than perhaps with other marginalized groups who make up a smaller proportion of the population, and are not necessarily members of most family units, such as people with disabilities. Through their relationships with mothers and wives, as well as through sisters, men have an opportunity to learn about conditions that negatively impact women, and a vested interested in improving those conditions, even if only to benefit themselves.

Perhaps men did not feel entitled to make recommendations in regards to conditions for women, which would explain some of the blank responses, deference to women, and non-responses. The majority of male participants however, seemed to feel entitled to share their opinions, even those that were not necessarily empathic towards women. It is possible that by asking participants to identify their sex before responding
the question, I activated their gender identity, and they responded accordingly. For example, there is research that suggests heightening participants’ awareness of their gender identity, as well as positive or negative stereotypes associated with men or women, can enhance or impede girls’ and boys performances on mathematical tasks (see Ambady, Shih, Kim, & Pittinsky, 2001). Perhaps the self-reports of men were more influenced by how they thought “men” should respond, rather than what they believed. Indeed, several of the bubble dialogues produced by Norwegian men depicted scenes in which male characters publicly made sexist remarks but privately rescinded them.

Regardless of the “true” beliefs of male participants, the perspective that nothing more could or should be done to improve conditions for women in Norway, and that Botswana women were privileged and perhaps undeserving, were prominent (at least in these samples) and as a result, most likely had substantial discursive force and impacted understandings of conditions for women. Further research with more extensive and diverse samples may provide more insight in this regard.

Another interesting finding was that there was limited consensus among participants regarding the best and the worst places for women to live. Participants from all countries, particularly from the Canadian sample, identified their own country as among the best, if not the best, place for women to live. Further there were some geographical areas that were identified as both best and worst by different participants, including Japan, Middle East, as well as Africa/Botswana. Although Sri Lanka and Botswana were not directly named as one of the worst places to live by any participant, these countries met some of the criteria as identified by some of the Canadian and Norwegian interviewees, including countries at war and countries with high rates of HIV.
In the Botswana and Sri Lankan samples, some respondents and interviewees specifically referred to inequities in the rural areas (this was also evident in the bubble dialogues). It appeared that understandings of equity, like perceptions of development, were often relational, in that equitable conditions were associated with home, and inequitable conditions were associated with “other” places (particularly by participants from Minority World countries like Canada.) Similarly, during her ethnographic study of women’s understandings of the “developed women” in Kumaon, India, Klenk (2004) found that “‘underdevelopment’ always seemed to be displaced onto someone else, or somewhere else, or to a different point of time in one’s life (p. 70). Most interestingly, some Sri Lankan and Botswana interviewees conceptualized the best and worse places for women to live based on a woman’s agency or position in the context in which she lives. This is likely a more meaningful way of assessing conditions for women than based on geographical locations as is common in “Western” research.

There was a great deal of diversity regarding conditions for women evident within countries, depending on women’s income, privilege, education, occupation, familial status, sexuality, ethnic background, ability, disposition and the like, as well as many similarities and differences between countries. For example, in Canada, income intersected with familial status and education to produce very dire conditions for a widowed mother without post-secondary training, and privilege intersected with familial status to produce freedom and choice for a wealthy widow and her daughters in Sri Lanka.

Also of interest were the similarities regarding the limitations for women across countries in relation to safety and security, women’s roles, as well as self-expression,
despite the different systems that restricted women in this regard. (Some) women in Sri Lanka were limited in terms of their mobility due to the constant threat of violent crimes, particularly the prevalence of sexual harassment in public places, and/or based on men’s control over women’s sexuality; by contrast many Canadian women were largely limited by fears of sexual assault as perpetuated within the media, regardless of the actual risk of violence. Women in Sri Lanka and Botswana were directly restricted from applying for some jobs or overtly discriminated against in the labour force. Yet in Canada and Norway, ‘boys clubs’ and educational practices produce similar occupational segregation. In Sri Lanka some women are prevented from choosing both motherhood and career and yet in Canada, many women “choose” one or the other at different times in their lives or seek both while feeling like they are failing miserably on all accounts. In Iran wearing hijab is legally enforced restricting women’s self-expression, and in Sri Lanka some male family members limit their daughter’s sister’s and wife’s clothing choices, yet in Canada women restrict their own self-expression, wasting time and money conforming to cultural standards of beauty. As Al-Hibri, (1999) questions, “why is it oppressive to wear a head scarf but liberating to wear a miniskirt?” (p. 46).

In this regard, different systems in different countries produced similar outcomes of immobility, injustice, and limitation. These parallels of oppression exist despite the greater prevalence of legal rights for women in countries like Canada, a common indicator of gender-equality among liberal theorists, which problematizes common associations between gender-equality and “development.” Sylvia Walby’s theoretical conception of the different forms of patriarchy may provide further insight in this regard. Walby (1990) argued that patriarchy takes on different dominant forms at different times,
in different places (as well as for women who are differentially positioned) depending on
the interactions between six key social structures: mode of production, relations in paid
work, relations in the state, male violence, relations in sexuality, and relations in cultural
institutions. As old oppressions fall, new systems take their place, which may create
minor advancements for women but often produce very few substantial changes for
women in the long run. She described two forms of patriarchy dominant in England
during the past two centuries, which she views as positions on a continuum rather than as
dichotomous: the private patriarchy, in which the household is the primary site of
oppression of women, and the public patriarchy, in which structures other than the
household, such as employers and the state, are the primary source of oppression of
women. Private patriarchy is primarily carried out by the dominant male family member
but also is typically reinforced through women’s exclusion within various institutions
within the public sphere. Although public patriarchies may appear more advanced on
some levels in that women are not excluded from public or the private intuitions, they are
typically subordinated within the public sphere.

Some of the women interviewed, particularly from the Sri Lankan and Botswana
samples, spoke of gender-based restrictions as imposed primarily by the men within their
families such as brothers, fathers, and husbands, a pattern more indicative of Walby’s
(1990) “private patriarchy”. Participants from the Canadian and Norwegian samples on
the other hand rarely spoke of restrictions imposed by individuals, and primarily referred
to structural sources of inequities, more indicative of a “public patriarchy”. For those
women who are oppressed within predominantly private forms of patriarchy, inequities
may be more direct, clearly apparent, and identifiably sex-related than for women
oppressed within predominantly public forms of patriarchy. In situations in which sexism is discursively evident, women may be presented with a clear path of resistance, which may enable them to subvert patriarchal tendencies on this level, and may present them with more agency to create different opportunities for themselves (provided that public structures are not preventative in this regard). Women primarily oppressed within public forms of patriarchy are regulated by more discrete, indirect systems and structural inequities may remain virtually undetected or even be self-imposed, giving women little discursive agency and few real “choices.” Perhaps this is what the South African police officer meant when she stated that she preferred the sexism and racism that she experienced in South Africa as compared to Canada. Although there appears to be similarities between some of the restrictions for women in various countries (although enforced by different systems) there also were significant differences between the countries. Most significantly, state welfare policy differed substantially by country, and the more advanced these policies, the greater the safety net that was available to protect the most vulnerable women in these countries.

In this chapter the types of factual stories told about local and foreign conditions for women, evident in the self-reports of women and men from different countries, which may provide some insight regarding how these perceptions are constructed, as well as commonalities across countries which may trouble associations between “development” and gender-equality. What can be learned from the five different stories told here regarding conditions for women across nations, including the “personal” account, the “official” account, the “popular” account, the “fictional” account and the “factual” account? This question will be addressed in the next chapter.
Chapter 6 - Conclusions: The Unfinished Story

Guided by feminist post-structural (Butler, 1997; Gannon & Davies, 2007; Plumwood, 1993; Weedon, 1987) and post-colonial (Minh-ha, 1989; Narayan, 1999; Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003) theory, one of the primary goals of this dissertation was to identify the discourses surrounding conditions for women and development that are evident in scholarly and popular publications in order to learn more about the possible realities and subjectivities for women that are culturally available. A diversity of ideological positions, as well as a variety of conclusions regarding relationships between the status of women and development were evident within the scholarly literature. As reported in Chapter 2, liberal and humanist scholarship typically suggested a positive association between conditions for women and development. Gender-equality was thought to improve in relation to development (for example based on the assumption that as social conditions improve the benefits ‘trickle down’ to affect all members of society), and/or that advances in gender-equality enhance economic development (for example if women are educated and are participating in the paid labour force, the pool of qualified workers increases). Socialist, post-development and some feminist scholarship typically suggested a negative association between conditions for women and development. The status of women was thought to decline in relation to so-called ‘progressive’ social change (such as capitalism and industrialism), and/or development was believed to advance in relation to gender-based inequities, for example when profits increase as a result of hiring female labourers at lower pay rates than male labourers. Finally post-structural and post-colonial scholarship typically did not suggest a causal relationship between conditions for women and development, but rather demonstrated how
development discourses produce various realities, as well as subject positions for women, that typically reproduce imperialist discourses and re-establish the superiority of Minority World countries.

Although I found a great deal of diversity among the scholarly literature, the same diversity was not as evident within the more publicly accessible popular media reviewed. In Chapter 3, through an analysis of online newspapers and electronic NGO donor information I was able to show how representations of conditions for women largely reproduced cultural hierarchies associating superior conditions for women in “developed” countries and inferior conditions for women in “developing” countries. Based on the findings of a study of two samples of online news articles published over a one-month period, I argued that the associations between “development” and gender-equality were constructed through the juxtaposition of conditions for women in Canada with those in Majority World countries, as well as based on the types of inequities that were reported in different countries. Although news articles primarily reported on gender-related injustices in both Canada and “developing” countries, women in “developing” countries (as well as marginalized women in Canada) were constructed as experiencing more pervasive, more extreme, and more “exotic” forms of sexism (for example, acid attacks) than (mainstream) Canadian women.

Based on a review of the electronic donor information of an NGO fund raising campaign to improve conditions for girls, I found that girls in Majority World countries were constructed as monolithic subjects (Talpade Mohanty, 1986/2003), and viewed as impoverished, illiterate, uneducated, enslaved, passive, disease-ridden, and covered in flies. This stereotypical representation of the ‘Third World Girl’ (see Talpade Mohanty,
1986/2003) was extended to all girls living in all “developing” countries in the documentation. In this regard, gender-inequalities were associated with “developing” countries and used to justify development initiatives.

Although Nike’s “Girl Effect” was defined in more universal terms as impacting girls in general, the campaign only described gender-based inequities occurring in “developing” countries, and focused on improving conditions for girls in these places. Some news articles also described gender-inequities that were identified as “global” or “world-wide”; however, like the NGO campaign, “developing” countries were constructed as the sites of these inequities and “developed” countries were constructed as defenders of gender-equality. I argued that referring to gender-based inequities in general terms when only representing injustices that occurred in Majority World countries was a tacit used in news reports and the donor information which rendered the problematic assumptions regarding the inferiority of Majority World countries largely invisible.

The second goal of my work was to ascertain what might be learned about conditions for (some) women at home and abroad based on a critical cross-national investigation involving four countries. Influenced by post-development theorists (Illich, 1982; Shiva, 1989), who suggest that conditions for women have deteriorated with “development,” and feminist scholars, who have studied the impact of societal change on women (Walby, 1990), I analyzed the “fictional” and “factual” accounts of conditions for women and development as constructed by participants from four countries, which allowed me to compare similarities and differences of participants’ experiences, and perceptions of gender and development. University students from Sri Lanka, Canada, Botswana and Norway were given two “bubble dialogues” (McMahon, et al., 1992),
cartoon depictions of scenarios involving issues of gender and development in which participants construct the spoken words and the thoughts of the characters. The first bubble dialogue depicted a multi-racial women’s NGO meeting in which the only white character was portrayed in a leadership position. While many of the Sri Lankan and some of the Norwegian participants created scenarios which critiqued mainstream development initiatives, consistent with post-modern critiques of development, Canadian participants appeared to misunderstand, ignore, or re-signify the politically charged depiction of cross-national power structures and constructed much more mundane scenarios. Most Canadian participants created rather utopian depictions of collaboration and sincere collegiality between characters of different nations/ethnicities. The racial/national power hierarchy represented in the cartoon depiction was for the most part, left intact. These depictions were largely consistent with the representations that appeared in Canadian newspapers depicting benevolent Canadians assisting powerless women in other places, or women from different cultures working collaboratively while basic and significant differences between their conditions are obscured (such as the Canadian grandmothers helping African grandmothers cope with the AIDS epidemic.)

The second bubble dialogue depicted a classroom discussion regarding the benefits of women’s education. Women’s education is commonly viewed as catalyst for improving the status of women (for example as articulated in the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, n.d.). As my review demonstrated however, education not only enables but can also constrain the advancement of conditions for women (see Jayawardena, 1986). Across samples, few participants depicted the characters as critically engaging with benefits and drawbacks of extended formal education for women, and
instead typically created scenarios in which the female character supported and the male character subverted the discussion regarding women’s education. In different samples, the male character was portrayed using different tactics to disrupt the conversation. Participants from Botswana and Sri Lanka were more likely to portray the male character as publicly disagreeing with the teacher’s statement (or publicly agreeing and privately contradicting their statement of support). Participants from Canada and Norway were more likely to portray the male character as publicly redirecting, dismissing, or disengaging from the conversation. In this regard representations of sexism in the Canadian sample appeared to be subtler and than in the Sri Lankan and Botswana samples. Interestingly, despite the different communication patterns used by the male characters, the effect was the same – the authority of the teacher was disregarded and the conversation regarding female education was disrupted.

“Factual” accounts of conditions for women included the opinions of male and female university students from Sri Lanka, Canada, Botswana and Norway, as well as the perspectives and experiences of diverse women from these countries. As evident in the accounts of participants (as triangulated with institutional policies and practices), at a national level there were both similarities and differences among conditions for women across countries, and no one theoretical framework could adequately account for these findings. Consistent with liberal theoretical perspectives (see Inglehart & Norris, 2003), conditions for appeared to be superior (although not ideal) for (some) women in Canada and particularly Norway (countries typically classified as “developed”), with respect to legal rights and social assistance, for example, compared to Botswana and Sri Lanka (countries typically classified as “developing”). Consistent with post-development
theories (Illich, 1982), conditions for (some) women appeared to be superior (although not always ideal) in Botswana and Sri Lanka with respect to family and economic structures that enabled women to pursue both motherhood and a career without the role conflict commonly experienced by women in Canada and Norway. Interestingly, different structures in different countries also appeared to produce similar conditions for (some) women. For example, it appeared that in Sri Lanka some women’s mobility is restricted largely by men’s direct domination and control over women’s sexuality as evident in the prevalence of harassment in public places and the surveillance by male relatives, whereas in Canada some women’s mobility is largely self-restricted in response to the continuous perceived threat of violence as disseminated indirectly by the media. This finding, as well as the different ways male characters were depicted subverting the discussion on women’s education in the classroom bubble dialogues, do not appear to support a progressive or a regressive evolution of conditions for women between “developing” and “developed” nations but rather differences that are perhaps best characterized by equifinality, a condition in which different developmental trajectories lead to the same outcome (von Bertalanffy, 1968).

At a local level there appeared in my data great diversity within and across the “factual” accounts of condition for women in the four countries. As asserted by participants in Sri Lanka and Botswana, an equally fruitful way to analyze conditions for women is not only according to geographical regions and the legal frameworks, policies, social services, and resources that nations offer women, but also based on women’s positions, as well as the possibilities they have been able to construct for themselves within the context in which they live. Women’s ethnicity, class, marital and familial
status, age, and educational and occupational background intersected in different ways in different countries to produce different lived experiences. In this regard it is important not to allow Canadian accomplishments of gender-equality, as represented in mainstream developmental discourses, prevalent in the UNDP’s cross-national comparisons and as reported in many Canadian newspaper articles to overshadow awareness of the radically inequitable conditions of some of the most vulnerable women in our communities, such as lone-mothers, and of these who are largely overlooked and ‘invisible’ whether in theory, policy, or in popular media, such as lesbians (and lesbian families), women in prisons, and women living on (or ‘off’) the streets.

Consistent with the accounts of the police officer who found sexism and racism easier to deal with in South Africa than she did in Canada (who was the catalyst of this work), this study has generated evidence of different ways in which sexism may be more indirect, more difficult to identify, and in some cases, more difficult to deal with in Canada than in other places (which is in no way to diminish the seriousness of problems associated with direct sexism). Communication patterns used to subvert discussions regarding conditions for women may be more indirect in Canada than other countries, as the bubble dialogues make evident, and the gendered subject may be disappearing from Canadian discourse (as is evident in the interviews with Canadian informants) rendering women’s issues largely invisible. (For example, “single-mothers” living in poverty have become known as “lone-parents,” in efforts to be inclusive, and yet with these broadening of terms, we lose sight of the gendered nature of this phenomenon.) In comparison, gender discourses were very prevalent in the Botswana bubble dialogues, reflecting recent changes within Botswana law to establish gender-equity. A larger pattern worth
noticing is that based on the data collected through the interviews, (some) women in Canada appeared to be regulated more indirectly by state structures than directly regulated within the private sphere (see Walby, 1990), which makes sexism less visible.

More direct forms of sexism may produce greater, awareness, and more direct forms of resistance. As suggested by Bakhtin (1981) the greater the heterogeneity within discourse and the more differentiated are the voices articulated around us, the greater the chances for individuation. This may explain the strong sense of agency and self-determination and achievement among some of the Sri Lankan and Botswana participants, even some of those who faced great adversity, experienced extreme limitations, and had access to few resources and support. Rather than focusing the presence or absence, and the location/s of sexism within a particular culture, perhaps a more fruitful way of investigating conditions for women on a national level involves looking at the heterogeneity within prevalent discourses regarding women’s rights, roles, and responsibilities.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the relationship between “development” and conditions for women is extremely complex and likewise my own findings do not suggest one clear pattern of this relationship that can be explained by one theoretical framework. Just as twisting a kaleidoscope produces a very different perspective on the same point of visual reference, different theoretical frameworks can invite different interpretations of the same conditions as representing advancement, decline, or no change for women (Walby, 1990), which may explain the great diversity in the scholarship in this area. As I have argued, the most productive path appears to be the more complex approaches as articulated by Jayawardena (1995) and Bulbeck (1998) in
which both similarities and differences are attended to, allowing the illumination of factors that both enable and constrain conditions for (some) women in different contexts. As Nancy Shoemaker (1991) concluded from her study of the Iroquois women’s status and power before and after colonization, “perhaps ambiguity is a progressive step forward to a more sophisticated understanding” (p. 53).

Given the heteroglossic (Bakhtin, 1981) nature of the scholarly publications regarding gender and development and the findings of my cross-national research, it is surprising that associations between gender-equality and development were so prevalent in the news articles and donor information. Through my work in this area I have identified three reasons that may explain the predominance of such discourses in popular publications, despite evidence suggesting otherwise. First of all, in postcolonial times, merging together feminist and development discourses serves to restore faith in development initiatives. As Esteva and Suri Prakash (1998) assert, human rights, such as gender-equality, are an untouchable “sacred cow” that are difficult to dispute. As I demonstrated in regards to the Girl Effect campaign, as well as the news articles, laminating feminist discourses on to development discourses serves to justify foreign intervention and often renders development discourses largely invisible. As Rist (2002) notes, “power does not necessarily involve changing reality, rather inserting it into a different problematic, proposing a new interpretation to kindle the illusion of change” (p. 78).

Second, as reflected in many of the bubble dialogues created by Sri Lankan participants, establishing the need for equity (or other “development”) work in Majority World countries creates lucrative employment opportunities for equality “experts” from
Minority World countries. Certain types of “development” initiatives may even perpetuate the need for other forms of foreign intervention. For example, neo-liberal economic development policies often serve to exacerbate differences between the rich and the poor, which intensifies the need for humanitarian development initiatives (Rist, 2002). As Illich (1982) asserted, equity workers may be the primary benefactors of equity related initiatives.

Finally, as evident in the review of the news reports, associating gender equality with “developed” countries and gender inequities with “developing” countries enables those in Minority World countries to differentiate themselves from the ‘other’ and construct positive opinions regarding conditions for women in Minority World countries. As Elsrud (2008) asserted, “belief in the good and favourable progress of Europe and other Western regions, thought of as civilized and modern, needed a mirror image to make itself present and durable” (p. 442). Indeed as many Majority World countries achieve other “development” milestones, indicators of gender-equality may be increasingly used to differentiate conditions, values and ethics in Minority and Majority World countries. Comparisons between gender-equality in “developed and “developing” countries may serve to reaffirm that equity initiatives have achieved their goals, and to make Canadian women feel more complacent regarding the seemingly more mundane inequities they experience compared to “other” women. Not only do associations between gender-equality and development serve to redirect attention away from local gender-related inequities in Minority World countries (Young, 2003) but they also mask factors that advancement of conditions for women in Majority World countries, which I argued
limits the ability to learn about the different factors that enable and constrain conditions for women.

Given the limitations unavoidable in such a study as this, the best that can be hoped for is that the work done here will have been able to afford me a way to better conceptualize what this study lacks, and to imagine plausible ways to remediate its many ‘blind spots’, by designing a means to access others’ perspectives and others’ experiences. In a very basic way, then, what this research has afforded me is a ‘point of embarkation’. It is to this task upon which I feel now equipped to embark: In the next phrase of my research I hope to generate transnational interpretations of my data, particularly the bubble dialogues, utilizing a online system similar to the one created by Ricki Goldman Segal <http://www.pointsofviewing.com/index.html>, in which discussants around the world (who have access to the internet) can view data sources, comment on these data, as well as respond to the comments of others. As Hirschmann (1998) asserts, “external or cross-cultural critique, by operating from a different cultural context, can provide insight into how social construction operates in our own context, and can suggest modes of resistance” (p. 364).

This study began from my desire to explore, in a systematic and scholarly way, the contradictions between my own assumptions that “gender-equity” was superior in “developed” countries and the anecdotal evidence I was collecting through my encounters with women from “other” places, as well as the tensions between my status as a “First World” woman and my experience of the ways in which my gendered subject position constrained my “choices.” Through this process I have greatly extended my own perspectives on development and conditions for women, as well as my understanding of
the complex and oftentimes confusing relationships between the two concepts. In many ways this dissertation tells a ‘progress’ story of my own “development narrative.”

Personally I leave this project with considerable reinforcement for my initial inclination to be/come more fully aware and more consciously engaged (consistent with Green’s (1979) notion of “wide awakeness”), attentive to and critical of the roles that gender plays in my life, to be more mindful of my “individual choices” that may feel “right,” comfortable, economically wise, or ‘benevolent’ and to better evaluate, for a wider perspective than simply my own local conditions, the long term and short term consequences of such decisions for myself, my family and my communities. Engaging in this work for me has been a process of what Spivak (1990) calls “unlearning our privilege as our loss” (p. 9). This “unlearning” entails recognizing and critiquing the position from which we speak and acknowledging limitations of our knowledge in this regard, as well as working hard to engage with the perspectives of the “other” in an ethical way rather than to just passively acknowledging injustices. This dissertation signals the beginning of my “unlearning” and my commitment to continually engage with the scholarship and experiences of “other” women.
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Appendix A – Human Development Index

From the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2009)

|-----------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|

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Appendix B – English Interview Questions

This study is to learn more about women’s lives and especially women’s rights and any particular problems or difficulties that women face in [your country]. A second aspect of the study is to learn about what changes development has brought that might improve women’s lives and to see if there are any losses for women that have come with modernization.

What you say here is confidential and anonymous. No one will be able to tell who you are. You can end this conversation at any time and if there is a question that you do not want to answer, it is okay.

1. Have you always lived here? If not where else have you lived?

2. Do you have children or have you spent anytime parenting?
   • (If applicable) Girls or boys? What ages? For how long?
   • (If applicable) Do you worry more about girls’ chances for success and happiness than boys’? In what ways/respects? Why do you say that?

3. What about yourself, your own experience? When you were growing up were boys and girls treated the same? At home? At school? Can you tell me more about how that was? Can you provide some examples?

4. In your own personal life experience have you found that women are treated the same, or have the same opportunities as men?
   • at Home?
   • at Work?
   • in public?
   • in everyday social life, such as on the bus or at a party?

5. Nowadays, Is life better, worse or the same for girls now as it was when you were growing up?
   • Why do you say that? In what ways have things changed for girls and women?

6. A lot of people talk about women’s rights. What does that mean to you?

7. In [your country] is there equality between men and women? What rights or privileges do women have in this society? What rights and privileges do men have? So are they the same? Do men and women take advantage of rights and privileges in the same way? In other words is there “gender equality”? same quality of life as men?

8. Most people think that women have more freedom and choice than girls. Do you agree? Can you think of some ways in which girls might have more freedom and choice than women?

9. Who do you think needs more protection women or girls? Why?
   • If woman says – “girls can be more easily mislead” ask, “In what situations could girls be more easily mislead than women?”
• If woman says “girls are weaker”, ask “emotionally or physically? In what ways could that weakness endanger them?”
• If woman says “girls don’t stand up for themselves.” Ask “Could you give an example of that? In what situations would women stand up for themselves when girls would not?”

10. Do girls see or know things about gender or about equity that women do not see or do not know? Did you when you were little did you know or see things that women did not see or know? Why didn’t the adults not see or know that?

11. At what point in a woman’s life does she experience the most equality, that is when do women or girls have the most similar rights and equal treatment as men and boys?

12. Why does it seem that so many women are silent during conversations when they are with their husbands, even if their husband’s really respect their wives?

13. How do you think your own experiences as a woman are similar to or different from your mothers and/or your grandmothers’ experiences? Do you recall your mother/grandmother talking about gender equality, and conditions for women in their own times? Any stories they used to tell?

14. Outside of your own family’s experiences and memories, do you think that for most women and girls conditions have improved, deteriorated or stayed the same for women in the past 50 years?
• Why would you say that? Can you give any examples?
• (If say “improved” ask if there are any ways in which conditions for women have deteriorated”)

15. Are there any dangers that women are particularly at risk for in this country? How do you protect yourself/your daughter?
• how do you tell them to protect themselves, what do they need to do in order to be safe?

16. Can you tell me now about two types of experiences – one negative, one positive. Can you tell me a story about being treated unfairly because of being a girl or a woman? Can you tell me a story about when you have felt completely equal with boys/men?

17. (If applicable) Do you tell your daughter/granddaughter about your experiences as a woman or about women’s rights more generally? If so what do you tell her?

18. Do women and girls in [your country] “play”? How do women and girls have fun? What is the most fun for them? What is the most fun for you?

19. (Show photos of women who conform to traditional gender roles and anomalies) What do you see in these images of women? What does that mean to you? What do these images tell us about gender and about gender equality in [your country]?

20. What is your idea of a perfect woman in your culture? Can you tell me a bit more about that, about why? How do girls learn these qualities?
21. (Show photos of women in different types of environments). Looking at these photos, in your own opinion, what kind of development has been good for women in this country? Have any women’s rights been LOST because of development?

22. What do you think are the best places for women to live in the world? Do they have equal rights with men there?? What do you think are the worse places for women to live? Why?

23. What specific factors have created more equitable conditions for women in [[your country]]? What factors have created less equitable, conditions for women in this country?

24. Some women say that it is easier to deal with people who are just plain sexist than it is to deal with people who think they are not sexist but really are. Do you agree with that why?

25. Do you personally experience more direct or indirect sexism? What kind of sexism is more common in [your country]?

26. Have you been to another country? If so where and how long? Did you work/study there? What did you expect to see about women’s lives in that country and what did you see?

27. Imagine you woke up one morning and during the night you had been magically changed into a man? What would be your first thought and how would your life be different?

28. (If applicable) has there been any development or aid work in this community? If so how were the funds allocated? How would you have allocated the funds? If you were in charge of development money in [your country], how would you spend the money to improve conditions for women in this country?

29. What is the worst thing about being a woman? What is the best thing?

30. What role has your education played in your life? How useful has it been and in what ways? Did your family strongly encourage your education?

31. Some people think that education is good for women and the more education the better their lives can be? Do you agree? Is there some situations where this is not the case?

32. Based on your own experience and in your own opinion what do you think would be the best possible education for a girl/woman who is going to live her life in Sri Lanka?
   - What subjects? What kind of teaching?

33. Is there anything else that I need to know about women or development in [your country]
34. I need to know a little information about you to show that I have talked to a diverse
group of women in [your country]. Can you tell me
• How old you are
• Your educational background
• Your work history
• Your social class
• Your marital and/or familial status
Appendix C – Sinhalese Interview Questions

1. බිංදු ලියන්නේ මෙයද?
2. මෙය මක්කලින් වේ? මෙය අංගින් මක්කලින් වේ?
3. (තැම්මේ) මෙහෙයින් මා? මෙහෙයින් මා? මෙහෙයින් මා?
4. (තැම්මේ) නම් දෙකක් ලෙස ද පොත පඳුරුම් අශ්කරයේදී මෙම විධානය මෙම විධානය මෙම විධානය මෙම විධානය මෙම විධානය?
5. මෙහෙයින් මී ආදියා නොනොද? මෙහෙයින් මී ආදියා නොනොද? මෙහෙයින් ආදියා නොනොද?
6. මෙමින් නම් පැහැදිලියේදී මෙමින් නම් පැහැදිලියේදී මෙමින් නම් පැහැදිලියේදී මෙමින් නම් පැහැදිලියේදී?
   - දෙකක්
   - මෙහෙයින්
   - සඳහා අදුරින්
   - මිනිත්මය මිනිත්මය - මේ විට මේ විට
7. ඉංග්‍රීසියේ ඔබේ බිංදු මෙය බිංදු මෙය බිංදු (රාජ වේ) රාජ මගින් මගින් මගින් මගින් මගින්?
8. ඔබේ මෙහෙයින් මේ තිබෙන්නේ මේ තිබෙන්නේ මේ තිබෙන්නේ?
9. ඔබේ මේ තිබෙන්නේ මේ තිබෙන්නේ මේ තිබෙන්නේ මේ තිබෙන්නේ?
10. ඔබේ මෙහෙයින් මෙහෙයින් මෙහෙයින් මෙහෙයින් මෙහෙයින් මෙහෙයින් මෙහෙයින් මෙහෙයින්?
11. ඔබේ මේ මේ මේ මේ මේ මේ මේ මේ මේ?
12. 
13. 
14. 
15. 
16. 
17. 
18. 
19. 
20. 
21. 
22. 
23.
24. (මෙම සමාඟික සැමාඟික සමාඟික සමාඟිකාවෙකු) 
වන් පුරා බූෂ්‍ය ගැටලිකයින් දැනෙම විස්තරයේ  යුතු ඉස්බා ප්‍රමාණ මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව කියා බර්තා පැරිසු අපිසු දැක්වාදෙන මෙම අක්ෂණයක්?

25. වන් පුරා බූෂ්‍ය ගැටලිකයින් මෙම පුරා දැක්වාදෙන මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව කියා බර්තා පැරිසු අපිසු දැක්වාදෙන මෙම අක්ෂණයක්?

26. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව මෙම සමාඟික සමාඟික සමාඟිකයේ භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

27. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

- මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

28. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ? මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

29. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ? මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

30. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ? මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

31. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ? මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

32. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

33. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?

34. මෙම භාෂාව භාෂාව සමාඟිකාවෙකු විස්තරයේ?