Researcher as Learner, Participants as Knowers:

An Ethnographic Snapshot of Women Sharing Knowledge

in a Rural Ugandan Community

By

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ABSTRACT

This snapshot ethnographic research was conducted in Kihande Village in Uganda with the Agabagaya Women's Group for a period of five weeks in 2004. Using a feminist ethnographic methodology, the researcher explores how women value, share and pursue knowledge informally among themselves to support themselves, their families and their communities. The analysis indicates that the women of Agabagaya are knowers in their worlds, that they actively pursue educational opportunities and development opportunities, and that they do so from a grassroots level. This particular group does not rely on and may actually be hindered by external development organizations and outside educational influences with top-down models. However, the group does use external development agencies when there is opportunity for the group to benefit. The researcher further explores the positions and implications of a white, Western researcher conducting research in a developing, non-white country and discovers that positive and respectful relationships are at the heart of the research process and that the participants control many aspects of the research itself.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although there is only one name that appears on the cover of this work, there are many who have supported and assisted me in this endeavour. First and foremost, I must thank the women of the Agabagaya Women's Group who shared with me their homes, lives, stories and one of our most precious resources, time. I was awe-inspired by their tenacity and am indebted to them for their kindness and generosity. I have a picture of the group in a frame on my desk and found encouragement in their faces every day when I sat down to write. I have learned countless lessons from the women of Agabagaya and hope others find the power in collaboration and friendship to the extent that these women have.

I also extend sincere gratitude to Chris Muhureza, the Senior Community Development Officer of Masindi District. Chris is an amazing individual who knows exactly what grassroots community development is all about and, although he was very busy, always made time for me. I am grateful and look forward to a day when our paths will cross again.

I am extremely appreciative of my committee from the University of Manitoba. Dr. Susan Heald of Women's Studies was a tremendous influence in regards to the actual format and framework of this research. She helped me develop my understandings of feminist research and of women's issues within a global context. She broadened my thinking, challenged, questioned, and pushed me intellectually. Dr. Dawn Wallin of the Faculty of Education provided me with thoughtful feedback, endless encouragement and was a keen and thorough editor. Dawn gave me direction when I felt aimless, encouragement when I felt discouraged, and was never too busy for my phone calls and emails. Finally, without Dr. John Wiens' initial commitment to my proposal, this interdisciplinary pursuit would never

have gotten off the ground. John provided unwavering support and endless enthusiasm for my work from start to finish. To all three of my committee members, I am grateful.

I wish to recognize the Faculty of Arts Endowment Fund for their generous financial support of this research project. It was a great confidence boost to know that my research was acknowledged through partial funding by the University of Manitoba. Also, thanks to Women Weaving the Web for their contribution, which helped to purchase film and pay for film developing.

I am eternally indebted to my dear friend Dominique who is still in Masindi as I write. She not only provided me with a home, delicious meals and laughs while in Uganda, she kept me grounded and had more confidence in this project and me than I did at times. The views of the hills from her front steps and our starry night sky conversations have become some of my treasured Masindi memories. To my other friends in Uganda who supported me with their friendship and hospitality, I must thank Sarah, Denis, Teopista, Richard, Nick and Augustus. I am also grateful to Robert for his kindness and support and extend my condolences to him and his family as I recognize the passing of his beautiful partner, Rebecca.

There are also people at home to whom I must express my gratitude: my parents, especially my mother, who literally cheered me on throughout this venture and spent hours reading my drafts without complaint; my sister, Cheryl, who would listen to me fret long-distance and shared advice based on her experience; and my friend Janice, for her endless e-mail encouragement and thoughtful feedback. Thank you also to my circle of friends: Laurie, Nicole, Jaylene, Colleen, Shane, Jill, Tracy, Jennifer, Carrie, Nancy, Tannis, Sue, and Sylvia who always asked about my writing, even when their own worlds were overflowing with

career stress, new jobs, moves, personal issues, athletic endeavours, children and newborns. I am grateful to have family and friends who give me the strength and courage to try and support when I flounder.

And finally, I thank my home base: Keith and Cayla. Keith's support for me never wavers and he holds our base camp together while encouraging me to climb my mountains. To all, my sincere thanks.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Women are the caregivers of their communities. They are knowers of their worlds and share their knowings with others naturally through dialogue. I am interested in exploring the ways that women share their knowings and how this sharing occurs within the "development" milieu. In pursuing an inquiry about the process of the sharing of knowledge that occurs among women and how that knowledge sharing has been influenced by development, I conducted a feminist ethnographic study of a small group of women in rural Uganda. The purpose of this study was to investigate how learning, in the form of the sharing of knowledge, occurred among women; how women used those knowings to support their families and their communities; and, how those knowings had been influenced and impacted by development. Additionally, I questioned my own role as a white, Western researcher in Uganda, examined its complexities and questioned its appropriateness in order to unravel some of the impacts this may have had on the research process itself.

I will create an understanding of my current position by conveying three threads of influential past experiences. These threads stem from my position as an educator, from specific childhood reflections and from my involvement in a development project in Uganda, and are woven together to create a tapestry of the "big picture." Unravelling these threads has helped me to locate my own position, to identify these influencing experiences of my life and to define my research intent. I hope that through sharing these threads of experiences, I make my position more explicit to the reader and provide the context from where this journey began.

The first thread of experience is a reflection on my childhood memories of my mother. When I was growing up in the 1970's, in a mostly white, middle-class neighbourhood, the neighbouring women had created a strong network of supports for each other. These women had knowings about many things including keeping gardens, treating insect bites, canning fruit, and tending sick children, to name a few. These were not tidbits of information that the neighbourhood women had learned in school and were not necessarily seen (in the public sphere) as particularly productive. However, these knowings were obviously very important to the everyday lives of these women and their families. Because this collection of knowings was undervalued and not available from the public sphere, these women took it upon themselves to teach and to learn—to share their knowings—with each other. As an adult and then a teacher, I realized how valuable my mother's support network was to her and to the other neighbourhood women and how important it was in nurturing their families. I began to wonder what supports were available to the mothers of the students of the school where I was working and what venues, if any, these women had in which to share their knowings. Were the mothers in my school's neighbourhood able to collaborate, to share knowledge, to support their families?

The second influential past experience that I will describe is my role as an early years educator and how that role has influenced my perceptions of women. At the primary school where I worked the teaching staff was committed to connecting our students' parents, specifically mothers, in more meaningful ways to the school. Much of the literature our staff explored, as well as our own experiences, indicated that, if we could engage the parents of our students in conversations about learning, we might influence some of the practices that occur within the home, specifically in relation to literacy. These conversations may therefore

increase the possibilities of engaging these parents and students as active participants in our school community. What roles did these mothers play in their education and in the education of their families? How influential were women in the development of and in supporting their communities?

The final thread of experience that I will share, is an aspect of teaching and learning that I encountered while working with local teachers in Uganda one summer. My naïve expectations of teaching in a developing country were immediately contested. I was not able to "teach" Ugandan teachers about what they wanted to know because I had a completely different set of experiences and, therefore, different knowings which were not relevant to these learners' questions. I did not share the same history or culture and quickly realized that what I "knew" could not simply be transferred to others. I was ill equipped to be in the position of "teacher" and so I began to work as a learner: reflecting, dialoguing, and questioning to try to make sense of these experiences. Why were the Ugandan teachers asking *me* the questions and, further, why did I assume when preparing to travel to Uganda that I would have the knowledge that they needed or even wanted? The teachers with whom I worked in Uganda knew their questions and struggles intimately and had the tools and knowings to pursue these questions. This confrontation with reality caused me to question my understandings of development. What was development all about and who was I to presume that I could "develop" others? And for that matter, why did those in developing countries presume to know how to "develop" those in "undeveloped" or "underdeveloped" countries? Did the women in developing countries rely on knowledge sharing among themselves to support themselves and their families? If so, what was my role, if any?

These experiences have been pulled from the bigger picture of my life's experiences. Each experience influences and is influenced by others. Each collectively represents who I am and the positions I hold. And similar to a tapestry, the picture would not be the same if one of the strands were not present. These three particular experiences have been recollected, contemplated, and pondered over. These experiences have become the core strands in creating the backdrop for this research and are the leaping off point from where this research journey began. Through unravelling and rewinding these threads, I have formed many questions about women, their knowings and development. How do women share their knowings? What types of knowings do they share? Are their knowings curriculum-based (i.e. stemming from what was taught) or non-curricular (stemming from experiences in their homes and communities)? How do their communities provide support for or hinder their ability to share their knowings? As a researcher, how do I take on the role of a learner and participant? How can I challenge notions of development to include and respect individuals' perspectives and their knowings? What can be learned from women who share and pursue knowledge? The research question that I framed focuses on the sharing of knowledge from a grassroots, collaborative perspective to determine what can be learned from a small, community-based group of women about how knowledge is shared and its importance in their lives. Because the research occurred with a group of women in Uganda, the question acquires new depths and complexities by virtue of being situated in a developing country with its own context of culture, politics, power and history.

I hope that the findings of this research will not only inform me as I continue to pursue my role as an educator and as a learner, but will also inform organizations, policy makers and communities whose interests are with women's knowings in the context of

development. For those who work in development, I hope to underscore the value of the knowledge that women already possess, value and share so that women are respected as legitimate knowers of their lives, needs and worlds. In doing so, I want to challenge the "saviour" model of development (and of education); and to emphasize that development cannot be a top-down process which is often underpinned by values incongruent with the local culture and ignorant of local communities' strengths, interests and needs.

In an effort to oppose these traditional models of development, I have framed my research within post-development theory. A post-development approach to women's education meaningfully engages participants, respects the knowings that women bring and allows for sharing and collaborating to reach new understandings. I have reviewed the literature on post-development theory and women's learning and argue that although the present focus in development in the Third World is on women and women's education, the top-down practice of development is hegemonic and may actually hinder women's ability to share knowledge that is meaningful to their lives. I outline my feminist ethnographic approach to this research in the Methodology section, and in the Methods section I detail the process I used in finding a research site in Uganda. The data and analysis is presented in two chapters. Chapter Four, "Researcher as Learner," explores my multiple roles as a white, Western researcher and the implications of these varied roles on the research process. Chapter Five, "Participants as Knowers," makes explicit the women's varying roles in the sharing of knowledge. I conclude with a discussion of what I perceive as the implications of this study and possibilities for future research in the "Conclusion," Chapter Six.

This thesis is only a small slice of my experience in Uganda. The experiences cannot be recreated in full as I am still trying to make sense of much of them. Also, as with most

rich experiences, it is virtually impossible to recreate them with mere words, no matter how artfully they are composed. The sights, smells and sounds of my Ugandan experiences cannot truly be conveyed through text. And finally, the experiences are influenced by my multiple positions, and filtered through my perceptions and memory. These layers become the gauze through which I record my experiences and thus these experiences become a retelling, a series of stories. Because the experiences are smudged by my lenses of perceptions, some aspects of my interpretations must, unknowingly to me, teeter on the border of fiction, although I cannot pinpoint exactly when and where. I am unapologetic when I state that these retellings do not reflect "truth," as I believe that they have become another knowing in their own right.

Nonetheless, this piece has become a place to share my struggles and follies as a researcher and to reflect on my role(s) while in Uganda, including some of the more complex aspects of being a white, Westerner in a non-white, developing country. It has become a place where I have relived and recorded my memories of the dynamic and awe-inspiring women that I met and with whom I had the honour of spending my time. And finally this thesis has become a place where I struggled to make some sense of a year's worth of experiences; to recreate my observations in an attempt to formulate some understandings and to work at assembling it all into some greater context, one with which others may connect. And so reader, it is with those caveats that I offer this piece to you—these shards of memories and scraps of understandings—in the hopes of sharing my experiences, sparking further wondering and igniting conversations about how to proceed from here.

"A story is always situated; it has both a teller and an audience. Its perspective is partial (in both senses of the word), and its telling is motivated." (Abu-Loghud, 1993, p. 15)

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development, although often seen as a sign of progress, is imbedded in colonial ideals and is often oppressive. Development of late has become more focused on women and women's education. In this literature review, I will provide an overview of development and post-development theory. I will argue that women's education via development that is a top-down hegemonic practice hinders women's sharing of knowledge. In reviewing education I will draw on Paulo Freire and the work of theorists such as Kathleen Weiler and bell hooks. Also, by reviewing authors such as Carol Gilligan and Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule, I argue that women are knowers, that women's education is greatly influenced by their relationships and that without positive relationships learning may be hampered. Therefore, an oppressive top-down approach (such as some forms of development) may not allow women's education through the sharing of knowledge to occur.

Constructing a Post-Development Framework

Research in developing countries is an act often conducted by Westerners, rationalized by the understanding that it is for the "good of humanity" and sometimes for the "good" of those being researched. Therefore, research by Westerners in developing countries is often considered a modern form of colonialism because colonization was often justified by the claim that colonizers needed to foster "order" in "uncivilized" countries (Smith, 1999). Through the hegemonic discourse of development, the West claims to be able to "save" those in "Third World" countries. Frantz Fanon (1963) criticizes the "saviour" argument in his

book *The Wretched of the Earth,* explaining that those in the West often prop up their own superiority by positioning those in developing countries as in need of help from the West.

Smith (1999) explains that, similarly, research by Westerners is often about power, domination and exploitation, the results of which are typically dehumanizing and oppressive:

> From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term "research" is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, "research," is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. (p. 1)

I believe that conducting research under the pretense of "benefiting the sake of humanity" compromises my moral obligations of respecting others. In this section, I will question what is meant by the term development and its global underpinnings and implications, in order to provide a framework for post-development theory.

Development

Development stemmed out of the era of Enlightenment and has been a booming industry ever since the postwar 1940's (Parpart & Marchand, 1995). It now includes planning, implementation and evaluation of research, initiatives and programmes throughout the world. At its colonial inception, development flowed from the West, was defined and directed by Westerners under the guise of "modernizing the backward," and was based on Western ideals and values that objectified and dehumanized people in developing countries. The term "development" itself implies modernity and progress to achieve eradication of poverty, economic growth and advancements from traditional ways of living. Parpart (2002) observes that "development was seen largely as a technical problem, wherein Northern 'experts' helped Southern governments to introduce Western technology, institutions and

practices" (p. 42). It was generally assumed that "undeveloped" (traditional, backward, inferior) could become "developed" (progressive, modern, advanced) simply by imposing similar economic and political conditions. Development has been accepted and promoted by the West, like human rights and democracy, often without question and, according to Escobar (1995), has "achieved the status of certainty in the social imaginary" (p. 5).

Development has been "in business" for over five decades and its fundamental purpose has been to move people out of poverty. However, according to the World Bank statistics in 1990-1999, poverty rates in Africa have actually *increased* and the number of people living in extreme poverty *has risen* by 74 million people (World Development Indicators, 2003). While the number of people living in poverty has risen, the gap between the rich and the poor is continuing to expand (Okin, 2003). Further, there are many instances where development has caused irreversible damage (Smith, 1999). So, instead of eradicating poverty, in some cases, development has actually made matters worse for people, especially for women and their children.

Women and Development

Women did not warrant consideration when the development industry first emerged. Parpart and Marchand (1995) state that development agencies excluded women from development theories and processes and maintained colonial views of women as exotic and backward human beings. In fact, "this vision of Third World women as tradition-bound beings, either unable or unwilling to enter the modern world, fit neatly into Western and neo-colonial gender stereotypes, and provided a rationale for ignoring women during the first two development decades (1950's-1960's)" (p. 13). Indeed it took decades until women were recognized as participants worth noting. Although women were eventually considered and

acknowledged within development, the discourse and assumptions of simply transferring information from the "First World" to "Third World" countries were not yet challenged (Parpart, 1995).

Today, there are many development advocates from grassroots organizations to the World Bank and the United Nations, touting the importance of educating or of "targeting" women. In recent development literature, there is much focus on women's education as the key to development. For example, King and Hill (1993), in a World Bank publication, state that, "The benefits of economic growth and family welfare that come from educating women are undeniable. The evidence makes it clear that raising the level of women's education contributes in important ways to development" (p. 13). This focus on developing women's education claims to lead to positive change for this generation of the world's children, to reduce poverty, to increase the healthy development of children, to make women more skilled, economically viable and therefore more productive. This may sound like a simple approach to some: to fix underdevelopment in the Third World, we must repair the women who live there by educating them.

However, I question how adding women to this fallacious formula—women and education equals development in the Third World—ensures success. In the more than sixty years since the inception of post-World War II development initiatives, the simple equation of adding development to underdeveloped countries, has made matters worse for many (most?) Third World countries: "the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression" (Escobar, 1995, p. 4). How then does adding women to the equation now ensure a successful product? I pose that our perceptions of development and the underlying

foundations and assumptions of development need to be questioned. A greater focus on women does not mean that development will become less colonial and oppressive.

Post-Development Theory

To better understand post-development theory, we must critically examine the West's position and question some of the assumptions about development. What is the role of the capitalist West and the current global ruling bodies (such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) in helping or hindering developing countries? The discourse of development must be critically examined to understand the power hierarchies at work and to challenge Western definitions of development. For example, does development not homogenize women by creating a sense that all women in Third World countries are poor, uneducated and unable to solve their own problems? Is the West perpetuating a view that it has the knowledge to "free others" from poverty? Who benefits from these beliefs? In addressing some of these questions, it is important to look at some of the governing bodies that are instrumental in the planning and decision-making in economic policies of the developing world.

The role of international bodies. According to Okin (2003), the reasons for the growing number of people living in poverty include the growing disparity between the rich and the poor, the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and gender inequalities which place the burden of poverty on women. Both the IMF and the World Bank were created in 1944 by, and currently exist in, industrialized countries. Both institutions' goals were economic: to extend loans to rebuild war torn countries, to promote the free flow of capital, and to facilitate international trade. All of these goals are income generating for the industrialized countries. The World Bank gives loans for development

projects that usually support a country's infrastructure (such as the building of roads, bridges, and dams). These projects rarely become income generating for the governments of the developing countries, but they do allow and support the transportation of goods into other regions, thus supporting the West's capitalist economies by creating more markets for Western goods. The (mostly Western) multinational corporations (mncs) and their experts bid on these development projects and receive the contracts. In short, the World Bank channels the funds, provides contracts to the multinational corporations, creates dependence on international markets, refuses to lend to socialist governments, and removes control of resources from the hands of local people to mncs, thus enabling the West to maintain intellectual and financial hegemony in the developing world (Escobar, 1995). The World Bank provides the loans, determines which multinational corporation gets the contracts, employs the experts, and collects interest payments to ensure a profit (and has secured a profit every year since 1947).

The IMF's role is that of surveillance (evaluating countries' exchange rate policies), financial assistance (extending credit or loans) and technical assistance (instructing countries on how to develop and maintain economic policies of which the IMF approves) (International Monetary Fund, 2004). It was the IMF's response to the 1982 debt crisis that implemented structural adjustment programmes (saps). Structural adjustment programmes, or global economic restructuring, were implemented to assist governments of poor countries to strengthen their economies (Okin, 2003). By cutting social services (such as health and education), increasing exports to the global market (thus reducing local sustenance crops) and privatization of government enterprises, the intent was that the economy would grow and this

economic prosperity would in turn trickle down to the poor (Okin, 2003). However, this has not been the case.

Consequently, women's roles have increased in the informal sector of employment (with little to no opportunity for job security or benefits), as well as in their homes and communities. Women bear an unequal share of the burden because it is women who compensate for the lack of social services, health care, childcare and education. Women, in addition to their unrecognized, "non-productive" household labour, are often employed in the casual labour forces where organized labour is non-existent (Naples, 2002). In some cases, the women have become more malnourished and have less time to devote to feminist activism activities (Desai, 2002). Today, because of the disastrous effects of World Bank and IMF policies such as saps, women continue to be hardest hit by poverty and international policies and regulations, which clearly serve the agendas of the West. By questioning the motivations of the West, post-development theory exposes and challenges oppressive power structures of development.

Discourse and identity. Post-development theorists criticize development discourse for maintaining colonialist and hegemonic language. This discourse perpetuates views of Third World women as homogenous "others." It creates a sense that the "superior" West can save "them" by transmitting knowledge and technology to underdeveloped countries. From a post-development perspective, the discourse of development, the production of the "Third World," of "poverty," of "us" "helping" "others," has attained a certain status of unquestionable "truth" in the West and has "…created an extremely efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over, the Third World" (Escobar, 1995, p. 9). Because of the privileged position from which many scholars write, the West is

able to maintain domination not only by maintaining colonial discourse, but also by perpetuating it by its construction and hegemonic influence (Parpart & Marchand, 1995). This "colonialist move" (Mohanty, 2003) of the dualistic and hierarchical discourse of development is a creation of oppressive language by Western privileged scholars in order to practice, maintain and exhibit control over "others." Post-development theory questions and challenges these meta-narratives.

Further, the dichotomous discourse of First World women versus Third World women inherently implies a superiority of Western women (Razack, 1998). Chowdhry (1995) explains that:

> Third World women are monolithically and singularly represented as oblivious to the "real" world, their lives defined and circumscribed by male-dominated tradition and unquestioningly accepting their confinement. There may be elements of seduction and mystery in this image of ignorance and mindless obedience, but mostly it represents Third World women as inferior to Western women, who do not wear a veil and who have nothing in common with this tradition-bound image. (p. 27)

By representing Third World women as traditional, poor and uneducated "others," Western women can then perceive/represent themselves as modern, and educated (Mohanty, 2003), creating an assumption of their superior identity.

Western and European women also have been criticized for generalizing their own experiences to all women regardless of class, race, culture and thus ignoring the realities of difference (Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1997; Parpart & Marchand, 1995). Earlier movements to incorporate women and women's issues into the development milieu (including "Women in Development," "Women and Development" and "Gender and Development"), although

recognized for addressing women in development, were criticized for homogenizing Third World women as poor, illiterate and backwards (Chowdhry, 1995; Njiro, 1999; Parpart, 1995; Parpart & Marchand, 1995). That is, the approaches claimed that all women in developing countries were poor, had the same problems and needs, and were affected by the same historical, political and social tensions which could then be addressed by the same recipe for improvement. Instead of homogenizing women of developing countries, researchers need to acknowledge women's class, race and tribe and the cultural, political and historical implications these factors have on women.

Post-development also challenges the notion that the "developed First World" has the expertise needed to solve the problems of "undeveloped Third World" countries. Parpart (1995) questions the dissemination of knowledge from the First World to the Third World, which assumes the First World's position of power. This assumption reinforces the roles of Western development agencies and experts and justifies the creation of First World policies and practices to be performed on developing nations, thus further perpetuating colonialist domination and undervaluing local and indigenous knowledge. Post-development theory advocates a recognition and respect for local and indigenous knowledge and believes that people have knowledge and abilities to collaborate to construct new knowings and to solve their own problems (Parpart, 1995)

A Summary of Post-Development Theory

Post-development theory challenges the roles of power and the structures that maintain and impose power. By examining the roles of the World Bank and IMF, I aimed to critically examine their oppressive power structures and expose their maintenance of global domination. Post-development theory is critical of the discourse surrounding development

and its role in sustaining hegemonic structures, subordinating others and devaluing local knowledge, often in efforts to maintain identities of superiority. Post-development theory questions the discourse of dominant knowledge of the West and urges inclusion and respect of local knowledge. Not only does a post-development stance argue for an acceptance of local knowledge and the need to discover the goals and aspirations of local women (Nzomo, 1985), "it welcomes diversity, acknowledges previously subjugated voices and knowledge(s) and encourages dialogue between development practitioners and their 'clients'" (Parpart & Marchand, 1995, p. 17). Therefore, by simply re-focusing development on women, the assumptions of development (i.e. the inherent power imbalances and subsequent discourse) remain unchallenged and unchanged. Women become the objects of oppressive and disrespectful practices, which does nothing but further perpetuate the West's hegemonic, colonial attitudes.

Implications for Research

I have argued that, although many development initiatives now "focus" on women and their education, this does not mean that women in the Third World have actually benefitted. As a researcher working from a post-development theoretical frame, I question how education for women in developing countries can be a respectful and meaningful process. I am reminded that I must acknowledge women as individuals in context of their class, race, and tribe while being aware of cultural, political and historical influences. Nzomo (1985) states that

> …development planners need to pay more attention to the concrete realities of Third
> World women's lives. They need to discover the real as opposed to the assumed goals

and aspirations of these women, and to seek out indigenous women's knowledge as a

basis for their policy formation and practice. (p. 140)

Mohanty (2003) agrees and reminds me that action and change cannot occur unless there is a

clear understanding of women's locations and the conflicting elements within those

locations.

Post-development theory insists that I seek and accept local culture and knowledge,

critically examine discourse and promote local grassroots movements in efforts to make

positive social change (Escobar, 1995; Nzomo, 1985). Post-development theory provides

spaces to question, challenge and look beyond surface understandings; to explore the

assumptions and complexities of development, its language, and the people involved. Post-

development theory recognizes the knowledge that women share with each other as valid and

valuable. Collaboration with local people and recognition of local knowledge will be critical

in my research as I intend to look closely at the ways that a group of local women already

share knowledge among themselves. In the following section, I will conduct a review of the

theories of education that influence this project and the implications for women.

Women and Education

Can education programmes for women that align with post-development theory

instead of oppressive development models exist? In an effort to challenge top-down imposed

curricula, I explore education theorists who value learners' experience and knowledge,

advocate bottom-up approaches to education, challenge the hierarchical positions of teachers

over students and support dialogue as a valid approach to education. By drawing on the

educational theorists who support learner-centred approaches to education, and by attending

to the ways that women share their knowings among themselves, I will create a link between

a post-development approach and women's education. I will draw first on Freire, highlighting and critiquing his theory of education and will complement his work with feminist theorists, such as Belenky, Weiler and Hayes. I will argue that education must value women's knowings, consider dialogue a critical aspect of education, and respect the learners' experiences, demonstrating that when top-down approaches to education are employed, women's sharing of knowledge is hindered.

Paulo Freire's Theory of Education

Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* emerged prior to post-development theory but has many of the same principles. The main themes in Freire's theory are oppression, dialogue and conscientization. Freire believes that students must be taught to think critically and to engage in problem-posing education. He therefore criticizes what he terms the "banking-model" of education, where teachers disseminate knowledge to students who are thus perceived as empty receptacles. He states that this top-down flow of information perpetuates oppression because students are expected to uncritically accept this given information as truth. Freire therefore advocates a "problem-posing" approach to education where students and teachers work collaboratively to create knowledge through meaningful dialogue. Freire believes that this process will lead to an "awakening of critical consciousness," liberation and freedom for the oppressed. When curriculum is used as a tool of oppression, it magnifies the concept of education as political. Freire believes treating students as receivers of knowledge is an effort to control their thinking and creativity which undermines opportunities for critical thought, development of consciousness and ultimately hinders opportunities for emancipation from oppressive situations.

Ivan Illich (1971) also sees top-down curriculum as oppressive and argues that schools do not actually contribute to student learning. Illich's criticism is in part due to his disdain for schools' use of obligatory curricula, which he believes, are neither relevant to individuals nor liberating. Nel Noddings (1992) also argues that the traditional education systems are outdated and controlling and states that curricula are limiting and "devoid of content they [students] might really care about" (p. xii). Teaching cannot be a top-down imposition and must be of relevance to the learner. When curricula are predetermined and top-down, students are excluded from the education equation.

Freire (1970) uses the term "dialogical education" in arguing for an educational process where individual thought is expressed, valued and negotiated through communication. Ira Shore and Freire (1987) state that, "dialogue belongs to the nature of human beings, as beings of communication. Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has its individual dimensions" (p. 4). Therefore, by valuing dialogue, education must value the conversations between people instead of insisting on a one way flow of information from teacher to student. Dialogue is "vital in every aspect of education" (Noddings, 1984, p. 186) and is critical in the sharing of knowledge.

In valuing dialogue, educators must also recognize the importance of the knowledge that students bring. Freire (1970) emphasizes the ability of all people to be knowers of their world and the teacher's role then is to elicit this knowledge and encourage people to use this realized conscientization in an effort to create positive change. I agree with Freire's position that students do bring their own experience and knowledge and that in order for learning to take place education must be meaningful and relevant. Because knowledge is socially

constructed, students must be engaged and a part of the meaning making process. Students' knowledge and experiences must be valued as legitimate knowings (hooks, 1994).

Freire's pedagogy is influential, has been widely cited, and although it shares common elements with post-development theory and with feminist approaches to education, it does fall short in some areas. First, and most obvious, is Freire's constant use of male referents throughout his book, completely negating the presence of women and their varied experiences compared to men. More troubling, however, is Freire's homogenous approach to the different needs of different people whom he considers oppressed. By essentializing the portraits of "the oppressed" he appears unaware of his own oppressive proclivities by completely ignoring gender differences, as well as differences of race, class, and experience. I agree with Kathleen Weiler's (1991) criticism of Freire, which says that he assumes a universal knowledge and fails to locate himself or the people with whom he works in historical, social or political context. She questions how these abstract labels of "oppressed" or "oppressor" are able to capture the true essences of one's multiple subject positions. Like Weiler, Kathleen Rockhill (1988) questions, "…isn't attention to difference, to disagreement, essential to a critical politics of transformation?" (p. 114). Both Weiler (1991) and Rockhill (1988) question the simplicity of Freire's proposal that the oppressed will unite in solidarity to challenge oppression and, although they agree fundamentally with Freire's theory, they both argue for an approach that pays more attention to difference.

Although Freire's language is sexist and his approach at times too simplistic, bell hooks (1994) insists that Freire's theories of education as the practice of freedom should not be overlooked:

…there is so much that remains liberatory. There is no need to apologize for the

sexism. Freire's own model of critical pedagogy invites a critical interrogation of this

flaw in the work. But critical interrogation is not the same as dismissal…. It is

feminist thinking that empowers me to engage in a constructive critique of Freire's

work… (p. 49)

Freire's work, although troublesome on some levels, is still useful in informing educational

practice.

Feminist Theorists and the Sharing of Knowledge

Gilligan's (1982) landmark research explores women's development and criticizes

previous research for being male-biased because it was conducted on males by men, thus

making it inapplicable to women. Gilligan argues that women not only value relationships

but also define themselves in terms of their relationships with others. She suggests that, in a

patriarchal world where autonomy is valued, women's inherent concerns with relationships

are often seen as a weakness (Gilligan, 1982). Theorists concerned with women's knowings

expanded upon Gilligan's research.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1997) in their research, published as

Women's Ways of Knowing, speaks specifically to women's education. Much of what they

term as "connected teaching" parallels Freire's work. Belenky et al. found that in connected

teaching, women's prior knowledge and experiences need to be accepted and valued.

Belenky et al. also oppose the banking model of education and challenge the power authority

of the teacher, arguing that women prefer the teacher to be a collaborator, someone with

whom to dialogue. They believe that a collaborative approach to learning where women feel

connected through dialogue is critical.

As Freire advocates for a partner teacher, Belenky et al. (1997) call for a midwife teacher. This teacher draws out the knowledge that women already possess, assisting them to "give birth to their own ideas," and encouraging "students to speak in their own active voices" (p. 218). Both the teacher and the student are engaged in the thinking process through dialogue. These "connected teachers" recognize and respect individual perspectives. "Midwife teachers help students deliver their words to the world, and they use their own knowledge to put the students into conversation with other voices—past and present—in the culture" (Belenky, et al. 1997, p. 219). These renowned theorists believe that women's education is based on connection, understanding, acceptance, collaboration and respect.

Although I agree with some aspects of the research by Gilligan and Belenky et al., these researchers make claims that fall towards essentialism. I do not argue with Gilligan's position that previous research was biased and often irrelevant to women. Nor can I argue with Belenky et al. that connected teaching needs to value women's prior knowledge and experiences. I am concerned, however, that the positions of both Gilligan and Belenky et al. tend to create homogenous constructions of women, their need for and use of relationships, as well as their approach to learning. I agree with Hayes (2001) when she argues that "attributes of women's learning are not innate, fixed, and uniform across situations ('essential' attributes of women), but are integrally connected to a particular set of situational, social and historical circumstances and thus changeable as those circumstances change" (p. 39). Hayes understands gender as a social relation and her views more closely reflects my understanding of women and gender. People relate to and act upon gender according to their experiences (Hayes, 2001). Women's education needs to understand the

importance of gendered circumstances while encouraging dialogue around topics that are important and meaningful to women as individuals.

Although there are gaps in the work of Freire's emancipatory approach to education and of Belenky et al. on women's education, both approaches value the learners' experiences, the need for dialogue and the importance of critical reflection. These theorists value collaboration between teacher and students to construct new meanings and believe that education occurs in a dialogical community, not a power-laden hierarchy. Women's education must therefore take into account what women already know, must respect women's knowings and must provide spaces where these knowings can be extended and questioned in a non-hierarchical and non-coercive dialogue. Therefore, instead of outside educators imposing oppressive curricula to "educate women," more attention needs to be paid to the ways that women already share knowledge among themselves and the kinds of knowledge they share.

I believe it is also critical to question where this sharing of knowledge takes place. The above-mentioned theorists place education and women's education in a context of school where education occurs under the guidance of a teacher. But what about the sharing of knowledge that occurs among women less formally? If we believe that women's education is dialogical, values prior knowledge and is collaborative, then we must also consider that women's education does not occur only in schools. Perhaps women's education—this sharing of knowledge that occurs among women in their homes and communities—is actually interrupted by or inhibited by school. Because school is influenced by development frameworks, it is therefore oppressive to women's education and the sharing of knowledge that occurs among them.

In light of post-development theory, where one must question the top-down, oppressive approach to education, and in considering the literature presented here on education, I suggest that education stemming from development initiatives may not actually support women's education. Moreover, it may actually hinder sharing of knowledge. Women's education through the sharing of knowledge is undervalued and may be interrupted by top-down educational impositions. I therefore propose to investigate the sharing of knowledge that occurs among women, the types of knowledge that is shared and where this sharing occurs. In doing so, I aim to validate the knowings that women already possess; to underscore the importance of the valuing, pursuing and sharing of knowledge in which women are already engaged; and, to argue that this sharing of knowledge is a valid form of education in its own right. Women's dialogue, the sharing of knowledge that occurs among them, is not just vital to their education; I believe that this sharing of knowledge that occurs among women is education itself.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND DESCRIPTION

In considering a research methodology when working from a frame of post-development, I wanted an approach that supported collaboration, was people-centred and allowed for critical analysis of discourse and power structures. There are many parallels between a post-development framework and a research methodology that is built on a feminist foundation. Because women have been underrepresented and, in some cases, un-represented by research that has either ignored female voices or has used methods that are inherently biased towards male views and knowledge (Code, 1995; Gilligan, 2001; Oakley, 2000), feminist research seeks to overcome this imbalance by focusing on women and women's issues. Also, the feminist position demands more qualitative approaches to research that focus on those who are marginalized and on acknowledging, analyzing and exposing power differences. Thus, countering hegemonic structures and practices in a way that is respectful and attentive to people is central to feminist research and echoes the principles of post-development theory. In this chapter I will outline those theorists who informed and influenced my methodology and will describe the methods I used to conduct this research. I will also describe the process used to obtain a research site and provide a description of the research site itself.

Feminist Research

Feminist research is a form of critical social research which aims to eradicate oppressive conditions by examining the underlying structures that create inequalities between those who hold power and those who do not (Esterberg, 2002). A feminist research approach must become a catalyst for positive social change. Code (1995) states that a feminist

standpoint "is a hard-won product of consciousness-raising and social-political engagement, designed to reveal the false presuppositions that patriarchal hierarchies and androcentred epistemologies are built upon, and to counter the forms of alienation they produce" (p. 41). By involving research participants at a fundamental level, feminists challenge positivist power hierarchies that create distance and perpetuate inequitable power structures between the researcher and the researched.

Oakley (1981) encourages a methodology that blurs the boundary between researcher and participant. Challenging these boundaries forces the researcher to become transparent in her purpose and subject positions. Feminist researchers hold that humans cannot (and should not) put aside their past experiences, cultures and values to become completely objective observers (Code, 1995; Esterberg, 2002). Instead researchers must be explicit in locating their positions within the research, the biases they bring and their individual motives and purposes. Lal (1996) states that a feminist researcher is acknowledged as a subjective knower occupying "multiple and fluid locations" (p. 186) and, therefore, is not neutral nor claims to be.

In working from an epistemology of socially constructed knowledge, which counters the notion of the positivist belief in the discovery of one known generalizable truth (Code, 1995), feminist researchers believe that the "truth" becomes a collaborative undertaking between the researcher and the participants. Feminist research underscores the post-development belief that research needs to be interactive and based on the understanding that people have the knowledge and capabilities to solve their problems (Parpart, 2002). Researchers do this by encouraging the inclusion of participants in the research process and by sharing findings with participants in an effort to expose these greater power inequities so

that the information can be used to counter oppression. By valuing and respecting participants' knowledge, traditions and cultures in the research process, researchers can attend to the multiple stories, positions and representations of the participants (Esterberg, 2002).

Reflective of post-development theory, a feminist approach challenges research that employs oppressive approaches and practices that promote hegemonic ideals. I aimed to conduct a feminist ethnography in order to work *alongside* the "researched," respecting their needs and requests. A feminist ethnography allowed me to include the perceptions of the women with whom I worked while maintaining a respectful and reflexive methodology (Esterberg, 2002). This feminist ethnographic study relied on women's knowings and experiences and yet ensured that I as researcher was explicit in my position through ongoing reflections.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research stems from the field of anthropology. Chatterjee (2002) states that, "simply put, ethnography seeks to translate field experience into text" (p. 243). Yet this statement alone oversimplifies the struggle with the "politics of representation" of anthropological work. The struggle of ethnography lies in the challenge of remaining true to researcher experience and subject position, while inviting participants' voices and respecting cultural differences. In fact, Chatterjee (2002) suggests that anthropology:

> ...is always in process and the written text is just one moment of these...worlds. It
> cannot be closed to its own historical movements. It is embedded always in a
> pedagogy–of teaching/learning/dialogue–which should, ideally, remain honest to its

own artifice, its global traffic, its currencies of contradiction, power and hope. (p.

261)

This embeddedness is explained by Beverly Skeggs (1994) who asserts that ethnography

makes the "links between structure and practice, between the macro and the micro; a method

which could link everyday interaction to history, economics, politics, and wider cultural

formations" (p. 74). As such, Skeggs advocates for a feminist ethnography that is subjective,

collaborative, and that overtly exposes power structures. These attributes align well with my

feminist position towards research and also fit into the frame of post-development theory.

Judith Stacey (1991), on the other hand, warns of two elements of ethnography that

could contradict feminist principles. First of all, she suggests that the research *process* itself

is loaded with power differentials and therefore there is a great opportunity for the researcher

to manipulate that process. Secondly, Stacey argues that the *product* of the ethnography has

the potential to be a biased representation of the experience. Because ethnography is usually

presented in a written format, there are concerns in regards to how that form is able (or

unable) to truly represent a "reality" (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Stacey, 1991). Therefore, as a

researcher, I needed to be constantly aware of and reflective of my position and the influence

that it may have had on the research process. Because I am the sole author of this thesis, the

product is undoubtedly biased. However, in honestly stating my position, sharing my

reflections and including the participants in ongoing discussions about my observations and

critical reflections, I hope my biases have been presented as honestly and as openly as

possible.

Although Stacey encourages more dialogue between feminism and ethnography to

explore these concerns of power and bias, she does find merit in ethnography as a research

method. Stacey (1991) states, for example, that valuable relationships can be formed between the researcher and the participants and that "often fieldwork research offers to particular research subjects practical and emotional support and a form of loving attention, of comparatively nonjudgmental acceptance, that they come to value deeply" (p. 117). I wonder if the creation of positive relationships is the most powerful thing in which I engaged.

Because the ethnography that I conducted was shorter than that of an anthropologic ethnography, I have called it a "snapshot ethnography[1]." In keeping with the feminist principles of research and the elements of an ethnographic methodology, I attempted to observe and absorb the culture of the group of women with whom I worked. I aimed to establish positive relationships with the participants, while being critically aware of my own position of power. However, I do realize that the ideal feminist ethnography was not and is not possible, that my position as a white, Western woman was (is) a factor and that the lines that divide and create power differences cannot be entirely erased or ignored. I feel that in my role as a researcher it is critical that I am reflexive in examining my position while attempting to understand these dividing lines.

Awareness of my multiple positions was imperative in this self-reflection. My observations, of course, have been shaped by my white, Western, middle-class, female lenses of experiences. Naturally, we all hold multiple positions at once and my varied locations such as feminist, Westerner, student, and educator, to name a few, influence my position as researcher and the biases that I bring. I understand that I must recognize these multiple positions when critically reflecting on my observations to notice how my positions influence my perceptions of what I "see."

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[1] I am indebted to Marcelle Falk for granting me permission to use this term that she so creatively coined.

In recognizing the challenges of employing a feminist ethnography, I am also aware of how my varied positions have influenced my relationships. Post-development theory and feminist research assert that research be participatory and collaborative. This cannot happen if a positive relationship has not been established between the researcher and the participants. A fundamental element of feminist research is that non-hierarchical relationships are sought and that researchers are genuinely interested in the lives of those with whom they research (Stacey, 1991). As Ann Oakley (1981) states, "…personal involvement is more than dangerous bias —*it is the condition under which people come to know each other* and to admit others into their lives [italics added]" (p. 58). I was well aware that creating completely non-hierarchical relationships would be challenging, and perhaps impossible, and that my positions of race, class and gender were relevant factors. I was also aware that relationships with power inequities might not always mean that I was the one in a position of greater power. Working honestly to establish positive relationships with the women participants, as well as with the people in the community in which I lived, was not only critical to my research, but was of fundamental importance to me as a person.

Methods

Using a post-development lens, I conducted a feminist snapshot ethnography of a women's group in Uganda to investigate how learning, in the form of the sharing of knowledge, occurred among women. The participants in this study were the adult women who were members of the group named Agabagaya. I also considered myself a participant in this study because of my reflexive role as a researcher. I was interested in exploring how knowledge is shared among the participants, what types of knowledge are shared, and in what context the sharing occurs. As a researcher/participant in this study, I was also

interested in examining my own role within the relationships I developed and the sharing of knowledge in which I became engaged. I hoped to be able to conduct the snapshot ethnography over a four-week period but was able to work for almost five weeks with the research participants.

Data Collection

I used observations, interviews and photography to document the research process. In recording my own role in the sharing of knowledge I used self-reflection. I documented my observations of the participants as well as my self-reflections in a notebook and used a tape recorder to record interviews. I also incorporated the use of photography into the research process by asking the participants to take photographs. I will explain my rationale for employing these methods, as well as some of the successes and difficulties that I experienced while using these methods.

Observations

Initially, I had grandiose plans of sharing and discussing my observations with the participants regularly throughout the study to encourage reflection, questioning and collaboration. As a feminist researcher, I hoped to engage the participants in conversations about the research. However, this was more complicated than I had expected and difficult for two main reasons. One reason was that the five-week time period in which I conducted the snapshot ethnography was simply not long enough to achieve this. Although I tried to ask questions based on my observations and understandings, a longer study would have been necessary to do this thoroughly. The second and the most significant reason that hindered the gathering of reflections from the participants, was that to "share and discuss my observations with the participants" assumed that I would know and understand what it was that I was

observing, as well as what was significant about those observations. In hindsight, this seems like a rather bold assumption and has the potential to greatly minimize the complexities of my observations. Again, more time would have been necessary for me to reflect and to think about my observations, and then to return to the group with thoughtful questions to promote a collaborative dialogue.

In the planning stage, I also wanted "to encourage participants to ask questions." Again this statement reveals my assumptions and Western position in regards to the Ugandan people. This statement assumes that I (the white, Western researcher) would determine the choice of the women to ask questions. The women with whom I worked needed no encouragement to ask questions. They asked questions often, although not necessarily about the research topic or process, but about topics of interest to them.

Because I was using a notebook to record my observations, and because I wanted to be open and honest about what I recorded in my notebook, I invited the participants to read or browse through my notebook at anytime. The following morning after a visit, I would transfer my notes from the notebook to a floppy disk, expanding on my observations, adding in reflections and questions as I did so. This process was flawed because, although the women could peruse my notebook, they were unable to read my expanded documentation that I created on disk.

Although no one ever asked me to withdraw statements or observations that I noted, there were times when I felt that some things that the women confided to me were private and personal. Because the boundaries did become blurred between the researcher and participant, I have chosen to exclude some anecdotes from this study. I feel it is my

responsibility to be cognizant of the appropriateness of publishing some items that may compromise the women's relationships with me or with others in the group.

Interviews

Although I had initially planned that my observations, conversations and reflections would lead me to develop relevant questions for the participants, which I hoped to ask through informal interviews, this, too, was contrary to the reality of what happened. First of all, I did not have a great deal of time to formulate questions based on my observations, as I had not been with the women for five days before the interviews began. This initial intention also assumed that I would have understood and would have been able to formulate questions about what I had observed in the first place. I did try to formulate questions that were broad and open-ended enough in the hopes of encouraging the women to tell me the stories of their experiences and involvement (Appendix A).

Once the interviews began, the chairperson ensured that all members of Agabagaya who wanted to be were interviewed. The chairperson organized the interview schedule and interviews were conducted in a variety of locations, including at the chairperson's home, at the secondary school (where the group often held their meetings) and at other members' homes. The interviews were recorded on a hand-held tape recorder and were later transcribed. Although interviews were not always conducted privately (they were often conducted at common gathering places or in women's homes with other women or family members nearby), they were good opportunities to sit and talk with some of the women individually, and to get to know them better.

Photographs

Photographs, when used appropriately and ethically, can provide richness and add an additional dimension to an ethnographic study (Pink, 2001a). Because my time in Uganda was short and yet critical to the research, I was drawn to photography as another avenue of documenting my journey. Photographs of this experience, as with all photos, provide visual images that trigger many memories besides simply what is displayed in the shot. I anticipated that this research would be a powerful learning opportunity and I therefore wanted to document it as fully as possible. However, I was also interested in using photography to challenge dominant notions of the researcher as the sole collector of information. Therefore, I planned to ask the women to use the camera to record people whom they perceived as important in their knowledge sharing. Pink (2001a) states, "a collaborative approach to ethnographic image production may do more to redress the inequalities that inevitably exist between informants and researchers…. Visual work can become a product in which both informants and ethnographer invest" (p. 45). This not only challenges the positivist notion of (superior) researcher as observer and sole collector of data but also values the knowledge and insight that the participants bring.

I hoped to use the photographs as catalysts for conversations with the women about their learning. By having the participants take photographs of people with whom they shared knowledge, I hoped that the conversations would provide me with a perspective that more genuinely belonged to the participant. Pink (2001b) explains that "when photographs become the focus of discussion between ethnographers and informants, certain questions arise. For instance, how do ethnographers and informants situate themselves and each other in relation to the photograph?" (p. 68). I hoped that the conversations arising from the participants'

perceptions of the photographs, the people in them and the participants' relation to them, would have provided insightful information regarding the participants' perceptions about their sharing of knowledge.

Although the main purpose here was to get a glimpse of the participants' perspectives, the opportunity to discuss the participants' photographs would have also been helpful in establishing relationships with participants. I imagined using the photographs to initiate conversations and to create a bridge between the participants and me. I thought that this technique might have been especially helpful considering the cultural differences between the participants and myself and might have helped us ease into a more natural conversation, especially if the photos were of people that the participants knew. I thought that the participants might have had an easier time talking and have more to say with the visual support of personally meaningful photographs.

Pink (2001b) also provides cautions for researchers who employ visual methodologies such as photography. Pink warns that researchers need to be aware of the local culture's notions of harm and anxiety. Secondly, she warns that some research participants, when involved in a visual method, may feel that the research is being "done to them." She warns, therefore, that the researcher must be particularly careful, observant and sensitive when employing such a methodology. With this in mind, I had planned to abandon the use of photography if there were cultural sensitivities or notions of inappropriateness within the community, or feelings of discomfort among individual participants. This method would also have had to be abandoned for logistical reasons, such as difficulty in accessing film developing.

The best laid plans…what really happened. The use of photography, although it became a central activity of the research process, was difficult to follow-up with, as I had planned. Because acquiring photographs was expensive and therefore rare, the women were keen to have their photos taken and excited to use the camera. During the consent meeting, the women asked outright if they could have some of the photographs once they were developed. I told them that I would get doubles printed of each role of film and that they could have one copy of each set of prints to keep. Although this proved to be both challenging (the closest film developing location was three and one-half hours away in Kampala) and expensive, it was something that the women were excited about and so I was happy to have found something that I could do for them.

I showed two of the women how to use the camera on the first day that I brought it and then those two women showed the others. I wanted the women to be comfortable using the camera and told them that the camera was always there for their use and that they could photograph whatever they wanted. As their comfort level grew, they did not ask to use the camera. They helped themselves and took photographs of special events, visitors, and each other. I had a minimal role in using the camera, except for occasions when they would ask me technical questions about the camera or if they wanted their photographs taken with their children. Once the photographs were developed (about once every two weeks), I would bring a set of prints to our meetings and the women would eagerly look at them, sort through them and divide them up between themselves. As discussed at the consent meeting, I always had two sets of prints developed so that I could have a set and so that the women could have a set.

As mentioned, I had initially planned to direct the participants to take photographs of women from whom they learned and then use the photographs as springboards for

discussions. My initial instructions were to use the camera freely. I wanted the women to become familiar with it and so did not put any boundaries on using the camera or give direction on what to photograph. Had there been more time, and after they were comfortable using the camera and had photographed their families and important aspects of the group, then it may have been more appropriate for me to step in and direct them on specific photography tasks. Giving the women specific direction too early of what to photograph too early may have made them hesitant to use the camera.

The short time period in which the research was conducted did not allow for planned opportunities to talk about the photographs. As well, my assumptions about the participants' willingness to talk about the photos in the way that *I wanted* were opposed to the reality of what the women wanted. That is, the participants wanted to take, look at and keep the photographs of themselves and their children. Often their conversations about the photographs were focused on who took the photo (as opposed to who was in the photograph) and on constructive criticisms about how the photograph was taken (for example, "This photo is too far away"). Who was in the photograph became important because it usually determined who got to keep the photograph. Perhaps I could have been more assertive in pushing my agenda. However, I always felt a bit precarious in these situations between wanting to develop a relationship with the women and advancing my research needs. In this case, I felt that I would simply let it be the way that the women wanted it. Had I had more time, I may have been able to explore this method more thoroughly.

The photographs then, instead of becoming a research tool used to analyze participants' perceptions, became a way for the women and me to document and record our experiences of our time together in Kihande village. They enjoyed taking photographs of me

posed with them and saw the camera as an opportunity to obtain rare and sought after photographs of their families and children. The women also kept a set of photographs that illustrated who they were as a group, recording their projects, activities and visitors. Although the photography aspect of the research did not provide me with the "data collecting" opportunities that I had hoped, it did provide the women with something that they otherwise would not have had access to and for that reason alone, was worth the trouble and expense.

I have chosen to incorporate some of the photographs in the final thesis even though they were not used as the tool that I had originally planned. The purpose of sharing the photographs here is two-fold: one is that I believe the photographs will enhance the texture of the thesis for the reader. Just as this text is a representation of my experience, so too are the visual images. They may allow the reader to connect on an additional level, to put faces to names and to gain a greater sense of our experiences. Just as I was careful about what I choose to share and record in writing, so too was I selective when choosing which photographs to include. The second and most important reason for including the photographs in this thesis is that I know that this will be important to the women with whom I worked. They were very proud to have been a part of this project, eagerly consented to having their photographs in the final thesis and requested a copy of the thesis. I would feel remiss if I did not follow through on my commitment to have the photographs in the final document. I struggled with where to place the photographs within the document. I did not want them simply appended and so instead chose to place them at the end of this chapter, just after the description of the group.

Description: Of the Process before Leaving for Uganda

When planning the research for this project I chose to concentrate on seeking an

appropriate site in Uganda. Firstly, having been to Uganda in 2001, I had some familiarity

with the country, its culture and traditions. Also, I had kept in touch with some of the people

I had met on my first visit, whom I contacted to help me locate a research site. Additionally, I

had a Canadian friend Dominique, who was living in Uganda at the time as a Voluntary

Service Overseas (VSO) volunteer. She too had offered to help me by introducing me to the

appropriate officials in the district where she worked. Therefore when looking for a potential

research site in a developing country, Uganda seemed like an obvious place for me to start.

One of my Ugandan contacts connected me to the director of the Ugandan Adult

Education Network (UGAADEN). UGAADEN is a national network of governmental and

non-governmental organizations (ngos) and individuals involved in adult education

throughout Uganda. The UGAADEN office is located in the capital of Kampala and is

affiliated with Uganda's Makerere University. My friend Dominique, who was living in

Masindi (a town located about three and one-half hours northwest of Kampala), was working

with the Masindi District Education office. Dominique forwarded my research request to a

colleague of hers who held the position of Senior Community Development Officer (SCDO)

for the Masindi District. Both the director of UGAADEN and the Senior Community

Development Officer, Chris, agreed to assist by having some potential research sites

available for me to visit when I arrived.

Along with a brief outline of my research purpose, I also emailed both contacts a list

of criteria for potential research sites. I asked each of them to identify approximately three

sites for me to visit upon my arrival in Uganda. I informed them of my travel dates and of my

plans to conduct the research for a period of about four weeks. The research criteria that I sent to my contacts prior to my arrival listed: (a) that the research site be a learning centre for women in the local community; (b) that it be in Masindi or Kampala; (c) that the number of women in the group be small (6-8 learners); (d) that classes occur in the day or evening (either is fine); (e) that the centre be in a local school but may be as informal as a class in someone's home; (f) that the teacher be female; (g) that the language spoken in the community and in the school be English; and, (h) that the goals of the education centre include literacy development, but may also have informal education goals (such as how to raise chickens and health education).

The rationales for some of the above stated criteria were of methodological importance while other criteria were listed simply for practical considerations. For example, the research site being located in either Kampala or Masindi was a practical consideration. In both of these locations I had access to accommodation. Also, having been to both places, I knew that my safety was not at risk and that I would feel comfortable moving about on my own. I knew how to access local transportation and had a general sense of how to find my way around in both of these locations. In Kampala, a city of more than one million people, I knew that I would have access to Makerere University and services such as the Internet, photocopying, foreign exchange, film developing and public telephones. If I chose to work in the rural town of Masindi, I knew that I would have limited access or no access to these services. However, I felt that Masindi, being a much smaller community, might be an easier place in which to become immersed during such a short period of time.

The criterion of having the research site located in the community where the women lived would allow for me to observe women in the community and within the research site

more easily. Also, I felt that if the women were all from the same community, there would be a greater chance that the women would know each other, and would therefore be more likely to converse with each other within and outside of the research site. The proximity of the research site to where I would live was also an important factor for me because I wanted to be part of the community and wanted to develop positive and friendly relationships with the women participants. The actual physicality of the site, however, was not an important factor. The site could have been in a local school, in a community building, or could have been informal gatherings held in someone's house.

The time of day when classes met (day or evening) was not an issue, as I was available anytime. I felt that it would be more important to have a small group of six to eight women so that I could get to know them better. I worried that too many women in the group might be difficult for me to get to know and to observe. That the women spoke English was critical for me to be able to form positive relationships with the participants and would also allow me to conduct the research without an interpreter. I was reluctant to use an interpreter because of the additional costs involved, but more so because of the complexities it would add to the research process itself. The curriculum of the learning centre did not necessarily have to have a literacy focus. Because my focus was on the women and the sharing of knowledge that occurs among them, the content of their conversations was what interested me. Because my study focuses on women, I also preferred that if the group had a teacher or instructor, she too be female.

Although I had developed and sent the criteria prior to my arrival, I also realized that the list and my expectations needed to be flexible. Having travelled in Uganda and to other developing and African countries, I was fully aware that my (Western ?) approach to

research, to time, and to planning, was linear and rigid and might not only be a completely foreign approach to some Ugandans but also might be quite offensive. Therefore, I was prepared to have a fairly relaxed approach to the research preparation and to trust in the good people who had agreed to help me, in their perceptions of what a "good research site" might be and in a bit of blind faith and serendipity. I tried to not over plan, to not have rigid expectations and to let go of the control that I was so used to exhibiting in my everyday life. Strangely, I found comfort in this decision and became quite relaxed about it. I accepted my "que sera, sera" approach and eagerly departed for Uganda. Arriving at Entebbe airport two days later, I needed to employ this flexible approach immediately.

<div align="center">Description: Of the Process of Locating the Research Site</div>

Upon arrival in Kampala, I was met by my friend Dominique who informed me that the plans had already been changed. Instead of staying in Kampala to visit the urban research sites as originally planned, I made the three and one-half hour road trip to Masindi to spend a day recovering from the two sleepless nights of travel. Plans to meet with Chris (the SCDO) had been changed to the following day to accommodate my earlier arrival. So off I headed on the torturously hot, dusty and bumpy journey to Masindi, where I rested, walked and prepared for the meeting with Chris the next day.

During my meeting with Chris at the Masindi District Office, he indicated that he had three sites for me to visit (as per my request), but that there was one site in particular that he thought would best meet my criteria. I was excited about the prospect of visiting the first of the possible sites but when I asked him when we could go there, he replied, "Not yet," and then was silent. I was a bit confused and looked over to my friend Dominique who, as cultural protocol dictates, had brought me here to be formally introduced. She looked at me

and smiled and I wondered why we were not proceeding with making arrangements to visit the site. I was eager to make plans, to organize a meeting time and place, but my only real option was to sit and wait and see.

Wait and see. This became something I learned to tell myself on a regular basis. This was my first—but definitely not my last—lesson in patience. "Wait and see," I would tell myself when feeling confused by a situation: sooner or later the answer to a question would be revealed or the reason for a decision would become clear. "Be patient," I was told by a Ugandan on more than one occasion when I had, as a dutiful researcher should have, asked a question to clarify my understanding of a situation. And so I waited, in the breathless afternoon air, as the Senior Community Development Officer scanned the newspaper on his desk and Dominique sat quietly looking out the window at the hibiscus bushes. I reminded myself that I must slow down and be patient; and that, although this was "my" research project, I was not in control nor did I have to be.

Eventually, one of Chris's assistants arrived. After the formal introductions and greetings, Chris and his assistant informed us of their various roles in the Masindi district, of the importance of the local women's groups and briefly described the potential research site. Evidently, according to protocol it was the assistant's role, not Chris's, to arrange to take me to the research site. The assistant informed me that he could arrange for us to visit the site and so the four of us decided to meet the following day (a Saturday) to travel to the village of Kihande together. We visited the research site and then I travelled back to Kampala for the rescheduled meeting with the UGAADEN director and the visitations to the various sites that had been arranged there.

Upon arrival back in the urban capital, I met with the director of UGAADEN, who was waiting for me at his office and was well prepared for my visit. He presented me with an agenda of what we would discuss and had invited two of his colleagues to our meeting. One colleague worked at UGAADEN as well, and one worked with the National Adult Education Centre. After greeting me, welcoming me and serving coffee, they began by explaining the Functional Adult Literacy programme that was started by the Ugandan Government's Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the roles of the various organizations with which they were involved. The director had arranged for me to visit three different sites, two in Kampala and one in Njeru, a town about one-hour drive east of Kampala, in the Mukono district. The director and I proceeded to visit the first potential research site that afternoon.

Over the next three days I visited two more potential research sites. At each site, I met hard working directors, committed teachers and enthusiastic learners whose programmes included functional literacy, health education programmes, farming programmes and youth programming. The director kindly reassured me that there was no pressure to choose one of the sites that he showed me and that regardless of which site I chose, the sites that he wanted me to see would help me gain a better understanding of adult education issues in Uganda.

Choosing the Research Site

Although I had hoped to visit six sites altogether, it soon became evident that this was not going to be feasible. At that point, I had been in Uganda for ten days and had visited a total of four different sites, in two different districts, including two rural and two urban options. Much of my time during that period was spent travelling (which by public transportation was a time-consuming event), waiting to meet with people, greeting people

and being introduced to people within various levels of each organization, touring the sites, listening to presentations and talking with teachers and learners. I knew that I needed to choose a site quickly so that I would have sufficient time to conduct the snapshot research. I reviewed the criteria that I had established prior to coming to Uganda and consulted my notes that I had compiled while visiting each research site. I created a chart comparing the various sites (using my notes and reflections) to my initial criteria (Appendix B). I also reflected on my comfort level at each of the sites and noted the willingness and receptiveness of the participants at each site. I wanted to work with a group of women who not only met my criteria but with whom I felt a connection. I wanted a group of women who were open and willing to work with me.

Some potential sites were eliminated as options more quickly than others were. For example, the site in Njeru, east of Kampala, was about an hour and one-half commute via public transportation from my options of accommodation. Also, although this site met many of the criteria and was well established, the participants were just learning to speak English and so communication would have been difficult. One of the urban Kampala locations was also eliminated as a possibility because the learners, who were mostly elderly women, spoke only *Luganda* and knew no English. Other sites were more difficult to eliminate. For example, one of the sites in Kampala was not chosen although it met my criteria, including that of being close to accommodation. At this site the director appeared enthusiastic about my visit and potential research; however, the students seemed intimidated by me and I did not get a sense of being eagerly welcomed by them. This site was well established and served a large and diverse population with a great number of programmes. Although interesting, I felt it would have been difficult to observe so many participants and programmes.

After a weekend of careful deliberations, writing and reflecting, I chose the site in Kihande village near Masindi. Not only did this site generally meet my criteria, I had a good feeling about this site. The women, called the Agabagaya Women's Group, were enthusiastic about my visit and had openly expressed how eager they were to participate in my research project. Because of the personal connections that I had made with the director of UGAADEN and his colleagues, it was difficult to tell him of my decision to work in Masindi, as opposed to one of the sites that he had arranged for me to see. I had enjoyed getting to know the director and his colleagues and was extremely grateful for their time, assistance and hospitality. I felt at ease once I had made my decision. I wrote letters of thanks to the director of UGAADEN and his colleagues and began planning the next steps.

Description: Of My First Visit to the Research Site

On the day of my initial visit to Kihande, Dominique, Chris, his assistant, and I agreed to meet at the district office on Saturday to travel together to the potential research site (see Appendix C for a map of the area). This was the first of the four sites that I visited and I was feeling eager and curious and, as a novice researcher, slightly apprehensive. The village was about four kilometres from the centre of Masindi town via the main road. The red dirt road was busy with pedestrians and *boda bodas* (bicycle taxis), as well as a few minivan taxis bombing along at break-neck speeds. Dominique and I, the only two *mzungus* (white people) around, travelling down the road on motorbikes, seemed to attract some attention in the form of staring, pointing and some calling out, "*Mzungu, how are you?*" The road was lined with groups of vendors selling a variety of goods from wooden furniture to bananas. As we got further from town, there were fewer vendors and the road was framed with lush

vegetation, long elephant grass, mango trees under which groups of men gathered, banana trees, and small gardens of maize, cassava and beans.

When we arrived in Kihande, it was obvious that the women were awaiting our arrival. The women (about eight of them) were dressed up and were sitting outside the secondary school. They wore long colourful dresses called *gomezes*, with large fancy sleeves, wraps around their waists or wraps draped over their shoulders. They greeted us warmly by smiling and saying, "You are welcome!" while gently shaking our hands. The handshake was more of a handhold—gentle and lasting for an extended period of time. After greeting each other in the schoolyard, our group of four was ushered into a classroom of the secondary school building, which the women were using as a meeting space. The brick room had large glass-less windows, a concrete floor and a corrugated tin roof. The spacious but sparse classroom had a blackboard and many desks that were made to seat two students. A head table had been placed at the front of the classroom and was adorned with a lace tablecloth while handmade doilies were draped on the accompanying chairs. The school desks, also laden with doilies, were arranged facing the head table. Before we sat down, Chris asked the women to move the school desks closer to the head table and to rearrange the seating to create a circular shape as opposed to the classroom-style arrangement. We all worked to accommodate his suggestion.

When everyone was settled, Chris formally introduced Dominique and me and then asked to see the programme that had been prepared. The emcee rose and handed Chris a notebook in which a programme had been handwritten in ink. Chris told the emcee that we did not need all the formal proceedings, but Dominique (who was sitting next to him and had also read the programme) noticed that the women had planned to sing a song and so she

insisted that we proceed with the programme as outlined in the notebook. Chris acquiesced and asked his assistant to begin the meeting. The assistant thanked the women for hosting us and asked if it was all right if everyone spoke in English[2]. The women consented and he then invited the women to start the formal programme.

Although I had been hoping to see a group meeting in session, I quickly recalled from my previous visit to Uganda the formal and often lengthy programmes that the Ugandans prepare when hosting guests. It would have been considered rude to greet us without a formal programme planned. I realized that seeing the women in action by observing a lesson or meeting would not have been possible here or at any first visit of potential sites. Therefore, I would have to rely on the information that the women provided and on my own observations to determine how this group and others functioned.

As the official programme began, the emcee stood and asked us to bow our heads for a prayer that was lead in *Runyoro*. We remained standing to sing the Ugandan National Anthem (which is in English) and then the women arranged themselves before us to sing a song in *Runyoro* that they had written to describe their group (see Appendix D for lyrics). The women sang without any instrumental accompaniment and although I could not understand what they were singing, it sounded absolutely beautiful.

After the women settled back in their desks, Harriet, the vice-chairperson, read a prepared speech in English. She explained how the group, formally named the *Agabagaya Women's Group*, started with eight members. The group had a constitution (Appendix E), which they presented to us and we passed along the head table, along with a certificate

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[2] While the official language in Uganda is English, there are more than fifty tribal dialects spoken throughout the country. In the Masindi district the local language is *Runyoro*. Because people are becoming more mobile, fellow Ugandans do not often speak the same language. English, therefore, becomes a common language of communication.

(Appendix F) that they received from the Masindi District Office officially recognizing the group. Harriet then read the group's objectives, which included: (a) setting development projects; (b) conducting education programmes; (c) instilling discipline in their members; (d) taking trips, tours and picnics together; (e) socializing with the group to learn more skills; (f) conducting seminars and getting education on issues; (g) eradicating illiteracy; and (h) providing short-term loans to their members. In her speech, Harriet listed the group's achievements to date which included growing organic crops (such as maize and beans), raising broiler chickens to sell, owning a heifer and two new piglets, as well as maintaining subsistence farms. Harriet identified the group's future plans as having more organic farming, having an office, growing mushrooms and owning their own land. She then proceeded to share some of the group's problems and stated that, since the group did not own land, they had to rent and borrow land from their members. The group did not have an office or meeting space that was their own and, finally, they needed start up capital for their new mushroom farming project.

According to the programme it was then Chris' turn to speak. He began by emphasizing the importance of the functional aspect of adult literacy and that being literate means to read and write and to achieve in life and not to just pass tests. He also posed the question to the group, "What is your vision?" He urged the women to look beyond their present plans and objectives and to create a vision of their future. Chris questioned the group as to why they did not include men in their group and worried aloud that, when men are excluded, they could eventually restrict the women from participating. He said that men could get suspicious or feel threatened by the changes that women make as a result of attending group meetings, and warned them that their husbands may eventually forbid the

women from continuing with the group. However, he then said, "But it is up to you" (field notes, May 8, 2004). Chris also warned the women about purchasing land and having an office. He explained that it might be better to start small so that they would not have to worry about large payments. Finally, he closed by encouraging the women to come to his office anytime. "Come and advise us," he said. "We are there for you—to serve you" (field notes, May 8, 2004). Chris indicated that he knew some of the women from previous visits and urged them all to come to his office.

Chris then introduced Dominique. She stood and explained her role as a VSO volunteer working for the Masindi District and then she introduced me. I thanked the women for welcoming us and explained my role as a student and as a researcher and briefly explained my research project. Large dark clouds started to roll in; Chris appeared anxious about the threatening storm and so tried to hurry the programme along. The women, either oblivious to his anxiety or ignoring it, continued on with their programme and served refreshments to the head table (a choice of bottled water or soda). Although Chris looked ready to close the programme, Dominique suggested that we allow for a question and answer period. There were no immediate questions from the women, so Chris asked how often the women met as a group. They told us that the group hosted *Runyoro* literacy lessons on Saturdays and that the entire group gathered every other Sunday at 4:00 to hold group meetings.

Chris continued to fidget, looking outside repeatedly where the storm clouds continued to build, probably wondering how the two *mzungus* would manage on the treacherous roads in a downpour. He asked if there were more questions. He then invited the women to ask their questions in *Runyoro* if they felt more comfortable. One woman asked a

specific question about organic manure and Dominique referred her to the Masindi Farmers' Association (MADFA) where she knew another VSO was working who would be able to help with specific farming questions. A second question was asked about connecting the women's group to donors in Canada. Chris answered before I could and responded simply that my role was that of a researcher and not a donor.

Chris eventually encouraged the group to wrap up the meeting because of the impending rain. However, before we left the women informed us that they had arranged for the local photographer to come as they wanted to have a photograph taken of us with their group. We all shuffled outside into the schoolyard, had our photograph taken with the women and began to say good-bye. We shook hands and thanked each other as we prepared to depart. We walked back to the motorcycles while the women continued to wave and the children gathered at the commotion. We made it back to Masindi from Kihande village thankfully missing the rain. The threatening storm seemed to have passed.

Not only did the Agabagaya Women's Group generally meet my pre-established research criteria, but also they were enthusiastic about the prospect of being part of my research project. My initial reaction was that the women appeared welcoming, warm and eager. These attributes continued to radiate from the women as I proceeded to learn more about this dynamic group. Although tentative, I was also very excited to begin the research process.

<center>Description: The Process of Obtaining Consent</center>

Written consent was obtained from the Agabagaya group members, from the chairperson of Kihande village, from my friend Dominique and from the District's Senior Community Development Officer, Chris. Prior to obtaining consent from the group and from

each individual, I followed the same process. I thoroughly reviewed the consent form and then ensured that all questions were answered. Each person who signed a consent form received a copy of the form to keep.

On the day that I arrived in Kihande to discuss consent with the women's group, Dominique and I met Shakillah at her sewing shop and we walked over to her house together. Shakillah's husband, who was the chairperson of the village, was also present at the consent meeting. Other group members in attendance were Mary, Epiphania, Aidah and Rosemary. I suggested that the programme proceeded as follows: we would read through the consent forms together; talk about and ask questions about the consent forms and the research project; and then, if they were willing, they could sign the forms and we could decide when to meet again. The group agreed and we proceeded.

I handed out the consent forms (Appendix G) and I read through them as the women and the village chairperson followed along. Some of them mouthed the words as I read, nodded (as if to indicate they understood), and some tracked the words with their fingers. I was very clear that participation was voluntary and that they could choose various degrees of participation. For example, one could choose to participate in the study, but not have their photographs published in the final thesis. These various degrees of participation could be indicated by ticking off statements on page two of the form. As we read, I stopped periodically to paraphrase or clarify what I had read, to ask the group if they understood and if they had any questions.

After we read through, I asked if there were any questions. The village chairperson asked if, once the project was complete, I would then be sharing the project with others in Canada and if that would lead to donors wanting to come to fund the group. I explained that I

might be asked to present what I had learned and, in that case, would share the study with others, but that basically the study, once completed, would not necessarily "go" anywhere. I explained that I was a student researcher, and I reiterated to him that, therefore, my main purpose was to conduct the research, analyze and synthesize the data. I explained that I was not connected to donors and my purpose was not to find a donor for them. The village chairperson pursued this line of questioning and asked if once people read the report, would they not want to come to be a donor for the group. Dominique explained that the process of receiving donor money was usually not that the donor would come looking for a group to sponsor, but that the group would need to look for a donor. Dominique further explained that looking for a donor was a long and time consuming process and that perhaps the group's energies would be better spent on activities that would more likely be productive, rather than on activities that would be time consuming and may lead to nothing. Dominique also explained how I had spent much time and energy seeking support for my research and how it was up to the individual or group to pursue their own funding—not up to me (or others) to find funding for them.

Aidah asked if the group could receive a copy of the completed research project. I agreed to send the group a copy but informed the group that it probably would not be completed until the following year (2005). Aidah expressed concern that if I sent the copy through the Ministry office, the women might not receive it. I told the group that, although the local government was aware of my presence and purpose here in Uganda and had consented to the study, I was not accountable to the Ministry. I suggested that I send a copy of the thesis through Dominique and Aidah agreed saying that that was a good idea. One member also asked if they would be able to keep some of the photographs that they took and

I told them that I would make two copies of all of the film that I developed and that the group could keep one of the sets. The women smiled and clapped when they heard this.

When the women had finished asking questions and discussing the project, they all signed the consent forms. It appeared that none of them had any reservations about signing the consent form and some even seemed quite excited about the prospect of participating in the research. I reviewed the consent form with the village chairperson individually, as the consent form for the community leader varied slightly from the one that the women signed (Appendix H). The chairperson asked me to prepare a letter of introduction so that if "his superiors" questioned my presence in the village, he would have a letter on hand explaining who I was and my purpose. I agreed to bring him a letter the next day and he said he would have the consent form signed and ready for me when I returned. As it turned out, there was no electricity the next morning and so I could not type the letter nor print it. I presented him with the letter a few days later, at which point he gave me his signed consent form.

To obtain official consent from Masindi District, I arranged to visit Chris, the SCDO. I explained the consent form for the government official to him (Appendix I) and he read through it silently. When he was finished, his only question was about the word "risks." I explained to him that the risks of the research were that anonymity of the participants would not be able to be maintained in the final report. He laughed and indicated that he thought that the word "risks" was a rather strong term. Chris signed the consent form without hesitation.

Although I felt nervous about presenting the consent forms and requesting consent, I thought the process was worthwhile and successful. My nervousness was in part due to the fact that the women could have simply said, "No, we do not consent," in which case I would have had to arrange for a new research site. However, I felt that I proceeded in an honest and

forthright manner and because of our open dialogue, much of my initial anxiety was relieved. All of the participants appeared not only agreeable but also eager to be a part of the research. Participants of the Agabagaya Women's Group who were not present at the initial consent meeting and who wanted to participate in the study provided consent at later dates using much the same process as described above.

Description: Of the Details of the Agabagaya Women's Group

According to my interview with Harriet, the group's vice-chairperson, the Agabagaya Women's Group started out informally as five friends who would often help each other out. She told me, by way of example, that for her *introduction ceremony* she needed to buy a cow so that her family could host the traditional dinner. So, Harriet and her four friends (including Shakillah and Sally, who are current group members) each contributed 10,000 *shillings*[3]. Harriet said in reference to her friends, "In case of any problems, we have to contribute that money." Lois, who moved to Kihande village as an adult, encouraged the group of friends to form a more structured group. Harriet told me that she talked it over with Shakillah and that they agreed to do so. So in 2001, with seven members, the Agabagaya Women's Group began to hold weekly meetings and started to contribute money as a cooperative on a regular basis. After some time, the group realized that they needed to keep written records of the money that was being contributed and distributed, of loan information, and of minutes of meetings so that decisions made by the group could be documented for future reference.

Agabagaya's constitution states that the group's main purpose is to "eradicate poverty within our community." They began to chip away at this monstrous goal by orchestrating a cash cooperative among themselves, by initiating income-generating projects for the group,

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[3] At the time of writing, one Canadian dollar equalled about one thousand three hundred shillings. Therefore, 10,000 shillings would be equal to about $7.70. The symbol for the Ugandan shilling is /=.

by providing educational opportunities for their members, and by conducting informal workshops with other women in the community to support their growth as self-sufficient groups. Their other goals include collectively owning land where they can house their various projects and building an office. Many members also hoped that eventually the group will own a vehicle.

When I began my research the group consisted of twelve members who met every other Sunday. Six of these members made up the elected executive: Shakillah (Chairperson), Harriet (Vice-Chairperson), Lois (Secretary), Joy (Vice-Secretary), Dorcus (Treasurer), and Sally (Advisor). There were six other general members: Sarah, Mariam, Epiphania, Rosemary, Mary and Jamiila. Aidah was considered an advisor and "one of us," but was not a contributing shareholder in the group. The group had a disciplinary committee which consisted of some executive and some general members. The women ranged in age from twenty-five to sixty-five years old, some were Christian and at least two were Muslim. Eight of the women were married, one was a widow and two did not disclose their marital status. All of the women had children and some of the women also cared for orphaned children of their extended families. Although not often talked about, some of the women were second wives to their husbands[4]. All of the women had attended school, some up to primary six (approximately equivalent to grade six), at least four attended senior high levels and three had attained post-secondary education.

Each member was required to bring 7,000 *shillings* to each meeting, which occurred every other Sunday. Initially, the women met every week, but eventually changed the meetings to once every two weeks. At each meeting, each member was expected to

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[4] Polygamy is a legal and practiced in Uganda.

contribute her money, which was collected and recorded in the logbook. Although 84,000/= was collected at each meeting, only 60,000/= went to the "vote." The vote was a process where each eligible member, a member who had not yet received the lump sum in the current cycle, would get a chance to receive the money. Small pieces of paper with "no" and one with the "yes" were scrunched up into balls and placed in a pile. Each person would draw a paper ball and the member who received the paper with the "yes" would receive the money. A "vote" would be held at each meeting until each member of the group had received the money one time. In a six-month period each of the twelve members would receive the "vote" money one time. This would complete one cycle, after which the process would begin again. It was for this reason that the group had decided that twelve members was the maximum number of women that would be allowed in the group. One member also told me that twelve women was a manageable group size, where everyone would still know each other. The remaining 24,000/= that was collected at each meeting went toward the group's savings pot. The money that was contributed to the pot was available for members to borrow on a short-term basis (at an interest rate of 5% per month) or, once some money had accumulated, could be used to support or purchase income-generating projects for the group.

The Agabagaya Women's Group had a variety of income-generating projects at the time of my visit, including raising one hundred broiler chickens to sell, raising one heifer for milk and two piglets to sell, farming organic crops for family use and to sell, and growing one acre each of maize and eucalyptus, both to sell. The group owned the animals but various members would keep them, depending on the land and facilities (such as suitable pens) that each member had available. For example, Dorcus kept the heifer at her place because she already owned a heifer and therefore had the proper shelter and space for it. Lois, who was

Dorcus's neighbour, helped by feeding the animal. The group paid for the animals' expenses, such as food and medicine for the chickens, and the herdsman for the heifer. Some of the milk that was produced by the cow was sold to pay the herdsman's fees and the cow dung was used for the group's organic compost. Epiphania, who said to me, "We work together as a group," kept and maintained the group's organic compost at her place, which the women used either in their gardens or sold by the bin. Their latest project was growing organic mushrooms and was initiated after a meeting with the assistant community development officer and with advice from MADFA. Once the mushrooms matured, the women planned to dry them use them in their cooking and sell them in the market. The group decided on what projects to support with their money at their meetings and aimed to make purchases that would generate an income.

The loans that the women made from the group helped to pay for family expenses such as school fees, books, rent, or supplies for their shops. The Agabagaya Women's Group did not have written criteria for how the borrowed money could be used. The women did tell me, however, that they expected the money to be used to support members or their families. For example, Joy used borrowed money to buy clothes in Kampala, which she then sold in her front yard to the villagers to make a profit. Harriet borrowed money to renovate her house. Lois told me that collecting the repayment of loans had not been a problem, and that the group had once loaned money to a non-member. Lois's goal was for the group to have enough money to extend loans to members of the greater community.

The Agabagaya's Women's Group also provided some formal educational opportunities for women by hosting guest speakers to provide "sensitization" on topics like AIDS or information on farming techniques. The group had joined local organizations like

the Masindi Farmers Association and the Red Cross. These organizations provided educational opportunities, courses and guest speakers for the group's members. The group paid for and supported many of its members to attend workshops and training sessions, with the expectation that the member would share the information gained at a workshop with the whole group.

Another educational opportunity, an exchange visit between Agabagaya and a women's group in Mukono district (about six hours away), occurred while I was with the group. Due to Shakillah's initial interest in the idea, I helped the women to organize the visit between their group and the women's group I had visited in Mukono district. During the exchange, two members from the group in Mukono came to Kihande village to teach the women how to make a fuel-efficient clay stove. The following week, two women from Agabagaya and I travelled to Mukono district to teach the women's group there how to make a traditional remedy to cure the banana wilt that had infected the local banana crops. The event attracted local, district, and media attention in Kihande. (See Appendix J for a transcript of the radio news broadcast of the event.)

When I asked where the idea of this organizational structure came from, Lois said, "It's our way of living. Women have the burden. Men pay some fees and leave all other responsibilities to the women" (field notes, May 18, 2004). When I asked what would happen if women could not pay the fees, Lois said, "The women can ask their husbands. It is not a lot of money. The husbands don't mind because they see us prosper so they give us support by giving us money" (field notes, May 18, 2004). And then, the village chairperson (Shakillah's husband), who had been sitting in on our conversation added, "We husbands don't mind paying because we see how it benefits us all" (field notes, May 18, 2004).

While I was there, one member had not fully paid her initial shares to join the group and had been remiss in paying her contribution fees. The group took the matter very seriously. According to Shakillah and Lois, members had come to Shakillah as the chairperson to complain about this particular member's lapses in payments. Shakillah stated that it was her role to ask the member about it in front of the group in an effort "to be transparent" (field notes, June 1, 2004) and to allow the member to defend herself at a meeting. During the meeting, the member said very little, but the other women contributed to the conversation and nodded in agreement with Shakillah. Finally, Lois said to her, "If you cannot pay the 30,000 *shillings* you can say good-bye to us. It is very simple" (field notes, May 31, 2004). They wanted the member to respond, "to defend herself," but she did not. The member was told that she would given some time to think about it and would be asked about it again next Sunday. I later asked Shakillah and Lois if it was possible that the member had difficulty obtaining the money and they explained to me that she owned a shop with her husband and that she had access to the money that they earned in their shop. The group, although supportive, was obviously not lax about the level of commitment required by each member. The women took their work very seriously and had high expectations for themselves and for each other.

There were monetary fines placed on members who were late or who missed meetings without good reason. According to the Agabagaya Constitution it was expected that all members conduct themselves in an appropriate manner, and that behaviour such as lying or gossiping was prohibited. At various meetings members were reminded to bring their payments on time, to carry themselves in an "exemplary" manner, and to refrain from "rumour mongering." The women also had structures in place to support each other in time

of need. For example, condolence money was given to a member if she lost an immediate family member. There were also the informal supports that were provided to one another, such as caring for each other's children, making meals for funerals and talking with each other to help solve family or personal problems.

The women's generosity and caring was also evident in the way that they treated me. Their hospitality was evident from my first visit and their kindness continued to impress and surprise me. I was always warmly greeted with a smile, a lingering handshake and the words, "You are welcome" by each person when I visited. They often gave me fruits or vegetables from their gardens, like tomatoes, *dodo*, chilies or bananas, or eggs from their chickens for me to take home. Sometimes when I went to one of the women's homes, I was offered a snack like papaw, passion fruit, *kabalagala* pancakes, or bread and tea. The women sometimes prepared foods that they knew I enjoyed, like mangoes, or foods that they knew I had never tried. For example, after seeing jackfruit in a villager's garden, I commented that I had never tried jackfruit. Jackfruit is an unsightly fruit, twice the size of a football, lizard green and covered in pimply bumps. A few visits later, when a group of us were sitting on Lois's front steps, we were served a tray of jackfruit, cut up and ready to eat. Lois sent her oldest son, who was four years old, to fetch a jug of water while she retrieved a basin and some soap. After washing our hands, we all snacked on the fruit. The women laughed as I struggled to remove the slippery peach-coloured pods from the shell. Although they kept saying that this particular jackfruit was not as nice as it could be, I found it very sweet and delicious.

A Sample of Photographs

Shakillah (chairperson of Agabagaya Women's Group) and me.

Lois (secretary of Agabagaya), Augustus (VSO from MADFA), and the groups' two piglets.
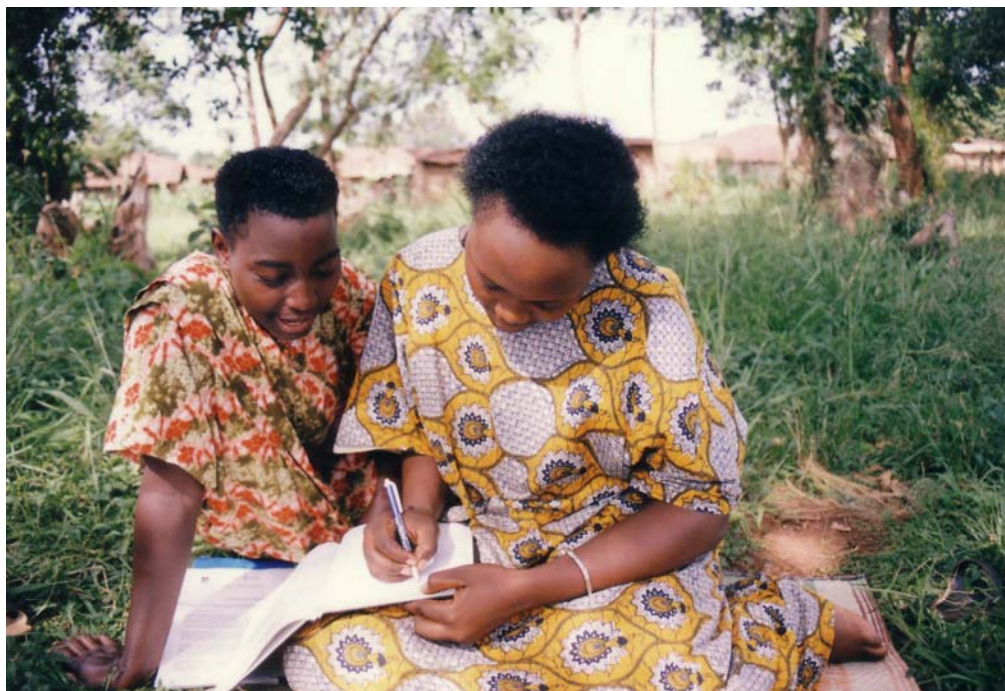
Shakillah and Jamiila writing the lyrics to a song in my notebook. We are sitting on a mat in the schoolyard while we wait for the others to arrive for the meeting.

The women of Agabagaya and me gathered at a meeting.
Backrow from left to right: Shakillah, Mariam, and Lois;
Front row from left to right: Sally, Epiphania, Me, Jamiila, Rosemary, Harriet

Conducting an interview with Sarah in the schoolyard.

Peeling matoke for the meal for our Mukono guests.

From left to right: Lois, me, Dorcus, Sally.

Mixing the dirt and anthill sand together with our feet to make the clay mixture used to form the fuel-efficient stove. From left to right: Harriet, Dominique, Lois, Epiphania.

Passing the clay that has been formed into balls from the mixing area into the cooking area, where the stove will be built.

Sally helping me to "mingle millet" prior to a meal that she hosted at her home.

Serving millet at a gathering with the women. Shakillah is serving the food with me.

Shakillah and Epiphania at our host's home in Mukono.

Preparing the meal for the farewell party. Under the supervision of Sally and Aidah, I am frying batter-covered potatoes in oil using a charcoal cooker.

The gift presentation at my farewell party. A song is sung when a gift is presented and another sung when a gift is received. We are dressed in traditional gomezes. From left to right: Epiphania, me, Joy, Mariam, Sally, Shakillah and Lois.

Dorcus and Aidah in their beautiful dresses at the farewell party. Aidah is holding a picture book and pencils that I gave her for her nursery school.

Joy and me at the farewell party.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCHER AS LEARNER

Conducting an analysis and reflecting on my role as a researcher is an inherently subjective process. However, it is one that I feel is valuable and necessary. My multiple positions, my "whiteness" and my role as a researcher influenced the process of the research and are critical to reflect upon. During my time with the Agabagaya Women's Group I put much effort into pushing the boundaries between "researcher" and "researched," between "them" and "me," and, although the boundaries definitely became blurred as our relationships developed, this lead to new questions, issues and possibilities. In this chapter, I will explore the issues I faced as a researcher, the control that the women[5] had over the research process and how the relationships we established directly influenced the research itself. Finally, I will draw my analysis back to the literature.

Me as a Researcher: Issues of Self-Confidence and Perceptions of My Multiple Positions

Conducting research in Uganda was complicated by my multiple positions, including being a researcher, being white, and being from the West. I will share the inadequacies I felt in the role of researcher and give examples of the internal tensions with which I struggled because of my multiple positions. Through the use of examples I will also illustrate how the women's perceptions of me as a donor, as a white, Westerner and as a researcher influenced the research process.

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[5] I have struggled throughout the writing process with referring to the women of Agabagaya as "the group" or "the women" as if they are one homogenous body. Although I recognize the women's individual differences and uniqueness, I find there is little alternative at times. I will also use the term "member" to describe an individual anonymously, as well as the women's first names when I feel it is appropriate to do so.

Self-Confidence

My confidence as a researcher was something I struggled with while preparing for my research, while conducting the research and while reflecting on and writing about my research. This lack of confidence during the research process, coupled with my attempts to relinquish control of the research, often made me hesitant to become involved in or to be more assertive in certain situations. When I was in doubt with how to proceed, I tried to lean toward the side of relationships over the research, to the side of the women's needs over my (researcher) needs.

Some of the lack of confidence I felt stemmed in part from my inexperience as a researcher. I was aware that, although I might be considered knowledgeable in some fields like teaching, I knew that research was a field in which I was a novice. I had never conducted a large research project and was relatively unfamiliar with Ugandan women and their culture. Although I had visited Uganda, I did not speak the local languages or fully understand local histories, cultures, politics, and the like. I was fully aware of and was open and honest about my position as a learner. Being forthright with the women about being new to research allowed them to see me in the role of a learner as opposed to an expert. Although the women made me feel very comfortable in my role as a learner of research, I was not always as comfortable in explaining this role to others whom I would meet. My field notes provide an example:

It's funny how I sometimes feel nervous explaining my research topic to others. I suppose it is because I don't feel very confident in what I am doing—not that I am not sure of the idea and the premise behind it, but more because I am unsure of how it will unfold. I also know that [some] people have very set ideas about what research is

(i.e., quantitative data collection with cut and dry analysis). And so I worry that I may be challenged on my methodology and feel a bit ill experienced to defend it. I believe in it, just feel that I do not have enough experience (or any!) and have not had success with it <u>yet</u>. (field notes, May 18, 2004)

Although I believed in the research process, I did not have the experience to fully understand where I was going with it and what it would eventually look like. I constantly struggled with and reflected on the process of the research, my desire to create positive relationships and the tension that was created between research and relationships.

In the beginning of the research, my field notes are full of examples where I questioned the process. For example:

I am not sure if I am doing this research "right"—I go and visit, interview, and record. But am I recording the important/relevant things? How do I know? What will I do once these interviews are all done? They really want me to come with a "programme," a plan—the women do not want me to (or understand that I want to?) *observe* them doing what they normally do. (field notes, May 23, 2004)

I struggled with these feelings of frustration and insecurity often. I had feelings of inadequacy as a researcher, I wrestled with feelings of the appropriateness (or inappropriateness?) of a feminist researcher conducting research that is entangled with colonial implications, and I had feelings of guilt as a Canadian woman with far greater resources and freedoms than the women with whom I worked. I struggled with these conflicts often. I wrote about them and I talked daily with my friend about these issues and sometimes with other Ugandans with whom I became friends. Although I still have questions and do not feel like a research expert, I am pleased with the relationships that were created. I am

satisfied with the respectful nature in which the research proceeded (which was due to the women's involvement, control and eagerness) and with the data, memories, connections made, product and new beginnings that have stemmed from the research. I have learned that I could not know what the research would "look like" or become until I had time to reflect on it, read more and write about it.

<div align="center">Perceptions: Of Being a Donor</div>

While in Uganda, I struggled with the ways that I was perceived by others. These perceptions varied greatly from my experiences in Canada and so were quite noticeable to me and often uncomfortable. Because I was a white, Westerner, I was often perceived as a donor, as someone who worked for donor organizations, or as someone who had access to donor organizations. As previously noted, I was asked about connecting the women's group to donors at both the first meeting with the group and by the village chairperson at the consent meeting. People who were not members of Agabagaya also approached me seeking donor support. For example, one day a young girl from the village gave me a letter asking me to sponsor her in school. She explained that she was a good student but, because she had not paid her school fees, had not been able to attend classes. On another occasion, a husband of one of the group members asked if I would help his orphan organization that had lost some of its funding recently.

> He said there was a priest who used to help and that they provided for 70 orphans and now because the priest has left, they can only support 36 orphans. They support the orphans by supplying blankets, clothes, etcetera to help with the upkeep of the orphans. He asked if I knew of any organizations that could help. I said I did not, but

would keep it in mind. He gave me his address and insisted on taking mine. (field

notes, May 25, 2004)

He later gave me a list of the names of the orphans, I presume to legitimize his request,

although I did not doubt his honesty.

The assumptions that I was a donor or connected to donor organizations made me feel

uncomfortable partially because I did not want to maintain the perceptions that I was there to

give money. I did not want to perpetuate a colonial approach to "development"—that "we"

could "save" "them". I also worried that if I began to make donations to those who asked,

then people would want more from me and I was afraid of being taken advantage of. This

feeling of being taken advantage of did not stem from an experience where this really

happened and so I wondered from where these fears came?

In part, this perception of being a donor also made me uncomfortable because it

underscored the differences between the women and me in regards to our access to resources

and the accompanying inequities (as access to more resources and money often equates one

with more power). My field notes provide an example of my reflections on these feelings:

I have thought about bringing items [to the women] to show my appreciation, but am

hesitant to do so. I do not want to perpetuate the idea that *mzungus* have more money

and resources to give—although this is true, I have difficulty perpetuating this

concept. Is this a cultural perception [or my perception?]—that it is impolite (or

shameful) to ask for money? Here the concept is that you should ask for money. Chris

explained to me that more than half of the national budget is donor funded. (As a

matter of fact the headline in the paper a few weeks ago stated that the donors

rejected the proposed National budget.) The government seeks donors and according

to Chris, the government actively encourages the people to organize, form groups and

seek donor sponsorship. (May 23, 2004)

I struggled constantly with the issues of giving. Although I wanted to be perceived as a

researcher, and wanted people to disregard the colour of my skin and the accompanying

assumptions, my own behaviours sometimes perpetuated the very notions that I was trying to

counter.

On more than one occasion, in an effort to pursue a relationship of friendship with the

women, I would end up feeling like a donor, ironically because of my actions. For example,

at a meeting about one week into the research, after conducting an interview with Aidah, she

and I were talking informally about her nursery school. I remembered that a friend had given

me a package of pencils to give to a teacher while I was in Uganda. During my conversation

with Aidah, I remembered about the pencils and casually offered them to her. Apparently the

women who were sitting close by had heard my offer and I was struck by their reaction:

The women cheered and cheered and I immediately felt uncomfortable. I had been

trying not to be perceived as a donor and here I was making a donation. I am really

caught with this. It is true, I (as a Western, middle class woman) have far more than

they do and why shouldn't I give to them? On the other hand, they have this notion

that white people are donors and that groups are successful when they are funded by

donors. (field notes, May 21, 2004)

I had offered the pencils without thinking about the implications and assumptions of the

gesture. I had been working to dispel the beliefs that white people were donors, that I was not

a donor, and yet my actions in this scenario were contradictory.

On another occasion, I inadvertently acted in a similar manner. During a group meeting, two of the women said that they were meeting in town to visit the Red Cross office, which was close to my house. In an effort to build a friendly relationship, I inadvertently reverted to Western behaviour by impulsively asking if the two women would like to meet me for lunch after they had attended to their business at the Red Cross office. I was trying to create a bridge, to get to know the women more in an informal setting, as well as to extend a friendly (albeit Western) gesture. However, "going out for lunch" is not a cultural behavior that these women engaged in with their friends, perhaps because they did not have the time or money, or perhaps simply because it was not typical within the context of the women's cultural and/or social behaviour. My field notes explain the scenario:

> Lois explained that …they [she and Shakillah] were going to register their group [Agabagaya] at the Red Cross office on Monday…. The Red Cross office is in the health building just down the road from my house and I asked if since they were coming to town, would they like to go for lunch. The group erupts in a cheer.
>
> M: I immediately regret this! The implication of course is that because I have asked (or because I am white?) it is assumed that I am paying. And all this time, I have been struggling with these white, donor expectations. On the other hand I do have more resources! Why shouldn't I buy them lunch? (field notes, May 31, 2004)

The way that I as a Westerner displayed and pursued friendship, and the ways that the women did, were sometimes in contrast. The attempt to form a positive relationship by using a Western strategy (in this case, going for lunch) perpetuated their perceptions of me being a *mzungu* and the assumptions that being a *mzungu* meant that I was a donor. I learned to be more thoughtful in my decisions about what I offered to whom, but never really reconciled

these conflicting positions. I felt that I did not want to maintain the colonial assumptions that these women needed donors to be successful, yet struggled with the simple fact that I indeed had more than they did.

<div align="center">Perceptions: Of Being a White, Westerner</div>

Being white in a country of mostly non-white people made for some interesting reactions. In Kampala, the reactions to me/my whiteness were less obvious, probably because in a city full of foreign ngos, it was more common to see white people. In Masindi, however, people's reactions were often less subtle. For example, one day I had stopped at a school with Dominique and while she went in to meet the headmaster, I sat in the shade of the schoolyard mango tree, writing in my notebook. "However this seemed to cause quite a stir! Noise began to erupt from the classes as the children could see the *mzungu* from their classroom windows. Teachers immediately came out to greet me and to welcome me" (field notes, May 18, 2004). On at least three occasions, young children cried when they saw me. On another day, still early in the research, I was waiting in the village for one of the members to meet me:

> As I sit here I am attracting much attention and feel a bit uncomfortable: a *boda boda* driver went by but could not stop looking at me sitting here, a small group of children have gathered to stare a few meters away from me. Some of them have dared to venture closer, but others look afraid to come too near. (field notes, May 20, 2004)

And often the *boda boda* drivers who would drive me home from the Masindi market knew where I lived even though we had never met. Being white made me stand out and because of that people knew of me even though we had not interacted. Being white also carried with it some assumptions.

The women's presumptions of me as a white, Westerner, as a *mzungu*, were apparent through their comments about me. For example, during the visit by the Mukono group, I was working to crush up anthill sand in preparation for the lesson on how to make a fuel-efficient stove. While I worked Aidah said in an impressed tone, "Melanie is a hard worker" (field notes, June 8, 2004). The women laughed when I joined in on physically intensive activities and often laughed and took photos of me engaged in physical labour. On another occasion, when a few of the women and I were walking through the village we passed various vegetable gardens, Shakillah pointed out the cassava plant, a local root vegetable that is one of the starchy Ugandan staples. "Shakillah asked if I ate cassava and I said yes. They laughed and then Aidah said, 'Cassava has lots of starch and makes you strong. Even I, an old lady, am stronger than you.' And the women laughed again!" (field notes, May 17, 2004). And, although these women walked long and far to go town or to go to their fields, when I would walk to their village, Shakillah would say, "You walked?! Aye, you are strong." These examples seem to illustrate that the women's assumptions of me, as a white, Westerner were that I was not as physically capable; that I was not as strong and that I did not (could not?) engage in labour intensive activities.

The first time that I joined the women in cooking, the women seemed surprised. They had been preparing the evening meal for the guests from Mukono and without invitation I went out to the cooking area behind the house and joined them. The women laughed when I started to peel *matoke* and took photos of me using a mortar and pestle to grind nuts. The women knew that I was out of my element. When I left that evening near dark, I asked what time I should return in the morning for the session which was being taught by the Mukono group. "Epiphania tells me at 9:00 am and [one woman replied] jokingly, 'You can prepare

the breakfast'" (field notes, June 7, 2004). The women worked late that night to prepare and serve the guests their supper. By the time I arrived at nine o'clock the next morning, the women had already made their own families' breakfasts and the guests had been served their breakfasts. The women had completed various chores, Shakillah woke at four o'clock that morning to slaughter forty of the group's chickens, and Lois had already been to work, taught a class and returned. It seemed to me that the member's comment aobut returning to prepare breakfast, although said in jest, was also mocking me to some degree.

On the day the Mukono guests taught the Agabagaya group how to make a fuel-efficient clay stove, many of the women took part in the workshop and were engaged in the physical labour of building the clay stove. The process took 12 of us over six hours of hard work in the heat of the day to complete. While we worked on mixing and forming the clay, some of the women were also involved in the laborious process of preparing the large lunch for the workers, their families and the guests. It was obvious that I was not as conditioned as the women were to the labour intensive life that they lead.

Although I tried to be involved physically in what the women did, I could not always maintain the same physical energy levels of the women. And so when they said that I was not as strong as 67-year-old Aidah, or when they laughed at my pitiful attempts to grind nuts or mingle millet, the women were right in assuming my inexperience and physical inability to participate in the tasks to the same degree to which they performed them. Further, because I was a white, Westerner the women did not expect me to engage in physical work. It seemed to me that the women's perceptions of white people were probably a result of the colonial presence of the whites and of the current behaviours, attitudes and practices of whites who were working and/or living in Uganda today. The women saw white, Westerners as people

who rode in vehicles and hired "locals" to do labour intensive work for them. In Masindi, white people were seen in white trucks, not in dusty fields, and eating in the expensive hotel, not hanging out their laundry. Although it is easy to point fingers at the way "other" white people lived in Masindi, I too, participated in this colonial behaviour. I justified my actions by saying "I don't have time to do my own laundry" or, "At least someone is gaining financially from my presence here." My own behaviours and actions maintained and perpetuated the colonial hierarchy that I worked so hard to oppose. Although I tried to actively engage in the women's activities as often as I could, I was not as skilled or efficient, did not have as much stamina and at the end of each day, returned home exhausted to a house with running water, a gas stove and a fridge, with my laundry cleaned and neatly folded on the chair. Sadly, the women's perceptions of *mzungus*, although I tried to challenge them, in hindsight do not seem so misinformed.

My insistence in taking part in events like cooking was partially due to my efforts to want to break down the women's perceptions of me as guest and to be engaged with the women in their other daily activities. As time went on, the women became more receptive to my helping out with food preparation. We had a cooking day, where they showed me how to make *kipoli* and I showed them how to make sweet bread. One day Sally hosted a gathering for the women and me. Because she knew that I liked to help out, Sally left some of the minor food preparation until the end when I arrived so that she could show me how to prepare the millet. She also allowed me to help serve the meal to the women. The women let me help with the cooking for my farewell party, although some of the women were reluctant to agree to this. Their hesitations were probably not just because I was fairly useless and ineffective, but also in part due to their desire to do something for me. When I asked at the

meeting if I could come and help prepare the food, Lois said, "But we want the farewell to be for you" (field notes, June 13, 2004). The group talked in *Runyoro* for a moment and then Sally said, "Let her come and help" (field notes, June 13, 2004) in English and so it was decided. And when we were all working in the stifling hot cooking area the morning of the party, one of the women's husbands came by. He was appalled when he saw me working and said to me, "These women are not serious!" (field notes, June 20, 2004) implying that it was not acceptable that I (as a white, Westerner or as a guest, I am not sure which) was helping to cook the meal that was being prepared in my honour.

As time went on, I became more aware of my multiple roles in Kihande and their subsequent implications. For example, my involvement as a white, Westerner with the women of Agabagaya generated a degree of status with others in the village as well as with the district officials. An example where this became evident was in the request made by Chris, the SCDO. When I first arrived, Chris asked if I would be willing to visit other women's groups. Chris indicated that he thought that, "A visitor from overseas would boost their [the women in the group] morale and make them feel proud that they were being recognized" (field notes, May 6, 2004). The women of Agabagaya proudly introduced me to community members, requested that I would "give greetings" when they were meeting with other groups and insisted on having their pictures taken with me individually. These examples suggest to me that my "whiteness" carried a certain status with the women, with the villagers and with the district officials.

I wondered too, if because of my perceived status, that the women would ask for my advice (although being perceived as an expert appeared to happen more often with district officials and not as much with the women of Agabagaya). When the women asked for my

advice, I sometimes got the sense that I was asked only out of courtesy or perhaps out of protocol. For example, on one occasion, after two members informed me of a sensitive group issue, they then asked for my advice. I politely declined to give advice on the topic as I did not really understand the history of the problem or the people involved. Immediately after I said I was not able to give advice on the matter, the two women carried on their conversation without any hesitation and described to me how they planned to proceed with the issue. The scenario was recorded in my field notes as follows:

> When we [two members and I] were walking, the first member said, "Maybe you could advise us." I responded that I was not the best to do so and then she told me that according to their constitution, they would confront [the member] at a meeting. She [the member] would then have a chance to defend herself…. [The member asking my opinion] obviously had a clear plan of what to do and I am not sure why she asked for my advice. (field notes, June 14, 2004)

It appeared to me that the women understood that there were constitutional guidelines to inform their decisions, had already referred to them, and had had a discussion on how to proceed with this situation. They did not require my advice but, evidently, felt the need to ask anyway.

Perceptions: Of Me as a Researcher

My role as a "researcher" also appeared to carry predetermined assumptions by the women. Many seemed to hold the notion that research was a formal process and that there were certain structures and expectations. This became evident when I initially asked to observe a group meeting. When I arrived we gathered under the tree at Shakillah's house. I sat and patiently waited for the meeting to begin and after lengthy and informal

conversations, Shakillah finally asked, "So, what do you want to ask us?" (field notes, May 17, 2004). It became apparent that the women thought that my role as "researcher" was to ask questions. About a week later I wrote in my notebook, "It feels like they want to please me and do what *I want* them to do. It's a bit frustrating" (field notes, May 23, 2004). It took a while before I felt that the women understood my role as a researcher more clearly—that I was not there to direct them but willing to be led by them.

After I had been in Kihande for about four weeks and had better established my role and some of my relationships with the women, Lois asked me point blank about my thoughts of the group. This excerpt from my journal illustrates the scenario:

> As we settled in to Harriet's cozy home, Lois said, "So Melanie, you have been with us now for over a month, you have seen our meetings and our projects, now I have a question for you. What do you think our weaknesses are?"
>
> I felt put on the spot and yet it was obviously a concern for this group. I first praised them for their many initiatives, organization and creativity. I said that I did not have a criticism, but an observation. I told the group that when I interviewed them, they all had different visions/goals for the future. I explained that they might want to consider talking about what they want for long term goals, come to some consensus, and make a plan of how to get there. As I talked, I felt very much like a Westerner preaching about how we do things, although I did not say, "We do it like this…." However, I also felt that I owed an honest answer and this was, if nothing else, honest. (field notes, June 9, 2004)

Although I wanted to answer Lois's questions honestly, I felt that it was not my place to preach my Western ideals. I questioned (and still question) the appropriateness of my response.

The women's understanding of research, including interviews, also affected the research process. The women seemed to view interviews as a very formal procedure where the interviewer would ask scripted questions and the interviewees would answer succinctly. The women's responses were often brief and even when encouraged to do so, they rarely elaborated on their answers. My field notes describe my reaction to the interviews:

> All of the women seemed more formal during the interview and I felt that it was because of the tape recorder. They spoke slowly and clearly and at times in a more formal manner. For example, at the end of Epiphania's interview, she said, "Thank you Miss Melanie." They also hushed each other if someone was speaking when the tape was going and motioned toward the tape recorder. With both Epiphania and Aidah I could see them physically relax when the tape recorder was shut off. (field notes, May 21, 2004)

The manner in which the women responded greatly hindered the flow of a more informal interview that I had hoped to achieve; an interview where we would go into lengthy conversations and interesting sideline stories. My lack of experience in conducting rich interviews may have been a factor, however, I suspect that this only partially explains the women's formal behaviour. An informal and relaxed discussion was not what the women had expected and understood about interviews.

Further, most of the interviews were conducted during the first two weeks of the research when the women did not yet know me as well. My field notes from the first week

state, "I sometimes feel like they are giving me the 'party line,' the 'right' answer or what they think I want to hear. They certainly don't often engage in telling me a story—they answer my question with a one or two sentence answer" (field notes, May 24, 2004). The interviews may have taken on a very different feeling if they were conducted later in the research, once the women knew me better and trusted me more.

<div align="center">Relationships: Shifting Power and Disrupted Assumptions</div>

Relationships are laced with power and I cannot speak about relationships without speaking about power—one implicates the other. Building positive respectful relationships with the women was central to the research process and so I spent a great deal of time and energy establishing these relationships. I realized the importance of relinquishing control over the research process and was soon cognizant of the discomfort to which that led. It is this constant negotiation of power, of fitting in and of letting go that I address here.

<div align="center">*Shifting Roles*</div>

In an effort to diminish the confining boundaries of the definitions of "participant" and "researcher," I hoped to create an atmosphere where the participants and I would challenge these definitions and, instead, all take on roles of students, teachers and researchers. I hoped that we would work collaboratively to investigate and to better understand the sharing of knowledge that occurs among women. However, I underestimated how complex this would be. Now when reflecting on this process, I see that the roles that the women and I took on were varied, fluid, intertwining and were not always obvious nor clearly defined. I will share some examples. At times, the women definitely perceived me as a researcher: "Now, Melanie, don't you have questions that you want to ask?" (field notes, May 18, 2004), Lois inquired of me one afternoon in my first week in Kihande. The women

also accepted me as a learner and enjoyed teaching me about their group, their community and their customs. They saw me as a teacher and they often asked me about Canada, my culture, traditions, foods, and Canadian farming practices.

Conversely, the women in the group also assumed the roles of learners, teachers and researchers. They were definitely learners and actively pursued answers to their own questions. The women also took on roles of teachers. They taught me about their culture, their foods, their language, and they often taught each other as well. For example, the women taught one another how to use my camera and told me about specific times when they had learned from and taught each other. Finally, the women pursued their own research by, for example, attending workshops on farming practices, bookkeeping and leadership, in an effort to learn how to "fight poverty" in their community.

In hoping that the women and I would take on various roles, I reveal my pre-research assumptions and naiveté. First, I assumed that the women would want to pursue *my questions* about the sharing of knowledge, when clearly they had their own questions to which they wanted answers. Second, I erroneously assumed that the women would not have already taken on these varied roles of researchers, learners and teachers in their daily lives prior to my arriving. Moreover, although in my proposal I stated that "I wanted to create" an environment where we all took on these roles, I definitely overestimated my hand in this and underestimated the role of the women with whom I worked. Simply put, the women's roles were not up to me to define or create and I was mistaken in assuming that the roles the women took on would be influenced by *my* presence and research agenda.

Relinquishing Control

I was cognizant of my need to relinquish control of many aspects of this project. In an effort to push the boundaries between participant and researcher, I actively worked to *not* be a controlling force. I did not want to be perceived as "in charge," or as an "expert," and did not want the participants to feel threatened. In reflecting on relinquishing control of the research project I realized that this stemmed not only from feminist theory, and therefore a function of what I did, but also was a function of who I am and was something that I have addressed professionally prior to this research. As a classroom teacher of early years children, I have had much experience and practice in "letting go" of control in the classroom setting. I am not comparing the women to the children, but rather comparing my approach in the classroom to my approach as researcher. In my experiences, I have learned that if I sincerely want others around me to have control and ownership, then I have to reduce how much I interfere. Thus, I did not want the women to feel that they needed to proceed the way I, as the researcher, wanted them to, but rather, I wanted them to feel comfortable with me and proceed the way they chose.

However, I soon realized that this letting go of control was coupled with some feelings of discomfort at times and I needed to remind myself (or be reminded) that a position of diminished power was exactly what I was working towards. My field notes provide examples of some of these reflections:

> I was saying to Dominique that it's funny how I never really know what to expect
> when I come [to Kihande to meet the women]. I plan to observe and I end up asking
> questions. …I come to do an interview with two people and I do interviews with four.

Today we are taking "snaps," so we'll see what actually happens. I am not in control and Dominique reminded me that <u>that</u> is a good thing. (field notes, May 23, 2004)

Although I would remind myself that I did not want to be in control and would step back in situations so the women could take charge, I was also conscious of how difficult this was for me at times:

While we are waiting I am feeling impatient and a bit frustrated that things aren't more organized. Yet I tell myself that this is the women's event and they will do it however they will do it and it is not up to me to interfere. I recognize that this is not easy for me – I want to step in, to take control and to get things moving, but instead, I sit and wait. (field notes, June 8, 2004)

And again during another meeting, in which the SCDO and his assistant were present, we were making plans to host the visitors from Mukono. I wrote, "…I really wanted to step in more often to offer suggestions around planning and hosting the visitors [from Mukono], but I … am very conscious of not overstepping my bounds" (field notes, June 6, 2004). I was aware of my desire to want to control more situations and more of the research process, but I consciously struggled against it, trusting the women and letting the research be influenced by their input and control and thus allowing the research to take its consequent shape.

Although I believed that I needed to continue to relinquish control and actively worked at it, I continued to wrestle with it:

It's the fine balance between letting go of control and still achieving results…. It reminds me a lot of how I feel when I am teaching. However, in that context [teaching], the bottom line is I have a responsibility to do my job and here, I'm not so sure about the bottom line…(field notes, June 13, 2004)

I could have been more active in deciding on the schedule and in voicing my opinions about how we should proceed, however, I felt that interfering was unnecessary and may have even been counterproductive. For example, when conducting research with the group, it was not as important to me when to come to Kihande as it was to come when the women felt receptive to having me there. Although I wanted to come in the mornings to simply observe the women, to get a sense of their lives outside of the group, they rarely allowed it. I needed to respect the women's requests around time and visits and allowed them to make decisions so as to build a trusting relationship with them. By inviting their voices and input, I needed to therefore respect their subsequent requests and decisions. Other examples of what I did to reduce my control of the research process included not leading meetings and arriving with a flexible agenda or without an agenda altogether. I tried to listen more than I talked, sought permission instead of assuming (for example, when taking photographs or conducting interviews), and I asked when I should come back at the end of each visit. In relinquishing control, I tried to be mindful of the perceived power inequities between the participants and the researcher—between the women and I—and tried to acknowledge and question the accompanying (and often colonial) assumptions.

Although I actively sought an egalitarian relationship and sometimes felt that I had achieved the status of "friend" and equal, I was reminded periodically that this was not the case; that our relationships were continually fraught with imbalances. For example, on the day that the Mukono guests had arrived and we had all gathered in Dorcus's front room, I felt I was a part of the hosting group. However, a traditional gesture of welcome confirmed that I was not a host, that I was indeed a visitor, an outsider. Because the guests had just completed a long journey, local tradition dictates that after they are greeted and welcomed, the guests

should be presented with an offering of food. Although I had not travelled, I was surprised and disappointed when a fried egg was presented before me. Further, I was presented with my food first, before the other guests, and it was presented to me by one of the women on her knees. My field notes illustrate my discontent: "This disappoints me, as I feel like a member of the group, but it is clear that I am not. I am not surprised and I do understand" (field notes, June 7, 2004). I understood that the gesture was intended to be out of respect. However, it demonstrated that, although I had been with the women for three weeks, the perceived hierarchical differences were still influencing our relationships. In these situations where the power imbalances were so apparent, I was left feeling awkward, uncomfortable and also unaccepted.

Another example of me being treated as a guest occurred later that same day. I had been out at the back of the house with the women helping to prepare the meal for the guests. One of Lois's children had brought her two roasted cobs of maize. Lois asked if I had ever tried roasted maize and when I answered that I had not, she passed me a cob to try. Lois broke her cob in half and shared it with Sally, so I broke my cob in half and shared it with Epiphania. Then in the midst of peeling potatoes, because the guests had just been served *break tea* in the house, Shakillah brought me a serving of milky tea and bread with *kipoli*. The other women with whom I was cooking did not receive *break tea*. Again, I felt like I was being treated as a guest and so in an effort to minimize the perceived hierarchical difference, "I drank my tea, and shared my sandwich with the women around me" (field notes, June 7, 2004). The women gladly accepted the offering. This example demonstrates not only the interference of the perceived hierarchy on our relationships but also how I constantly struggled to negotiate, challenge and diminish these perceived differences.

Establishing Positive Relationships with the Women

In working to establish positive relationships with the women, I treated the women in the group like I would treat new friends. I tried to create positive relationships by being respectful, by demonstrating an authentic interest in their lives, and by being kind, friendly and sensitive to their requests. I inquired about the women's families and about other topics that were important to them. I listened to what they wanted to tell me and I respected the choices they made. I expected that the women would ask about me and my family and life in Canada, which they did. I tried to answer their questions openly and honestly and shared photographs of my family and friends with them. In establishing positive relationships, I also tried to respect the boundaries of privacy and the differences of our cultures and refrained from judging or pushing my (Western, feminist, privileged) views onto the women. For example, when the women talked to me about polygamy, I listened to what they told me, responded to their questions honestly, yet refrained from preaching my personal opinions.

I also tried to remove the hierarchies that came with being white, Western and a guest. A practiced tradition in Uganda is for women to kneel before guests when they enter their home. The women told me that the gesture is one of respect. However, men never knelt before women and I was never asked or expected to kneel before anyone else. There was clearly a hierarchy in place that dictated who would kneel before whom. I told the women that the gesture made me feel uncomfortable. My field notes describe the greeting when Epiphania took me to Joy's home to conduct an interview with her about seven days into the research: "Joy greeted me and knelt before me. Epiphania told her…that kneeling made me feel uncomfortable and then said, 'We are equal'" (field notes, May 25, 2004). Ironically, when Dominique and I were invited to Epiphania's home three weeks later, the following

occurred: "When we enter Epiphania's she welcomes us and kneels. Dominique says, 'Oh, you don't have to do that!' and she says to Dominique, 'It is my culture, I am comfortable'" (field notes, June 13, 2004). Although I tried to reduce the hierarchies between us, I presume that some women were uncomfortable not following certain traditions that they had practiced over the course of their lives. I must note that although I have presented two examples of women kneeling before me, it was not the norm. Most of the women did not kneel before me and I did not often observe them kneeling before others.

In working to reduce hierarchies and deflect attention away from me, I was very forthright in acknowledging the role that the women played. When officials from the district would ask me for my feedback on the women's group or would thank me for my work, I always praised the women as the conceivers of the ideas, as the organizers of events and as the ones who were taking initiative. When the reporters from the local newspaper and radio station came to see the fuel-efficient stove being made and asked to interview me, I told them that members of the group were the ones needing to be interviewed, and proceeded to find Lois and Shakillah to answer the reporters' questions. Although my presence may have gotten the group recognition for the work that they were doing, I deflected praise to the women of Agabagaya.

Over time, our relationships continued to grow and develop. An example from my notebook illustrates my feelings about the women about three weeks into the research:

I really have been enjoying my time with these women. Today when we were walking between Sally's house and Shakillah's house, Jamiila took my hand and led me to her house so that I could photograph her baby, her sister and her brother. She held my hand as we went down the path to her house. I felt a bit uncomfortable (as I would not

normally hold hands with my friends from home), but it also felt good to be the

recipient of such a warm gesture. It made me feel included and liked. (field notes,

May 23, 2004)

These feelings seemed completely normal at the time, and yet I was surprised by how much I

was enjoying the women's company and by how much I wanted to be included and accepted

by them. The following day, Shakillah and I were walking in the village. We were talking

about a confidence that she had shared with me: "Shakillah nudged me, giggled, and gave me

a conspiratory smile" (field notes, May 24, 2004). We both laughed and I remember feeling

surprised and I felt that this gesture was one of friendship. Shakillah had acknowledged the

secret we had shared, and I was pleased to feel included.

The power dynamics and hierarchical nature of our relationships were continually

manifested in various ways. Nonetheless, as the research proceeded, our relationships

continued to grow in trust and respect. Naturally, each relationship varied depending on

factors such as the amount of time I spent with individuals, areas of common interests, and

the personal connections that we made. For example, Shakillah and I spent a great deal of

time together. Because she was the chairperson of the Agabagaya's Women Group we would

often gather at her house. She and I were usually the first to arrive for meetings and so we

would talk while we waited for the others. I got to know her husband and children and one

day she shared her wedding photographs with me. Lois and I also spent time together outside

of group meetings. I visited her at the school where she taught, I visited her and her family at

their home on a number of occasions, and one day we met in town so she could help me shop

for a traditional outfit for the farewell party. Not finding an outfit that was suitable, Lois lent

me one of her *gomezes* and helped Dominique and me to dress on the day of the farewell

event. Aidah and I did not spend a great deal of time together outside of the group gatherings, but because she was a teacher we had a common interest. Aidah was also the group advisor and village vice-chairperson and so had invaluable insight and wisdom to share with me. I respected her immensely and we had a comfortable bond. Each relationship was different and reflected the individual women: Sally had a contagious laughter and loved to joke and laugh with me, while Epiphania enjoyed sharing her garden produce and planting advice. Harriet was forthright, honest, energetic and worked near my house, so we would often see each other informally. Joy was kind, gentle, caring, and had a smile and presence as warm as her name. Dorcus opened her home to the visitors from Mukono, and shared fascinating stories about her life. Both Mary and Rosemary were younger than the others, were more reserved, and were both actively involved in the group. Jamiila was youthful and energetic and eagerly shared her life with me. Mariam was exuberant, outspoken, and had an immense amount of energy which was evident in her brisk walking pace. Conversely, Sarah had quiet presence. She was serene, intelligent and eager to learn. Each relationship was built on what each of us offered as well as what we established together.

Our relationships continued to develop. The trust between us grew and some of the women confided in me about personal and group issues. I was invited to some of the women's homes, and they would sometimes hold my hand as we walked. The women gave me an *empaako* name (a tribal pet name) of *Abwole*. They would often greet me with this name in *Runyoro* and were thrilled when I would attempt to respond in their language. I spent much time practicing *Runyoro* as it pleased the women immensely, even if I stumbled and erred as I spoke. The amount of time that the women spent with me was enormous and was illustrated by one of the VSOs comments to me, "How do they make so much time for you?"

The women hosted a farewell party on my second last day in Kihande and invited village and district officials. They had an elaborate programme (Appendix K), had a local artist make a batik, which they presented to me as a farewell gift, and sang a farewell song that they wrote for me (Appendix L). Of course, one could argue that the women's motives were other than that of friendship and, although I accept the reality of ulterior motives, the development of relationships that may have been initially prompted by each of our desired outcomes eventually grew into relationships of respect and enjoyment. From my perspective, our differing motivations were not a source of tension or an obstacle that hindered our relationships from developing. However, it was something that loomed in the background and, at times, nagged to be probed. (The women's possible motivations and what they had to gain from participation in the research will be examined more closely in the following chapter).

I felt that I had established a degree of trust with the women of Agabagaya. I felt that we had developed relationships where I was perceived as someone who respected them and who worked on their behalf when they asked. For example, I had followed up with and made the initial contact to organize the exchange visit to Mukono as Shakillah had encouraged me to do, secured funding for the venture and shared the exchange plans with the District. Helping to organize the exchange gave me some credibility as an ally and had positive implications for the group and their reputation.

Not only did the women's perceptions of my role change but also so did my perceptions of my role. Relationships became a focus and a priority for me but also created a rift for me internally. It seemed to me that the intimacies and complications of the relationships began to take priority for me over research. One day about three weeks into the

research, I was thinking about my afternoon: "I had really enjoyed my visit, the women are always so generous with their time, so hospitable and genuinely kind. I smiled all the way home on the *boda boda* as I reflected on my afternoon" (field notes, June 2, 2004). In my attempt to blur the line between participants and researcher, I failed to consider the implications that this would have for me as a researcher and thus, for the research itself. When departing Kihande one afternoon, after having an absolutely joyous time with the women, they let me walk alone to the main road for the first time ever. I was elated! Had I finally dropped the title of "guest?" Although I knew that it was foolish for me to believe so, I could not help but to wish that I had become a friend. I was "doing research" but I had become concerned foremost with building and maintaining my relationships with the women, and now that I felt that we had established the beginnings of positive relationships, I wondered how it all "fit back" with research. I wondered how I would keep the research progressing? I further began to realize and truly understand that the research was not only complimented by my relationships with the women but, because the women controlled what I did and saw, I realized that the research was dependent on my relationships with the women.

The Women's Power: My Misconceptions and the Research Realities

Prior to my arrival in Uganda, I had thought about, talked about and read considerably about researcher/participant relationships. I was adamant about wanting to create positive and respectful relationships with the research participants and I also wanted to examine these relationships in terms of power hierarchies. Although I understood on a theoretical level that the women participants would have power and control in this process, I was surprised by the amount of power and control the women actually held. As I began to look closely at the power structures between researcher and participant, I realized that I had

less power than I had presumed. Further, it was through our established relationships that I

became aware of the women's power and control in the research by what they eventually

allowed me to see and hear. As our trust and respect grew, the women were more

comfortable sharing with me and relinquishing *their* control over the research process. My

insights into their lives grew out of what they allowed me to see of their world.

<div align="center">*Controlling the Disclosure of Information*</div>

Because the women controlled many aspects of the research, developing positive

relationships became critical to the outcome of the project and, without the support and trust

of the women, I would not have had access to the knowings that they held. For example, I

was surprised to learn that, although I thought that I had chosen this group to research, there

was more to the picture than what I had originally assumed. About four weeks into the

project, Lois and I were walking on the narrow path from Dorcus's house to Shakillah's

house. It was the day that the Mukono visitors were teaching us about the clay stoves and by

this time, Lois and I had spent a considerable amount of time together.

> On the way [to Shakillah's], she [Lois] tells me that when the group first heard that I
>
> (a Canadian researcher) was coming, they went to the district office to ensure that I
>
> would visit their group. I asked how they had heard that I was coming and she said
>
> that [the assistant SCDO] had told them. (field notes, June 8, 2004)

I had erroneously assumed that I had controlled the selection process, when in fact, it

appeared that the women were a considerable force in the process without me even knowing

it. This illustrated for me that although I was looking for a research site, the women definitely

had a hand in ensuring that I visited their group and thus, exhibited control in the research

process early on. Also, although my initial visit had occurred five weeks prior to this

incident, it took Lois until this day to share this story with me. This scenario made me wonder how much control the women had in other areas of the research process of which I was unaware and what influence they had exerted on other parts of the research.

When I first arrived I often asked questions and sought information from the women on what was occurring, why certain things were being planned and why particular approaches were being taken. Often the women would reply to my direct questioning with one-word answers or no answers at all. I supposed that it was not culturally appropriate to be so direct, so forthright in requesting information. However, I discovered that if I waited, the answer(s) to my question(s) would usually/eventually be revealed. This gradual release of information was a very real way that the women controlled the research process. It seemed that the women did not and often would not give out information until they were prepared to do so. I learned that an appropriate response (and a personal coping strategy), when I perceived the women to be withholding information, was that I needed to be patient, to "wait and see." I must note that I do not believe that the women purposefully withheld information in an effort to sabotage the research. I feel that it was more a combination of cultural behaviour, building of trust and perhaps some miscommunications that influenced this initial reluctance to share information.

Let me provide an example. When sitting with the women of Agabagaya during a meeting one Sunday in the grassy yard of the secondary school, I noticed a large group of women gathering on the other side of the schoolyard. I wondered who these women were and why they were here. It seemed as if they were waiting for the women of Agabagaya. My field notes illustrate the scenario and Lois's directions to me:

Lois wanted to wrap up the meeting because there was another women's group

waiting to meet with her. …Lois seemed anxious to wrap it up and asked Chris, his

assistant and I to come and give greetings to the women who were waiting to meet

with them. She told me that I would give greetings and then Harriet, Sarah and

Mariam were waiting to be interviewed. (field notes, June 6, 2004).

 Although this type of interaction between the Agabagaya women and these other women

who had gathered was exactly what I would have liked to have seen, it was clear that that was

not what the women had planned for me that day. When I asked Lois what the meeting was

all about, she answered vaguely that these women had come to meet with them. So I gave

greetings as requested and then proceeded to conduct the interviews that had been arranged.

The women who were being interviewed that day waited for me off on the other side

of the small schoolyard. I conducted each interview and once each interview was completed,

the participant would thank me and go to join the large group meeting. When I asked during

one of the interviews about the group of women meeting in the grass, I received more vague

answers. The interview with Mariam illustrates this well. Although I left long wait times and

prompted her often, she never did explain what Agabagaya was doing with these other

women.

M: So did that group, that is meeting there, did they come to Agabagaya

            to ask for help, is that why they are meeting today?

Mariam: *We* mobilized *them*.

M: Okay...[pause]

Mariam: Because they are in a problem.

M: Right…[pause]

Mariam: And we are in the same problem.

M: Yeah…? [pause]

Mariam: So at least we are now growing— [makes hand motion here]

M: —farther along?

Mariam: Yes, so we mobilize others so we can also grow, the whole village can, can grow. This is poverty eradication programme. That's what we are supporting. Now even our president, is now, has [stated?] the struggle, to fight poverty and that's what we are doing. When we fight our own poverty, also we fight for other women.

(interview transcript, June 6, 2004)

Mariam's response was ambiguous. I continued with the rest of the interviews and decided that it was best to wait and see to find out what was occurring between these groups of women. The following Sunday the purpose of the gathering was fully explained to me and I was allowed to sit in and listen when the women met again. Although there may have been many reasons why the women did not reveal a lot of information about this gathering at first, I think that the example illustrates that the women definitely had control over if and when they would share information with me.

On another occasion, when I was talking with just two members, and had asked a specific question regarding group protocol, they did not answer. "They do not say anything" (field notes, May 31, 2004). The women remained silent and eventually changed the subject. I had no choice but to drop the subject and respect their decision to not respond to my question. The women always had control in what they chose to tell me. Again, I am not saying that the women were uncooperative by intentionally keeping information from me, but rather I am demonstrating how much the women controlled when, how and what information

I would receive. I was dependent on them for information. The women, therefore, held a great deal of power over this aspect of the research and the releasing of information was dependent on the level of trust and respect that we shared.

Controlling My Schedule

The women controlled what information they chose to share with me, but they also determined my schedule; that is, how often I could come to the village to observe and converse. The women always decided when I should come and when I should not come. For example, on the Friday of the first week of the research my notes state:

The Saturday *Runyoro* class is cancelled because Aidah's granddaughter is getting married. So they told me not to come back until Sunday. Usually they have me come at 4:00 and the last two times at 3:00, but this Sunday they want me to come at 2:00. I think because they want me to take photos. (field notes, May 21, 2004)

On another occasion nine days into the research, I had asked Epiphania if I should come back the following day. "Epiphania said again that the women are very busy. Perhaps I have been coming too often. I want to just hang around and observe some of the women during the day, but whenever I come, they think that they need to gather and greet me and then they ask me, 'So Melanie, what is the programme?'" (field notes, May 25, 2004).

Prior to commencing the research the women had explicitly told me that I could only come in the afternoons because they had much work to attend to in the mornings. At our first meeting, the women told me that I could come on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays. However, when the interviews started (at the end of the first week of the research), I was invited to return every day. Each day after the interviews when I was preparing to leave, I would ask when I should return and usually Shakillah would tell me to return the next day to

interview more of the women. This became the protocol. At the end of each visit, I would ask when I could come again. Shakillah, being the chairperson and organizer of most interviews and meetings, would tell me when to return, what time and where to meet. My notes illustrate an example of these conversations when I was directed to not return the following day:

> …We were singing, dancing and laughing and having so much fun, but it was getting dark and I had to leave. Shakillah asked when I would come next and I said, "I am not sure. Do you want me to come tomorrow?" She replied, "No, don't come tomorrow." I didn't argue. I know that they have lots to do without me. They want to plan the programme and the budget for Sunday and I feel badly about the amount of time I take up. (field notes, June 14, 2004)

It became evident that had the women and I not formed positive relationships, they would not have wanted me there as often they did. For example, because I really wanted to be at a planning meeting in preparation for hosting the Mukono exchange group, but it was planned for a day that I could not attend, the women changed the date of the meeting to accommodate me. Out of the 34 days that I conducted the research, I was with the women of Agabagaya 21 of these days. Twice in the five-week period I travelled to Kampala (for a total of six of the thirteen days that I was not with the women) to get film developed, to exchange travellers cheques, to meet with a representative from Mukono District to arrange the exchange, and to purchase supplies. The remaining seven days that I was not with the women were spent writing, reading, transcribing, resting and exploring. Besides inviting me to the village regularly, the women began to invite me for events that they thought I might enjoy, like cooking. They also invited me to their homes and work places, offered to meet me in

town and wanted me to meet their husbands and children. The women moved from asking me about "my programme," to willingly including me in their lives.

The women organized the schedule of my visits and arranged the interview schedules as well. Shakillah, as the chairperson, ensured that every woman in the group was interviewed. She organized whom I would interview, when and where. I would arrive at the determined time and Shakillah, Epiphania, or Joy would meet me and take me to someone's house where I was welcomed by the interviewee. I did not usually know in advance whom I would be interviewing, how many women I would be interviewing on a given day and where the interviews would be conducted. Because Shakillah needed to schedule the women based on who had time to meet with me, she would often arrange these interviews when I was not present. When I arrived there was always a plan in place, although it was one that I did not have a hand in determining.

The interviews were obviously a priority for the women and Shakillah ensured that each woman was interviewed, even when tragedy struck. On two occasions when I had arrived at the scheduled time to conduct interviews, Shakillah was not able to meet me because of deaths in her extended family. On both occasions, she had arranged that someone meet me to explain the situation.

When I arrived today, I was met by Epiphania—which surprised me because I was to meet Shakillah at her sewing shop and she was to organize two more interviews. However, the shop was closed up and Epiphania was sitting on a bench outside the shop, obviously waiting for me. She greeted me and shook my hand, and as always asked, 'How is Dominique?' As we began to walk up the path towards Shakillah's

she said, 'So Melanie, Shakillah is not here today. Another baby has died and she has

gone to help prepare for the burial.'" (field notes, May 25, 2004)

Although Shakillah had much more pressing things to take care of, other than tending to the

foreign researcher, she ensured that someone met me and that the interviews proceeded as

scheduled.

As time went on and as the women's comfort with me grew, the women were often

more open with me. About two weeks into the research, women with whom I had spent most

of my time so far, began to confide in me and, about three weeks into the research, I was

being invited to women's homes. Eventually, through our developing relationships and

growing familiarity with the research process, I think that the women's perceptions of the

research and of their roles within it also changed. For example, the women moved from

providing stiff interviews to an eagerness to work with me. An example of this was evident in

a conversation I had with Shakillah five weeks into the project. I had arrived in Kihande early

that day and so walked over to Shakillah's sewing shop, knowing she would not yet be at

home.

Epiphania comes over and we greet and talk. She says that they [the women of

Agabagaya] want to write a letter of commendation for me to take home—how

thoughtful and professional. I tell her that I too have a report to write for Chris and

Shakillah says, "We will do it together." (field notes, June 13, 2004)

This example also illustrates the power that the women themselves felt they had. The women

felt they could assist me by writing a letter to commend me as a researcher and they felt

confident that they had the information and feedback that was needed for a report for Chris,

the SCDO.

An interesting scenario arose early in the research when a woman from the village asked me to interview her. Unbeknownst to me, the woman was not a member of Agabagaya. On the first Sunday that I attended an Agabagaya meeting, this village woman and Augustus from MADFA were also present. I presumed that this woman was a member of Agabagaya that I had not yet met and, when we took a tour of the group's income-generating projects, we also visited this woman's demonstration garden. She excitedly showed Augustus and me the variety of gardening projects on which she had been working. The woman asked me if I could interview her the next time I visited (which was to be the following day) and I responded affirmatively. However, when I arrived at Shakillah's the next day prepared to conduct the interviews, Shakillah sat down to speak with me. My field notes explain what happened:

> She [Shakillah] asked me if I was interviewing her [Shakillah] today and I said yes.

> Shakillah: We are going to [the woman's] after?

> M: Yes, I thought that was what we had planned. I can interview her
>   today. (I began to wonder where this conversation was going and
>   waited patiently to find out.)…

> Shakillah: Do you only want to interview members of the group?

> M: [hesitantly] Well…I only have time to research one group…

> Shakillah: I'll tell you why I am asking. [The woman] is not in our group. She is
>   forming another group of her own.

> M: Oh? [waiting…]

> Shakillah: Yeah….

> M: So you would prefer it if I didn't interview her?

Shakillah:	Aye. [slight head nod]
	[pause]
Shakillah:	She is one of us. She advises and this and that but she is not a member of our group.
M:	I told her that I would come take some photos of her projects today. I feel that I should still do that. What should I do?
Shakillah:	We will go and look and take the photos and talk. Then we will go.
M:	Okay. (field notes, May 24, 2004)

Evidently, Shakillah did not want me to interview this other woman. Shakillah explained that this woman should not be interviewed because she was "not in our group" and was "forming another group." If there were other reasons why Shakillah did not want me to interview this woman I did not know and could not guess. What was very clear to me, however, was that although I had agreed to interview this woman, it was not what the chairperson wanted me to do. So, I felt obliged to respect Shakillah's request and asked her how we should proceed so as not to offend the woman. The way I spent my time with the women, the research activities in which I engaged and how the women chose to respond were all ways that the women exhibited control over the research process.

Controlling Information by Speaking in Runyoro

Another way that the women of Agabagaya demonstrated control over the research process was by choosing what I would hear during their conversations. The women were able to control this by speaking in *Runyoro*. Because *Runyoro* was the women's first language, I understood that it was sometimes easier for the women to revert to their native language, especially when trying to clarify or further explain something to someone. However, I soon

began to suspect and to notice that *Runyoro* was not just used as a convenience for the women, and that it was sometimes used as a way to censor what I heard. I will provide some examples. On my second day with the group one member asked about the camera. "She asked why I had not brought my camera today and when I would bring it. They talk in *Runyoro* for a moment and then Shakillah tells me in English that I should bring it on Sunday" (field notes, May 18, 2004). A similar example occurred on the fifth day: "They then began to speak in *Runyoro* for a minute or two and then asked me [a question]" (field notes, May 21, 2004). Another documented example occurred after my first week in Kihande. I had been in the village everyday that week to meet with women or to conduct interviews. I wrote, "As we made plans for when I should come again, they spoke in *Runyoro* briefly and then Lois said, 'We thought we had planned that you would come Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday?'" (field notes, May 23 2004). The women seemed to express their concern to Lois when they spoke in *Runyoro* over my many visits and then Lois echoed (and edited?) their concerns to me in English. It was important to notice the women's reversion to *Runyoro* as it often indicated that they were talking about something they did not want me to hear and this reiterated for me how much the women controlled what I heard.

Another similar event occurred one Sunday during the second week of my research. I had arrived early to the meeting and had inadvertently interrupted a meeting already in progress:

> I arrived at 3:30 (I was told that the meeting would start at 4:00) and found the women already gathered on a mat behind the school. I was surprised and then confused and then worried that I was late. As I approached, they welcomed me briefly. Lois explained that they were re-reading the constitution and she continued.

Sally, Harriet, Shakillah, Lois, Mariam, Epiphania, Jamiila, and Rosemary were

present. Joy arrived later and left early. (field notes, May 31, 2004)

The meeting continued in *Runyoro* with some English interjections and about 20 minutes

later once the topic was addressed and the discussion ended, the women officially welcomed

me and began the regular meeting. It appeared to me that the women had begun the meeting

early because they did not want me to hear about controversy or matters of tension within the

group. I had arrived earlier than they had requested and they did not want to appear rude by

excluding me, so instead talked in *Runyoro*. The details of the issue were later explained to

me in a small group conversation and, although I understand the sensitive nature of the issue

and their hesitance to share it with me, it again demonstrates the control that the women had

in what they chose to share.

In the first week of the research I discovered that an incident occurred where it

seemed to me that the group deliberately chose not to tell me something. I am not saying that

the women did not have the right to be selective about what they shared and I completely

understand why the women might choose to keep certain things to themselves. (Especially

because the nature of the issue was sensitive and the women would not want it "publicly"

aired). However, this does beg the question of how much and how often the women censored

their conversations. It also illustrates that the women of Agabagaya had a great deal of power

when it came to what they wanted me to hear and to not hear and what they chose to share

with me. It was necessary that we establish a mutual trust so that the women would feel

comfortable sharing with me. This also demonstrates that, although I could record what I saw

and heard when in Kihande, the women had many conversations and interactions to which I

was not privy. The women needed to trust me and I needed to trust them as well.

At the beginning of the research, I was hesitant to ask about the conversations that took place in *Runyoro* among the women. I did not want to be overbearing or to appear rude and wanted to respect what the women chose not to tell me. However, as time went on and I felt more comfortable and accepted, I would ask directly what they were talking about. An example of this occurred about four weeks into the research, when I asked during a group meeting about the *Runyoro* conversation that was occurring. The conversation stopped and Aidah told me, in front of the group, about the details of the issue. She explained that some of the members did not want to talk about this particular issue in front of me, while others were arguing that they thought that I should hear the conversation. The conversation then continued in English. As the women became more comfortable with me, and presumably trusted me more, they also become more concerned that I was able to fully understand what was occurring during their conversations.

Eventually, I felt that the women actively included me more often in the conversations even when they were sensitive in nature. For example, the issue of "rumour mongering" was discussed previously in *Runyoro* and therefore had been concealed from me during meetings and gatherings. (Although I had been informed of the issue during a one-on-one and a small group conversation and so was made aware of it.) However, at a particular meeting in June (about three-and-a-half weeks into the research), Shakillah said to the members in English, "What is said in the meetings stops here and should not be heard out and about in the community" (field notes, June 13, 2004). Shakillah was referring to a complaint she had received about a member who had been talking negatively about the group to a community member. This appeared to be a shift, as previously these sensitive issues were discussed in *Runyoro* during group meetings.

Another example occurred during a meeting about four weeks into the research when Harriet challenged the group in English in my presence. Harriet wondered how it was decided on who was going on the exchange to Mukono. She asked, "When did this group sit to decide? The members want to know" (field notes, June 13, 2004). Evidently the entire group did not have a say in which members were chosen to go on the exchange and wanted to know how and when this decision was made. This was the same question I had asked two weeks earlier and was met with silence. However, on this day, it was asked, answered and discussed in my presence in English. Raising and discussing sensitive group issues in my presence would not have occurred if the women had not developed a greater trust in me.

This releasing of control of what the women would have me hear and learn was also evident in the fact that the women became more active in ensuring that I heard and understood about what they were talking. In the first two weeks, when the women spoke in *Runyoro*, no one would offer to translate or call out for translation. After about three weeks into the research, if the conversation switched to *Runyoro,* the person who was sitting next to me would begin to translate without being asked or prompted to do so. If the person next to me did not begin to translate when a discussion ensued in *Runyoro*, someone would call out in the midst of the discussions, "Translate! Translate!" so that I could understand the conversation. As trust was built and habits and routines were more established, the women spoke more openly in my presence, were more willing to discuss sensitive issues and were more concerned that I understood their conversations.

By the time we went to Mukono, where the women all spoke in their local languages (although the Mukono group spoke *Luganda* and the Agabagaya women spoke *Runyoro*, they could understand each other), Shakillah and Epiphania were very aware that I did not

understand what was being said. Without being asked, they took turns quietly translating the conversations for me. "They had to constantly translate for me and one of them always stayed close to my side—not for their comfort, but rather, for mine" (field notes, June 17, 2004). The women became more aware of my desire to understand and willingly translated more often.

I feel that a greater trust and openness occurred as a result of the developing relationships between the women and me. Because of the positive relationships that the women and I formed, they were willing to spend their time with me, became more open about sensitive issues, confided in me more often, and allowed me to participate in activities in which *mzungus* would normally not partake. Although I struggled at times with feelings that I was disregarding the research in the name of the relationships with the women, I realize now that these relationships were critical to the success of the research and therefore superceded all else.

<div align="center">Connections to Literature</div>

Although I understood from a theoretical standpoint that relationships were important, my experiences demonstrated how critical they were to the research process. Relationships, meaningful and reciprocally respectful connections that I made with the women of Agabagaya, were what made my research possible and what made me think deeply about my role in Uganda and in the research process itself. In this section, I will argue that forming positive relationships with the participants during the research process was critical for two main reasons. The first is that forming positive relationships is a fundamental element of feminist research—it is a moral, as well as theoretical, requirement of any feminist research. As a feminist researcher, I needed to respect and connect with research participants as human

beings first and foremost, not treat the women solely as "subjects." The second point that I want to highlight in regards to why positive relationships are so important in the research process is based on my beliefs that women are powerful knowers of their lives and communities and, as a researcher I needed their input, their voices, and their knowings. Therefore, if the women and I did not develop positive relationships, the knowings that they chose to share with me would have been more limited and more superficial. The women of Agabagaya had power and control in the research process which directly impacted the quality of the data collected.

<div align="center">*Positive Relationships as Fundamental to Feminist Qualitative Research*</div>

The importance of forming positive relationships within an ethnographic study (and presumably within any ethical qualitative study) cannot be overstated. Oakley (1981) argues for research where hierarchies between researcher and participant are reduced, where interviewees ask questions of the interviewer and where interviewers openly share their responses and personal information with participants. Oakley (1981) states that:

> It becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship. (p. 41)

As Oakley (1981) succinctly puts it, there is "no intimacy without reciprocity" (p. 49). The literature in regards to relationships between participants and researcher underscores the need for the researcher to make the relationships with the participants a priority, as these relationships are a fundamental element in the research process.

The importance of examining power hierarchies within relationships is prevalent

throughout the feminist research literature. For example, Skeggs (1994) writes:

Feminist research places emphasis on power relations. Early feminist research

suggested that the power relations between the researcher and the researched should

be non-hierarchical. This is now dismissed as naïve by most feminist researchers,

who argue for an acknowledgement of power and differences between women. (p. 80)

Skeggs reminds me that relationships are not void of power and instead asserts that as a

researcher I must acknowledge power. I attempted to probe these power differences to

examine my position within these differences and worked to diminish these differences.

Although not always successful, I was aware of and reflective of my position. Abu-Lughod

(1993) writes that:

Relations—or, more accurately, constructions—of self and other are rarely innocent

of power. To be feminist entails being sensitive to domination; for the ethnographer

that means being aware of domination in the society being described and in the

relationship between the writer (readers) and the people being written about. (p. 5)

The feminist research literature argues that relationships cannot be established or examined

without looking at the nature and manifestations of power. While working to create positive

relationships in which I was aware of and reflexive of power, I was struck by the emotional

attachment that I began to form with the women participants. Coffey (1999) also

acknowledges the importance and value of relationships within the research process:

"Fieldwork involves the enactment of social roles and relationships, which places the self at

the heart of the enterprise. A field, a people and a self are crafted through personal

engagements and interactions among and between researcher and researched." (p. 23)

As our relationships developed, as we came to know each other better, became more concerned with each other, and became more connected to each other, my emphasis on our relationships became quite central in the research. That is, relationship issues (maintenance, tensions, and enjoyment of) often became a greater focal point than the research itself. Although I had initially planned to create positive relationships with the women with whom I researched, I soon realized that I *desired* these relationships—I wanted to be connected, to feel included, and to be considered a member of the group. I did not want to be viewed as a guest, as an outsider. Coffey (1999) suggests that, "It is inevitable and desirable that we seek to develop positive relationships with those we are engaged in studying (with)" (p. 39). I agree wholeheartedly with Coffey's statement and, although slightly surprised by these emotions, can attest to feelings of wanting to be included in the relationships with the women and of seeking out the women's friendships.

Although positive relationships are what I, as a feminist researcher aimed to achieve, at one point in my reflections it made me pause. When I was walking home one evening from Kihande after cooking, laughing, singing and dancing with the women, I remember smiling and feeling quite happy and content. Then I caught myself thinking, "What part of this is research exactly? It seems to be getting very cloudy" (field notes, June 14, 2004). This question startled me and needs to be examined. The research had indeed become cloudy, blurred, and, at times, indistinguishable from the relationships. How do I reconcile the need to develop relationships while continuing to conduct the research? What happens when the laughing, sharing confidences, teaching each other songs, and talking becomes a greater focus than the interviews, observations and note taking? In making the relationships such a priority in my research, did I gather documentation of lesser quality and/or in lesser amounts,

pursue my questions with less vigor, or let the research take a back seat? I have discovered

that this is not an "either/or" question—either I have a relationship with the participants or I

pursue research more rigorously. It is not a matter of research *or* relationships, of one *over*

the other but, rather, that the research *is dependent on* the relationships. I cannot be a feminist

researcher without my main concern being that of the relationships I create with the

participants. Feminist research cannot occur without positive, meaningful, reciprocally

respectful relationships.

Behar (1996) acknowledges these complications of ethnographic research when she

writes, "Our methodology is split at the root: act as a participant, but don't forget to keep

your eyes open" (p. 5). Behar's statement reflects the challenge of the role of researcher and

illustrates well the conflicting emotions I often felt. Skeggs (1994) writes of conducting

research interviews with young women and then spending much of her interview time

actually counselling the participants instead of carrying on with the interview. But Skeggs

(1994) argues that she had no choice. "But what else can you do?" and writes, "This is an

ethical dilemma of feminist research" (p. 81). The feminist researcher is concerned with the

human being first and I assert that, without a positive relationship with that individual,

reciprocal trust and respect, the subsequent data would simply not be worth having.

And although I agree with Smith (1999) when she writes, "…the term 'research' is

inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (p. 1), and understand the truth

of this statement in many (most?) research studies, I argue that this does not have to be the

case. The determining factors in creating research that is not a function of hierarchical

domination is twofold: first, the willingness of the participants to participate and second, that

the researcher's first and foremost priority is that of developing positive, respectful

relationships with the participants. If a positive relationship is not formed, subsequent "data," stories and information will inevitably be tainted with hierarchical, power-laden junk. Further, assuming that feminist research maintains colonial underpinnings undermines feminist theory and positions the feminist researcher in a role that is adamantly opposed. Smith's position overlooks the fact that feminist researchers work from a model of valuing relationships, attempt not to homogenize people into cultural constructs, and acknowledge power differences. That being said, I also agree with Patai's (1991) reminder that "neither purity nor safety resides in calling one's research 'feminist'" (p. 150), and add that it is not as important what I name the research as how I conduct the research. How I think about my subject position as a feminist and how I perceive those with whom I conduct my research is what determines its worth.

The Power of the Participants in the Research Process

Establishing positive relationships to obtain "better data," "subjective data," relies on a fundamental belief that acknowledges participants as experts in their worlds. Like Belenky et al. (1986), I believe that it is the women who know best about themselves, their communities and their lives. And, like midwife teachers, researchers need to "focus not on their own knowledge…but on the students' [in this case, participants'] knowledge" (Belenky, et al. 1986, p. 218). I trust that the participants will share what is important and relevant but I also acknowledge and respect that it is ultimately their choice to do so. The research relies on the willingness of participants to engage in the research process, as well as their openness to invest in a relationship with the researcher. Therefore, the power of the participants within the research process cannot be underscored enough.

When I reflected on the process of finding an appropriate research site, I realized the importance of finding a group of women who were comfortable with me and who were willing to be a part of the research. From the very beginning I sought to make a connection with a group of women, to feel a sense of welcome from them. I knew that, if the women were eager to participate, it would be easier to form positive relationships. However, I do not think I realized how much our relationships would make a difference in the research process. I underestimated how much control the women would take in the organizing of the research (like scheduling the interviews and my visits) and the influence the women would have on what information was shared with me. Because the women were willing to invest in our relationships, the women made time for me, were honest with me, and were concerned about the success of my project.

As mentioned, the feminist research literature argues for the development of positive relationships and the acknowledgement of the varying power differences. Some argue that positive relationships are a requirement, a prerequisite to qualitative research (Oakley, 1981). However, Coffey (1999) takes this statement one step farther and states that the quality of the fieldwork is dependent on the *quality of the relationships* and states, "The interactional quality of fieldwork relies upon the formation of such relationships. In comparison, poor or difficult fieldwork relations can affect the collection of data, as well as our experiences and memories of fieldwork" (p. 39). Without the supportive and reciprocally respectful relationships that were formed, the quality of the data that I obtained would have suffered. I previously explained that the women, especially at the beginning of the research, appeared to be selective in what they allowed me to see and hear. As time progressed, and as our relationships developed, I felt that the women felt safer in sharing sensitive subject matter

with me and felt that they could directly support my research. I believe that the quality of the data was directly related to the positive relationships that had been established.

Conversely, had our relationships been poorly formed, been distrustful or demeaning, or lacked caring, the research data would have been restrictive and superficial. For example, if I had tried to make all of the decisions, if the women's needs were not addressed, or if the sharing of myself was not valued, I assert that the research data would have been more limited by what the women chose to share with me, if they chose to share with me at all. Oakley (1981) shares my views on this:

> The reasons that they were so pronounced [she is referring to the willingness of the participants to participate] in the research project discussed here is because of the attitudes of the interviewer—i.e. the women were reacting to my own evident wish for a relatively non-hierarchical relationship…. The attitude I conveyed could have had some influence in encouraging the women to regard me as a friend rather than purely as a data-gatherer. (p. 47)

In effect, Oakley argues that the women were more engaged in the interviews because they perceived her as someone in a similar hierarchical position—as more of an equal. Oakley had worked with the women in establishing positive relationships, which led to a willingness to participate and to share more openly. In Oakley's (1981) article, she also refers to Zweig who instead of conducting interviews, realized that inquiring about peoples' lives "is much more readily done on a basis of friendship than in a formal interview" (p. 52).

Without positive relationships between the researcher and the participants, the research has every chance to be completely undermined. Oakley (1981) writes:

> Interviewees are people with considerable potential for sabotaging the attempt to research them. Where, as in the case of anthropology or repeated interviewing in sociology, the research cannot proceed without a relationship of mutual trust being established between interviewer and interviewee the prospects are particularly dismal. This inevitably changes the interviewer/anthropologist's attitude to the people he/she is studying. (p. 56)

The participants then, as knowers of their worlds, hold the power within the research process in regards to their level of participation, their degree of honesty and what they choose to share with the researcher.

Surprisingly, what is not emphasized as often in the feminist research literature is the amount of power and control that participants have within the research process. The participants in my study controlled what they shared, when they shared, with whom I conducted interviews and what I heard and observed. Rather, the literature often indicates that the participants are at risk of being exploited. For example, Stacey (1991) states that the process of ethnography puts participants at risk of being manipulated and that the research product is a product primarily of the researcher. Although I understand Stacey's position and point in questioning ethnography, I fully agree with Skeggs (1994) when she argues:

> Stacey overstates the power of the researcher and places the researched into a victim category…. the feminism of the research has provided a framework which they use to explain that their individual problems are part of a wider structure and not their personal fault….To assume that they were exploited confines them to a category of passivity that most feminists are at pains *not* to reproduce. (p. 88)

Based on my experience, I argue that the women of Agabagaya were not (and are not) passive, did not take on the roles of victims, and held great positions of power within the research.

However, Stacey's (1991) point that the product of the research is primarily that of the researcher is something that has remained at the forefront of my mind as I write. I am very cognizant that the women allowed me into their lives and so am extremely careful that I do not abuse that privilege or take advantage of our relationship. Although I have tried to demonstrate my points honestly throughout the text, this has also been tempered with my obligation to respect the confidences that I hold. I am careful to write in a way that protects these confidences, guards the women's honour and yet adequately reflects my experiences. Stacey asserts that the product of the research is usually controlled solely by the researcher and therefore has potential for betrayal. However, she seems to overlook the underpinnings of feminist research—that is, in conducting research that respects participants, I (the researcher) have no right to disregard the fundamental research priorities and moral obligations when it comes to writing an analysis.

When research occurs in a developing country by one who is from the West, the same foundation of positive relationships need apply. However, this is not always presented as explicitly in the post-development literature. Although much of the post-development literature calls for involvement and empowerment of local people, the literature is not often explicit in describing how this should occur. How do people engage others in active involvement, how do people become empowered if there is not a positive relationship formed between the two parties? For example, Parpart (2002) suggests "…a more interactive, grounded approach to empowerment and development…" (p. 42) and calls for a "…more

bottom-up, participatory approach—one where development 'experts' become facilitators….

It requires knowledge and accumulated wisdom, respectful of partnership and participatory

practice that will empower the poor…" (p. 44). Although in her article, Parpart goes on to

describe and critique Participatory Rural Appraisal (a set of development strategies aimed at

involving and empowering local people in the process of solving local development

problems), and encourages researchers to "…meld theory with praxis in ways that address

fundamental impediments to participation and empowerment…" (p. 53), she does not delve

into how researchers might address this and does not explicitly acknowledge the importance

of forming relationships between the participants and the "experts." Although I agree with

Elabor-Idemudia's (2002) position that power hierarchies between researchers and "subjects"

must be minimized, she too does not address how this could be achieved or that in "reducing"

hierarchies, the researcher might begin by examining her own position and avoiding

behaviour that imposes hierarchies. I feel that there needs to be more of a feminist influence

in the development literature in regards to relationships between participants and researchers.

I argue that to be successful in the role of a researcher I must first attend to the

relationships with the participants. Approaching research in this way satisfies feminist

research principles and thus, my own moral position. By honouring and nurturing the

relationships with the women participants, the women shared their lives with me more

willingly, granted me time and opportunities to collect "subjective data," and most

importantly, offered me their friendship. Not only did I come to recognize the importance of

relationships on a practical level, I came to value (and still value) the relationships on a

personal level and have come to understand the critical nature of these relationships from a

research perspective.

CHAPTER FIVE

PARTICIPANTS AS KNOWERS

The women of Agabagaya were actively engaged in supporting themselves and each

other and in finding ways to improve their lives. The two main themes that I will explore in

relation to the women's pursuit of development[6] are the aspects of knowledge and of

mobilization. The women of Agabagaya were knowledgeable and they valued, pursued and

shared knowledge daily and throughout various aspects of their lives. They were also active

in the mobilization of resources to support their group. The area of mobilization that I will

focus on is the women's efforts to utilize the visit of a white, Westerner—me—to support

their development efforts, and how their discourse was a factor in this mobilization. Finally, I

will argue that this process of sharing and pursuing knowledge and the women's active

mobilization of resources is the way that women approach their own development. The

women of Agabagaya practice that which post-development theorizes.

The Women of Agabagaya and Knowledge

When I began this exploration of women, development and learning, I assumed that

my research would take place in a "learning centre." I was flexible as to what this centre

might look like; it could have been in a school, a space in someone's yard or a gathering area

in the community. It did not matter to me how long the classes were, how often they were

held, who the teacher was (except that she be a woman), or what the topic of study was. I

simply wanted to see women in a space where there were opportunities for me to observe the

sharing of knowledge that occurred among them. I felt confident that my criteria were

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[6] By development, I mean the ways that the women engaged in activities that would support themselves and
their families.

adequate and would be useful in finding a suitable learning centre where my research could take place.

After visiting various research sites, choosing Agabagaya in Kihande, and proceeding with consent meetings and initial visits, I soon realized that the "learning centre" that I had expected to find did not actually exist. The sharing of knowledge in which the women were engaged was not dependent on a physical space. The women's sharing of knowledge occurred within the frame of the Agabagaya Women's Group. The women valued education, pursued knowledge and shared knowledge formally and informally, and although this did not occur in a formal educational setting, it was central to the lives of the women of Agabagaya.

Valuing Knowledge

The women of Agabagaya valued formal education. All of the women of the group had some formal education, ranging from primary six (six years of primary school) to completing various levels in secondary school (grades eight to twelve). Two of the women had gone on to post-secondary education at teachers' colleges (a one-year programme). During the individual interviews with the women, I did not ask specifically if the women valued education. However, this theme became apparent throughout all of the interviews. Between the 12 women, they had 49 had children. Ten of these children were already grown adults (nine of them were employed and one I am unsure of his/her status). Of the remaining 39 children, four were too young to attend school, one was mentally challenged and all of the remaining 35 children were attending school from nursery levels to university. Primary levels (from grade one to grade eight) are considered free (although there are often extra fees, uniforms, and the like required) and all levels in secondary and post secondary require school

fees each term. Having their children in school was evidently a priority for the women and this enrollment rate demonstrates their commitment to education.

Further, the importance of and the commitment to paying school fees was also evident through the interviews. Although I did not ask specifically how the women used the money that they received from the cooperative, 10 out of the 12 women with whom I conducted interviews indicated that the money they received from the cash cooperative often helped to pay for their children's school fees. One member, who did not mention school fees during her interview, had seven children, all of whom were in school from primary to university levels, except for one adult son who was employed. A second woman, who did not mention school fees, had three children and only one was of school age. Although these two women did not mention school fees in their interview, they both had their school-aged children enrolled in school, and therefore, they too would have been paying school fees.

The value that the women placed on education was also evident in the ways that they talked about education during the interviews. For example, Aidah, the eldest member of the group and the official advisor to Agabagaya, stated in her interview, "…education is the first, the first thing in our lives" (interview transcript, May 21, 2004). Later in the interview she told me,

> I struggled hard after my husband's death to educate the children. That's why you
> see—I don't look that well, I don't have a good house, I don't have what, but all my
> efforts were to educate my children…. I have taught them, I have educated them….
> When you are not educated you cannot survive in this country Uganda. (interview
> transcript, May 21, 2004)

Epiphania expressed that she hoped that Agabagaya would one day buy a vehicle to use to visit her children in distant schools. She said, "I would like in the future to buy a vehicle to take us when we are going on a trip or to take our children when they are studying very far, as transport" (interview transcript, May 21, 2004). Epiphania has a daughter who is in University in Kampala and so visiting is a challenge. When I asked Sally how her involvement with Agabagaya had provided support, she replied, "I have an orphan. He is now in S3 [senior level three]. So that group [Agabagaya] helped me in school fees, to look after him and he is now in boarding school…. That's how it's helped me" (interview transcript, May 21, 2004). Sarah told me, "I came from about three miles from the town. I was married. I got a husband, when I was about…maybe...fifteen years, something like that. So we stayed together and now we have our children, and we are trying very hard to see that our children go to school" (interview transcript, June 6, 2004). The group members demonstrated the value they placed on education through their commitments to sending their children to school, their financial support of education, and in the ways that they spoke about education.

The women of Agabagaya also valued education among and for themselves and clearly itemized these objectives in their group's Constitution. The Constitution lists "conducting education programmes," "conducting seminars and perhaps debates to get more educated on some issues," and "eradicating illiteracy/ignorance" (Agabagaya's Constitution, Article 3) as the group's aims and objectives. Mary's dedication to education is an example of this objective. Mary was encouraged and supported by the group to pursue formal education by taking *Runyoro* classes. In her interview Mary indicated that she would soon start taking classes where she would learn to read and write in English as well. The group had

also paid for Mary to take a hairstylist course, which she did and, subsequently, became an employee in the village hair salon.

Aidah, who was 65 years old and was raising six of her orphaned grandchildren, demonstrated her commitment to education in the village by running her own nursery school. The one-room brick building in the yard behind her house was where she taught a nursery school programme each day to about 40 children. The following excerpt is from my field notes on the day that I visited her nursery school:

> The students were all sitting on little benches in rows facing the front and greeted me in English. They sang the national anthem for me, sang a few other songs and recited some simple poems (for example, "I love you cow, you are my friend. You give me meat. You give me milk. I love you cow you are my friend.") The children also recited a poem about loving their mothers and being obedient children. (field notes, May 17, 2004)

Aidah also taught a small *Runyoro* literacy class on Saturdays (which was supported by the women's group). Although I was never able to attend the class, the women informed me about it at our initial introduction. The women of the Agabagaya group did not attend the classes, as they were literate in *Runyoro*. The class was open to villagers who wanted to become literate in their local language. At the time of my visit there were four villagers attending Aidah's *Runyoro* classes.

Although the women demonstrated a commitment to education by ensuring their children attended school and that the school fees were paid, I noticed a slight contradiction in this commitment to formal education. Many of the women cared for orphaned children, yet it appeared that not all of these children attended school. For example, one of the members told

me that she cared for a niece who was 16 years old. She told me that the girl had dropped out of school a long time ago. The member mentioned the burden of school fees and told me that the girl was now too old to attend school and so worked in the member's shop. I observed another instance of this when visiting one of the member's homes. The teenage girl who lived there (who was not the woman's daughter, and was possibly the daughter of the first wife) was not attending school because her school fees were no longer being paid. Although both of these instances involved children that were not the women's biological children, there appeared to be a contradiction between the value of education that the women demonstrated for their own children, for other members and even for villagers, and the apparent lack of educational opportunities for some girls who lived in the women's homes. It seemed that some of these girls had become house girls. This issue becomes quite complex when I acknowledge the cultural acceptance, as well as the practical need, for most families to have house girls. Although I noticed this contradiction in values and actions, I am not sure what to make of it. My reflections at the time were, "Do the women feel that it is not their responsibility to pay [for school fees] for children who are not 'theirs?' Is there not enough money? Do they need the help at home?" (field notes, May 18, 2004). More investigation and conversations would need to take place with these women, as well as developing a better understanding of the cultural and social underpinnings of these scenarios, before I could make a more informed comment on these situations.

Sharing Knowledge

Although the women valued formal education for themselves, their children and their communities, they also valued the knowledge that they elicited from each other and shared among themselves. The Agabagaya Constitution identifies "socializing with others to learn

more skills" (Agabagaya Constitution, Article 3) as an Aim and Objective and illustrates that the women formally recognize that knowings can be gained from each other. The group's very structure also values the knowledge that other women in their group have to offer. There are two women in the group who are designated as advisors to Agabagaya, Sally and Aidah. The advisors are identified in the group's Constitution, which states that the advisors' roles are to "give advice" and to "meet committee members in case of any problem forwarded to him/her" (Agabagaya Constitution, Article 6, Section 5). When I asked where the women get knowledge from, Epiphania explained, "She [Aidah] is our advisor and we can easily seek advice from her" (interview transcripts, May 21, 2004).

It became apparent that the women relied on each other for a plethora of information. During the interviews all 12 women spoke of sharing knowledge with other women in the group, as well as receiving knowledge from other women. Lois explained during her interview how the women sought advice from each other:

When you don't know about something and you want to do it, you can acquire knowledge from these women here, you ask them, "Who knows such and such a thing?" "What advice are you giving me?" "I would like to do this or that, should I do it or not?" Such things. (interview transcript, May 25, 2004)

Although Mary was quiet and did not speak out much at meetings, she demonstrated that she was an active listener at meetings when she told me in her interview that, "When we sit all, all members of the group and then one person speaks out and then another one, so I get one point here and one point there…" (interview transcript, May 25, 2004). The women valued the time that they had to talk and share with each other and acknowledged this importance during the interview.

The types of knowledge the women shared often focused on child rearing as well as planting and maintaining crops. Examples that were specifically mentioned during the interviews included how to plant mushrooms, how to look after children, how to support children in school, how to handle money, how to plant and space crops, how to build a house, and how to cross-breed fruit. Aidah, although her official role was to advise the group, explained the knowings that she too had learned from the women:

> I am very proud. I have learned how to prepare mushrooms, how to look after my children, how to get money, small money—to educate my family—and how to talk with people. You know when you stay at home alone, you can't learn how to talk with people, how to stay with a group, how to talk with friends and when you stay at home, you can't know how to prepare everything. (interview transcripts, May 21, 2004)

Lois too, had a list of knowings that the women shared. She said,

> If they get problems, they can come to us and we can help them. Even the members themselves, family matters we discuss. You should handle your money like this, you should behave like this in your family. ...We learn a lot from there. (interview transcript, May 25, 2004)

These examples indicate that the women are valuable sources of knowings for each other and within their communities. Many of the women, besides Lois, also talked about sharing personal problems with one another in order to seek advice. In 8 out of the 12 interviews the women indicated that the group helped to address family issues including dealing with husbands. Many women echoed Harriet's response when she stated that a benefit to being in the group was that the other women helped with family problems and that they discussed

how to "handle the problems at home" (interview transcript, June 6, 2004). Dorcus explained

that, "We talk, we share ideas with them. Sometimes after the meetings we tell each other our

problems at home. We share them together and sometimes we can give each other some ideas

and we stay peaceful at home" (interview transcript, June 6, 2004).

Although the women valued the knowings they shared among themselves, they also

recognized the importance of seeking knowledge from others who were not necessarily

women of Agabagaya. For example, six of the twelve women spoke of the importance of

sharing knowledge with those who were not members of the group. Aidah said, "We want the

group to bring more knowledge from other groups outside, to call other teachers from

different places to teach us" (interview transcript, May 21, 2004). When I asked Joy from

whom she received knowledge, she replied:

> We get knowledge for example, from you, from other people outside the group, they
>
> come and give us knowledge, also those people in our group, they can give us
>
> knowledge…. There is …Aidah and …Grace and … Shakillah. Each and everybody
>
> can give us knowledge. (interview transcript, May 26, 2004)

Sharing knowledge with group members and seeking knowledge from others appeared to be

a naturally occurring activity and permeated many facets of the women's lives.

The women identified the importance of learning from each other in settings other

than our interviews. For example, the group made a point of identifying the importance of

learning from each other during a meeting with Augustus from MADFA. After Lois had

given greetings and explained the group's projects, she also identified the importance of

learning from others. She said in her welcome speech to Augustus, "We hope that visitors

can pass information on so others can hear about us. In groups, we share experiences and other things and we can learn from each other" (field notes, May 23, 2004).

Not only did the women talk about how they seek and share knowledge with others, they actively looked for opportunities where this could happen. A prime example of this took place when the women engaged in an exchange with another women's group from the Mukono district. While planning to host the guests of Mukono and prior to the women of Agabagaya going to Mukono, there were many discussions about what the women wanted to share with, as well as ask the Mukono group. At one meeting, the women were discussing what they would talk about in terms of the "lesson" and then Mariam said, "…and we can talk about other things as they transpire" (field notes, May 31, 2004). To me, this indicated that, although there was a set agenda during each visit, Mariam understood there would be plenty of informal learning and opportunities for sharing. Prior to Epiphania and Shakillah going to Mukono, the group had a list of questions about which they wanted the representatives to inquire. Their list included finding out about growing vanilla and coffee beans, as well as how to grow nim trees and muringa tress (none of which were prevalent in Masindi). Sarah suggested that after the group had learned to build the stove, "Everyone could bring a neighbour and teach them how to do it. Epiphania agrees" (field notes, June 7, 2004). The women of Agabagaya understood that, like themselves, the women of Mukono would have a great deal of valuable knowings that they too possessed and were eager to inquire about these knowings.

When the women of Agabagaya and I talked after the Mukono group had left Kihande, the women acknowledged the importance of the knowledge exchanged between the groups. When I asked what went well at the stove making session, the women responded

with answers like, "We were learning together" and, "It was good to share our knowledge and skills" (field notes, June 9, 2004). Then I asked what the women would do now that they knew how to build the stove. My field notes illustrate the women's responses:

> Epiphania: Each member will get one. We will vote to decide who goes next. [Voting is similar to a draw].
>
> Shakillah: All the members will bring the sand and dust and will all work to make the stoves for all the members. After the women in the group all have a stove, then we can show other women in the village how to make them.
>
> Epiphania: Others will join us to share the knowledge with them.
>
> Shakillah: Next time we'll be 20 [people] and will share the duties.
>
> Shakillah: [talks of the problem that some of the members are only renting homes and therefore they need to know how to make a portable stove].
>
> The women decide to ask more about making portable stoves when they go to Mukono. (field notes, June 9, 2004)

The exchange was rich with examples of natural opportunities for teaching and learning from each other, of which the women from Agabagaya took full advantage. After Shakillah and Epiphania had spent the day teaching in Mukono, Shakillah was thrilled with the people she had met and what she had learned. That night I wrote:

> When we got back to Robert's [our host's home], Shakillah was very excited about the connections that were made. She exchanged contact info with the district people, AEC [Adult Education Centre] people, and with a woman facilitator from 'up the hill' who knows how to make shoe polish and soap. (field notes, June 18, 2004)

While in Mukono, Shakillah and Epiphania asked questions often and willingly shared what they knew.

Aside from sharing local knowledge with each other, and with the others outside the group, the women also enjoyed exchanging knowledge with me and would often ask me to share with them. For example, while we waited in the schoolroom for group members to arrive one rainy afternoon, I was asked by Shakillah to teach a song to those who were waiting. My field notes explain the scenario:

> Shakillah asked, "Melanie, won't you teach us a song before you go?" Not being a
> very musical person, I was not prepared for this, but knowing how accepting they are
> of my limited singing ability, took the leap and taught them *You are My Sunshine*—
> the only thing that came to mind. Sally had me write the words on the board,
> Shakillah copied them into her notebook and we sang it again and again. (field notes,
> June 9, 2004)

Not only did the women put my musical talents (or lack there of) to the test, they also challenged my culinary skills (which are also embarrassingly deficient). Because the women knew that I enjoyed eating *kipoli* (a spread made out of roasted peanuts and sesame seeds), they offered to teach me how to make it. However, they also insisted that in exchange I teach them how to make them a cake. This would have been manageable with a cake mix and an oven; however, this proved to be much more challenging with a pot and a three-stone fire. After much experimenting, I was able to show them how to make a sweet bread with raisins (which they politely nibbled on before the plate was discretely removed from the meeting area).

The women recognized and valued the knowings they had among themselves and they openly shared their knowings with each other to provide support and information. They shared their knowings with women outside of the group and they were keen to exchange knowings with me. The group was serious about their organization's goals and worked persistently towards them. The women recognized, valued and relied on the sharing of knowledge that the women with whom they interacted possessed.

Pursuing Knowledge

The women of Agabagaya valued formal education, shared knowledge among themselves, with me and with others, and also actively pursued knowledge through educational opportunities. The ways that the women pursued knowledge were vast and ranged from asking questions, inquiring about opportunities, attending workshops, watching or demonstrating skills (often in relation to farming), and connecting with other organizations. The women pursued knowledge through educational opportunities that were of interest or of relevance to them as individuals or as a group and were self-motivated in pursuing these opportunities.

During the interviews the women spoke of obtaining knowledge and specific information from a variety of sources and organizations, such as the district office, the SCDO and his assistant, "other groups," the Masindi Farmers' Association (MADFA), the women's council, and ngos like the Christian Children's Fund. The women pursued opportunities with vigor as described by Lois in her interview when I asked her how the women learned to do certain things. She replied, "When we hear of something, we immediately run there" (interview transcript, May 25, 2004).

I learned of a perfect example of how the women "run" to learn something new. As mentioned in the Description section, during our introduction meeting, one of the women asked a specific question about organic compost. Dominique referred the women to the Masindi Farmers' Association (MADFA) where she knew Augustus, a fellow VSO volunteer was working. About 10 days later, I happened to run into Augustus and he told me that he had already met the women. My notes retell the story:

> I saw Augustus last night and he said that two women from the group (Shakillah and Lois) had been to see him <u>twice</u>, have joined the organization (MADFA) and have invited him to come and speak at their meeting. This surprised me because Dominique had told the group about the farmers' association at our initial meeting and they have already been there twice! These women are do-ers! (field notes, May 18, 2004)

This illustrates how motivated the women of Agabagaya were at pursuing educational opportunities with organizations from which they could benefit.

The women mentioned these various pursuits in the interviews. However, I also observed them engaged in these educational activities during my stay in Kihande. For example, at the beginning of a meeting Epiphania told the group that a regional Red Cross meeting was being held the following week. "She wants the women to become members of the Red Cross…. It costs 3,000 *shillings* for each person to become a member and the group will pay. The benefits include learning first aid and 'other things'" (field notes, May 23, 2004). At another meeting, Lois briefly told the women about a workshop she had attended on behalf of the group on managing small farms as businesses. Although there was little time

at this particular meeting for Lois to talk about the information she had gleaned from the workshop, she told the women that she would tell them more about it at a later meeting.

On the day that Epiphania was scheduled for her interview with me she brought a blue hard covered book with her, which safeguarded the certificates she had received from various workshops she had attended. Two of the certificates indicated that the courses were 21 weeks long. "She also showed me a photo of her receiving one of the certificates and one of her daughter graduating…. She is very proud of her certificates and I ask if she would like me to take a photo with her and her certificates. She accepts and carefully arranges the certificates so that all the titles are visible" (field notes, May 21, 2004). Epiphania, like the other women, actively pursued knowledge through educational opportunities by attending courses and workshops offered by the district and various ngos.

The Agabagaya Women's Group also provided educational opportunities for women by organizing speakers to attend their meetings. One member told me, "The group decides on a topic and Aidah, the group advisor and nursery teacher, comes to help [facilitate]" (field notes, May 18, 2004). When Shakillah and Epiphania were talking to me about what they thought should be in the report that I was to write for the district office they told me that they felt it was important for the group to know of opportunities available through the district office. They said that they wanted "…to learn more about development, to take tours to other women's groups, or [to be informed of] workshops that are being held. They said that they would like to be invited/notified" of these events by the district office (field notes, June 14, 2004). The women actively sought opportunities to gain knowledge from other sources.

At one meeting earlier on in the research, the women took Augustus (the VSO from MADFA, who was attending their meeting) and me on a tour of their income-generating

projects. We went to different women's homes and looked at the group's various projects, such as the heifer, the piglets, the chickens, the mushrooms, and the organic compost. At Sally's house, we went into the cookhouse where the women showed us a clay stove that they had made (this was prior to the clay stove making exchange). When I asked where they had learned how to make the stove, Lois replied, "We read in a book how to do it." Then she proceeded to tell Augustus how it did not work out as well as it was supposed to, that it had cracked, and asked if Augustus could help find a facilitator to show them how to make the ovens (field notes, May 23, 2004). In her interview two days later, Lois told me more about the stove making. She said, "There is a woman who brought us books about energy saving stoves. So we read through and then we applied it practically" (interview transcript, May 25, 2004). If the women wanted to know something they were active in tracking that information down.

While we were in Mukono for the exchange, the women had an opportunity to meet with the director of the AEC (Adult Education Centre), who shared how their organization had received support through various ngos such as Computer Aid, Tools, and World Bank for Books. Epiphania and Shakillah both listened attentively and asked many questions regarding how the AEC had established contact with and garnered support from these organizations. Shakillah recorded addresses of organizations with which they wanted to follow up. At one point when the director left the room to attend to something, Shakillah and I drafted a letter to an organization that sends out free "development" magazines to grassroots organizations. Shakillah was very excited about the contacts and information that she received from the director.

The women of Agabagaya valued, shared and pursued knowledge in their everyday lives. They valued formal education but also valued the knowings of their group members. The women actively solicited knowings from each other and from external organizations to support themselves and their families. The women were well organized and eagerly took advantage of opportunities that presented themselves. The women saw opportunity in formal education, in the district's development initiatives, but also in the more subtle opportunities that presented themselves. How they mobilized resources to support their grassroots development will be addressed in the following section.

<p align="center">The Women of Agabagaya and their Mobilization of Support</p>

The women of Agabagaya were well versed in recognizing and mobilizing resources that could be used to their advantage. Although they did this in a variety of ways (some of which were described and meshed into the ways they pursued knowledge, in the previous section), I want to focus on the way that the women took advantage of being visited by a *mzungu*. It appeared that a white, Westerner working within their community gave the women an opportunity for gaining status. I felt that, because I was a white, Westerner, the women also believed that I had connections to possible donor organizations. I believe that it was because of these perceptions of me, as someone who could bring status to the group and as someone who could connect the group to donors, that initially motivated the women in mobilizing me. Because I often felt that the research process was more for my benefit than for the women's, I was relieved when there were opportunities for them to gain some compensation through my presence.

The Women's Mobilization of Me

The women tried to make a positive impression on me from the first day I met them. They were the most prepared group out of the four that I visited. As described, the women had dressed up, decorated the meeting room with doilies, prepared a formal programme, recited pre-written speeches, sang to us, served refreshments, and arranged for a photographer to be there. At one of our first meetings, when they showed me their group's Constitution and a certificate that the group received from the district (which they also shared with us at the initial meeting) I was told to photocopy these so I could have my own copy. I asked in my field notes early on in the project, "Are the women trying to impress me? Or are they simply proud of their accomplishments?" (field notes, May 18, 2004). Add these examples to the fact that when they found out I (a researcher) was coming to Masindi, they marched down to the district office to request that I visit their group. It appeared that this group wanted me to conduct my research with them and worked hard to see that that would happen. My question then became, "*Why*?" Although I cannot declare the women's motivations with certainty, I did wonder, "Why would the women want to participate in research that was so time consuming, so invasive?"

Choosing to conduct research with Agabagaya appeared to be advantageous to the group as it seemed that my presence as a white, Western, researcher carried some status. Examples of this included times when the women would proudly introduce me to community members, when they would request that I would "give greetings" when they were meeting with other groups, and on their insistence on having their pictures taken with me, often individually. When I asked Chris at our initial meeting how he thought the women of Kihande might respond to me, he replied that he thought, "A visitor from overseas would

boost their [the women in the group's] morale and make them feel proud that they were being recognized" (field notes, May 6, 2004). Although I agreed to do visitations to other groups with Chris and although I felt happy to assist him and to support the women of the community, I also felt hesitant to participate in activities that could potentially perpetuate a view that opinions of Westerners were more valued and more valuable than opinions of Ugandans. Although I did not want to support this view, I also felt obligated to appease my hosts because I did feel indebted to them. Although I felt that my opinion was sometimes sought because I was a white, Westerner I always tried to talk about the women and their activities and achievements without adding my opinions or giving advice.

As described in the previous chapter, it appeared that my whiteness/Western position seemed to influence an assumption that I was somehow connected to or had access to donor organizations. And although this notion of being perceived as a donor concerned me and made me feel uncomfortable at times, I reminded myself that I too was in this very position of seeking financial support for this research project. Further, connecting with donors and talking about donor organizations is part of a greater cultural and geo-political discourse. Although it is common for white people to be asked for money when travelling in poorer regions of the world, what I want to illustrate here is how the women's perceptions that I brought a certain perceived status to the group and that I have more resources and more access to resources, influenced their desire to mobilize me.

How Discourse was Used in the Women's Mobilization of Me

Because the group perceived it as advantageous to work with me (because of my position as a white, Westerner) I felt that this influenced the group in securing my initial visit. I further believe that the discourse that the women took up with me was influenced by

their perceptions of me. Thus, I often felt that the discourse they took up was contrived and was employed in an effort to match their perceptions of me as a white, Westerner. Interestingly, the discourse that the women used echoed some of the discourse found in other, more Western milieus. This surprised and interested me. Where had the women learned this discourse? From where had it originated? Were the women taking up a discourse that they perceived that I, as a white, Westerner used or in which I would want to be engaged?

I believe that the women took up this "imported" discourse because they perceived me as a Westerner, one who could benefit their group either through increased status or through potential connections to donors. The women's discourse was strangely similar to the discourse of Western agencies and people, not a discourse I heard from local people in Kihande. Their discourse sounded as though it was created in the West by Westerners, and was often the discourse within the development milieu. However, this "Western" discourse was pervasive in a country that was certainly not Western and was being used by people who were not from the West. I will refer to this particular discourse as an *imported* discourse; one that sounded strangely misplaced and mimicked by the women of Agabagaya.

One of the questions I had upon arriving in Uganda was, "Had development influenced the sharing of knowledge that occurred among women?" That is, had the long arm of development reached and influenced the local people of Kihande? Over the course of my five weeks in Kihande, it became evident that the "helping hand of development" had indeed reached this small village, an exhausting three-and-a-half-hour drive from the capital. Although it may not have been apparent by walking through the village of Kihande where the women lived (four kilometres from the town of Masindi), as there were no ngo offices and no signs advertising development initiatives, the women had indeed learned about Western

notions of development, about ngos and about funders. Their conversations with me were laced with words like "poverty eradication," "change agent," "funder," "income-generating projects," "mobilization" and "ngo," to name a few. The women had imported this discourse and wielded it like power, but perhaps these words were equated with power. After all, this discourse was employed by their local and national governments, was published in daily newspapers and was used by the local ngos of whom the women often sought services. It appeared that the women knew that this was the discourse of the powerful and were making conscious decisions to engage in it, to employ this imported discourse for their own benefits and purposes. Was employing this discourse a way of working within a system from which they wanted to benefit?

Sometimes the women employed this imported discourse, which seemed to me to be coming from outside agencies, from funders, and ngos, in ways that I felt were self-diminishing. For example, the word "poor" was often used in conversations with me to refer to themselves individually and as a group. One of the women told me one day as she walked me to the road, "Here in Africa we still live in poverty" (field notes, May 17, 2004). This statement seemed incongruent with the discourse of these local independent women. It echoed the discourse of an ngo or a newspaper report homogenizing all people of Africa into a Western construct: "The people in Africa continue to live in poverty." To me, these sounded like words of the West echoed by the Ugandan woman. I also wondered whose definition of "poverty" was being used here? Relative to the village in which they lived, the women of Agabagaya had comfortable homes and productive gardens that provided food for their families and income from what they sold. Some had livestock and cash crops and many owned small shops. Their children were enrolled in schools including secondary schools,

boarding schools and at the only university in the country, all of which required fees each term. Compared to many Ugandans, these women would have been considered well-off and yet, in spite of this, they labelled themselves as "poor." Moreover, the term "poverty" carries an assumption that the situation is reparable, that one can be "rescued." Perhaps this woman wanted to convey to me that she was "poor" and that she wanted/needed help (from a Westerner?) to be "saved" from poverty. My Ugandan friend calls this a "dependency syndrome" and says it is the "plight of the Ugandan people." I believe that the women had imported the term "poor," a Western construct, because she had heard it repeated for decades like a mantra: "Those in Africa live in poverty and the West can save them."

Although there were other occasions when the women indicated to me that they were "poor," that they lived in "poverty," or that they were "peasants," I will share one other specific example, one that I found particularly interesting. It occurred on the day that the women of Agabagaya met with other women from the village who were also trying to establish groups with a cooperative savings programme. These village women had organized themselves into groups according to their self-identified needs. There were three groups, one for each of the identified needs including a group for mattresses, one for metal sheeting and one for water. The mattress group had 23 members and had decided to contribute 3,000 *shillings* every Sunday. Therefore, one member would receive a lump sum of 45,000 *shillings* (enough to purchase one foam mattress) and the remaining 24,000 *shillings* would go to the group pot. The metal sheeting group had nine women (including three Agabagaya members). The water group had five members (including four Agabagaya members) and they planned to contribute 10,000 *shillings* each every Sunday to purchase some sort of a water hook-up for their homes, which would cost 50,000 *shillings* for each member. I said to one

member who was sitting in the water group, "Oh, this must be the rich group," referring to the relatively large sums that these women were contributing. The member laughed and while smiling said, "No, we are poor" (field notes, June 13, 2004). Yet, these women were spending more than three times as much as the members of the mattress group. I was intrigued by the mannerisms used by this woman when she told me they were poor: she was laughing and then smiled shyly and put her head down and tilted to one side, and then looked up at me, almost as though she was trying to convince me. It was not only the discourse she chose, but also her actions that seemed strange and misplaced. Was she trying to convince me of their "plight?" Or was she simply stating what she perceived as fact?

The discourse that appeared imported or artificial presented itself elsewhere as well. For example, the term "project" was used often and in ways that surprised me. The women's group had a variety of "income-generating projects" that they had initiated with the group's funds and that they proudly displayed. The group named these activities as their "chicken project," their "mushroom project," and so on. However they also used the term "project" to describe other activities in which they were engaged individually. For example, Shakillah had a small sewing shop on the main street of the village. It was a modest room that housed a sewing machine, a stool and a bench. She told me that this was her "sewing project," as opposed to a business or a shop. Similarly, the women termed Aidah's nursery school as "Aidah's project." It seemed as if the women were over-generalizing this imported term to identify their various activities. Although all of the activities were projects in some way, it seemed odd to me to describe them as such.

In wanting to please me and to demonstrate that they had an understanding of "outside" knowings, I felt that especially at the beginning of the research, the women

behaved in a very formal manner towards me. It appeared that they took up this imported

discourse to demonstrate to me their understandings of what they perceived I would want.

This was especially apparent in the way they behaved in the interviews. An excerpt from my

field notes depicts my thoughts and reactions to the interviews that I had held with the

women during my first two weeks in Kihande:

> All of the women seemed more formal during the interview…. They spoke slowly
>
> and clearly and at times in a more formal manner. For example, at the end of [one
>
> member's] interview, she said, 'Thank you Miss Melanie.' …With [two other
>
> members] I could see them physically relax when the tape recorder was shut off.
>
> (field notes, May 21, 2004)

And my reactions remained the same even after I had conducted a few more interviews in

those first two weeks and began listening to and transcribing the tapes. In the following

excerpt I am becoming more concerned with the quality of the women's responses:

> After reading some of the transcripts and listening to some of the tapes (and even as
>
> some of the interviews were occurring), I felt that many of the answers were stilted.
>
> … The women seemed to sit more upright, to talk more formally. …When the
>
> interviews are complete and the tape shuts off, the women often laugh and relax their
>
> bodies—sometimes we fall into a relaxed, more natural conversation after the
>
> interview is over. (field notes, May 25, 2004)

I feel that this stilted behaviour and imported discourse that was taken up by the women

reflected what they wanted me to believe about them. The women wanted me to know that

they too were knowledgeable of the outside influences, of outside discourse and were in

essence asserting their knowledge of external development. Examples of this were apparent

during the interviews where their responses to questions were permeated with this imported discourse. For example, the discourse that was used in their interviews included phrases like, "eradicate illiteracy," "develop my family," "to expand our projects," "to change our own poverty," and "to mobilize other women." It appeared to me that this discourse had been heard and internalized by the women's interactions with various ngos and development activities. As I have explained, the women had attended many workshops hosted by ngos (such as the Christian Children's Fund and the Red Cross), as well as sessions held by the district office, which reinforced the need to form groups and seek out funders. The above-mentioned interview examples sounded as if they were transferred from outside development workshops to our conversations in order to demonstrate to me—a white, Westerner—that they indeed understood this outside discourse, about external development, and were actively participating in "pursuing" it.

Perhaps the women used the discourse during interviews with me because they wanted to demonstrate that they were knowledgeable about the external agenda, the "development" agenda. Perhaps they wanted to be included in a discourse that obviously related to them and to assert to me that they belonged in this conversation. I believe that the women had been influenced by the imported discourse of the ngos, and subsequently wove this discourse into their own because of the (perceived) value that it carried when talking with me.

In contrast, there was also discourse that did not sound imported, that sounded more local. When answering the questions about the group's goals, some of the women identified that they wanted to "bring knowledge from other groups," "to call other teachers from other places," and hoped "that each and everybody [could] stand on their own." During an

interview with Sarah, she told me that she hoped that other women "…would come and join and at least see what we are doing … so maybe they can benefit." These goals were void of the external development jargon and also reflected what I had observed the women working towards.

The contrast between the imported discourse and the local discourse was quite apparent and obviously different in tone and intent. I wondered if the women took up this imported discourse more with me in formal situations. Although some of the imported discourse that they used in the interviews, like "mobilizing other women," could have been used to describe what they were doing when they met with the village women on the grass, it was *not* the discourse used at the time of that particular meeting. Instead the women said things like, "They [the women] have come to Agabagaya to seek advice," and "to find ways to solve their problems." Sally said to me that, "We want to help them." Shakillah softly declared that, "Agabagaya is the mother of these groups now" and one of the village women said to me, "We are part of Agabagaya now" (field notes, June 13, 2004). This discourse the women used on the grass that day included terms like *seeking*, *helping* and *mothering* and contrasted greatly to the imported discourse with terms like *mobilizing*, *eradicating* and *developing* that were used during the interviews. Although the women took up this imported discourse, especially during our interviews at the beginning of the research, there were gaps in when they chose to employ it. The interviews, which began the first week of the research, were loaded with external development discourse. Their grassroots conversations only became evident when they began to trust me and granted me a more intimate view of their world. Had the women and I not established positive relationships, this more nuanced texture of their behaviours would not have become apparent.

However, I want to be clear that I do not believe that the women were undermining the research, but rather that they were working to mobilize available resources—in this case, me—to support their grassroots development agenda. I believe that the women were working within the known, yet, external development framework/expectations (we need to change our own poverty, to eradicate illiteracy, to mobilize women) in order to gain recognition from the district, from ngos and from white, Westerners who were perceived as being an influential force for their group. Forming groups itself is a form of compliance with development structures (as is having a truck, a donor, an office, status, being recognized by a white person). I believe that the women of Agabagaya recognized the importance of gaining status among the villagers and with the district, and were actively engaged in mobilizing resources (including me and via their discourse with me) to work towards the "development" in which they believed and were actively seeking. As I see it, the women were working within the system of external development to achieve the grassroots development goals that they valued and sought.

<div align="center">How the Women "Do Development"</div>

I must clarify my terminology here. I will use the term *external* or *outside* development to refer to development agencies, ngos, and global structures that exist outside of the women's control. I will use the term *local* or *community* or *grassroots* development to refer to the work that these women are already engaged in within their group, their families and communities. The term development itself, although laden with colonial, hierarchical and hegemonic underpinnings, in this sense refers to what I think the women of Agabagaya do together to improve their lives, support each other and build hopeful futures. Elabor-Idemudia (2002) explains that grassroots people in developing countries "conceptualize

'development' in the sense of belonging to a community and connecting with other people in a way that makes possible the satisfaction of mutual interests" (p. 227). I agree with Elabor-Idemudia's definition of this term and, based on my observations of and discussions with the women of Agabagaya, I suggest that they too sought development in the form of belonging to their community and connecting with others to achieve their goals.

The goals that I saw the women working to actualize appeared to reflect the priorities of the group but also what they believed "development" to be. For example, the Agabagaya women pursued community development by meeting with other women from the village to foster and encourage them. They also joined organizations that required them to volunteer within their community to support the village, and they organized sharing workshops for themselves as well as for women other than those in their group. The Agabagaya women spent their time collaborating with and learning from others, supporting the village's women and children, and growing crops for subsistence and for income. Their approach to development was through a constant sharing and pursuit of knowledge, as well as through mobilizing resources that they felt could satisfy their needs and interests.

It seemed to me that development in this group meant trying out new crops, raising pigs, chickens and a heifer, as well as growing gardens for sustenance. It meant organizing classes for community members to become more literate in their local language. It meant attending workshops, working together and teaching one another. The women of Agabagaya were involved in varied and important grassroots development activities, ones that were having positive consequences for themselves, their families and their communities. Although the women spoke of improving the lives of their families during the interviews, I found their verbalized need for an office and a vehicle puzzling. Although the women may have liked to

own trucks and have an office (which was indicated as a group goal in their introduction speech to me as well as in five interviews), what they spent their time and energies on was collaborating with others in an effort to pursue knowledge and mobilize resources. Initially, I worried that the women of Agabagaya had been told for so long that they needed "us" to "progress," and needed funders to be worthy, that they had come to believe it. However, as I continued to reflect, I realized that my worries were unfounded because I observed that the women continually persevered with valuable and creative approaches to their community development. The women did not wait for funders to arrive, for ngos to roll in, or even for direction from their district office. The women of Agabagaya pursued their version of development regardless of outside presence or influence.

When I asked Shakillah what Kihande would look like if it were "developed," she told me that more women would be organized into more groups. During the meeting that day in the grass with the other village women, when Shakillah said to me that, "Agabagaya is the mother of these groups," I felt that this statement reflected the community development that the women of Agabagaya worked toward. It seemed to me that Shakillah's sense of development was insightful and practical and reflects the essence of "grassroots development."

When I initially posed the question, about development influencing the sharing of knowledge that occurs among women, I did not think of whose definition of development I was using. Prior to embarking on this learning journey I did not give much thought to the varying definitions, which I now understand depend mostly on one's location geographically, politically, historically, and socially. Development in the West has a sense of saviour-ism to it, the superior "us" helping the inferior "them." For the women of Agabagaya, development

is the community work that they do but it is also much more complex than that. Development to Agabagaya also means asking agencies and individuals for money and resources, attending workshops and courses, creating plans, networking with others, connecting with *mzungus* and with people from different parts of the country, seeking donors and having an office. It is not one or the other: community development or external development. In the Agabagaya Women's group, "development" is a complicated web of beliefs, activities and ideals that depend on their various visions of the future and sometimes, simply on the opportunities that present themselves. The fact is that development in the Agabagaya's Women's Group is created from within, not imposed from the outside.

There were development agencies from around the world present in Masindi. The people in the agencies worked on their versions of "development" in their offices, drove trucks, travelled, and yet it was the women who walked, or rode into town to meet them, to seek their advice or assistance. It was the women who organized local language literacy classes in their village, who counselled other women, who supported orphans, who paid for their children to go to school, who dug gardens, tried new crops, sold their produce, and started small businesses. The women had cash cooperatives, loaned money to each other and emotionally supported each other. I question the purpose and legitimacy of these external development agencies when the development that I observed was initiated, pursued and followed up by the women of Agabagaya.

<center>What this Means and the Connections to the Literature</center>

The influence of external development was indeed present in Masindi but, as the post-developmentalists assert, appeared to be achieving results different from what it intended. As described in the literature review, the efforts of the development agencies to focus on women

were to educate future generations and to reduce poverty (King & Hill, 1993). Yet, in this context, the implications seemingly create an ideal that indicates that to become "developed" "they" need to be "like us" and/or acquire "stuff" like us. Education itself is perceived by some as another form of Western hegemony over people in the developing world (Illich, 1997). The women of Agabagaya see white, Western people tooting through town with four-by-four trucks, briefcases, and cell phones everyday. These very people are the ones perpetuating a development discourse that says to be developed—that is, to be like us and to have what we have—you must do "X." The women of Agabagaya may not overtly acknowledge this ideal, however the women are certainly influenced by outside development in a variety of ways. Unfortunately these images and influences perpetuate the Western constructs of development. Escobar (1992) explains that development in the Third World has indeed established "forms of power through which individuals, government officials, and sometimes, whole communities recognized themselves as underdeveloped, as unfinished manifestations of a European ideal" (p. 413). Although we are living in an era of post-development thought, external development appears to maintain a somewhat hegemonic influence in Masindi.

Although Smith (1999) and Escobar (1995) argue for a complete dismissal of development, the reality is that a complete dismissal is not likely, let alone possible. Further, it appears that these authors do not acknowledge that the existing development is not a discrete, homogenous body of activity but one with fluid and multiple roles (that may be positive and negative). These development tentacles are embedded in the everyday lives of people, in national histories and politics, and in the infrastructures of international relations, as well as in national and regional policies and economies. Although rethinking development

is touted, I am unsure how the international community could proceed with such a task. It would be like rethinking a sweater that is already knitted and worn-out and, although it may be ill fitted and badly misshapen, it is not fixed simply by "rethinking" it. Throwing it away altogether does not seem to acknowledge life without the sweater, and to re-knit it from scratch would require input from all parties which becomes difficult when only one party holds the knitting needles. This impasse is the conundrum of post-development theory: the theory acknowledges that development is a Western construct that does not fit and mainly serves the West, yet fails to offer real solutions to fundamentally alter development in practice.

Although I agree that development does indeed require re-thinking, there are some current complexities that should be acknowledged. In my experience, there appeared to be a gap between the hegemonic control of external development and its influence over the women, and the fact that the women continued to tend to their grassroots initiatives within their community. Although the women wanted to engage in the external discourse with me, and to demonstrate that they were pursuing external development priorities, I also observed the women working toward grassroots initiatives that reflected their values. The women acknowledged the presence of external development initiatives, took up the discourse to verify their own positions of knowing within the external development arena, and yet were selective when proceeding with the actual work of external development within their community. Although they attended external workshops, a great deal of their time was spent working directly within their community on activities that would directly benefit their families and community. The women were aware of the existence of the external

development frames (the district, donors, and agencies) and yet I felt that they accessed or mobilized them to suit their own community needs and purposes.

For all the ngos present in Uganda and Masindi, I observed none in Kihande village (four kilometers away from Masindi where the women lived), and none directly "targeting" the women of this village. It appeared that there was little direct contact *from* the ngos to the women of the Agabagaya group. However, the women of Agabagaya did reach out to the government and non-government supports that were available just a short distance away in Masindi town. In this respect the women could be selective with what agency and in which activities they chose to engage. Because there were no actual development agencies in Kihande village, there was less of a risk that the goals of a development agency could supercede the goals of the women's group. These women, who were very effectively collaborating and working to enhance their communities, may very well have been hindered by development agencies who may have had their own agendas to implement. How women interacted with outside agencies, how they mobilized these agencies and people to support their goals, and how they pursued their own development agenda is often overlooked in the literature, which instead focuses on development theory as if people at the grassroots are not present. Simply paying lip service to grassroots activities does not underscore strongly enough the need to start with what is occurring at the grassroots level before looking at how people can be empowered and participative. The literature does not usually acknowledge the fact that local people may already feel and are indeed powerful, and already participate in their own community development agendas.

Although it is not within the scope of this paper to analyze these external development agencies, in questioning their influences with this group of women, I do need to

consider their role. I wonder if the women would have had some of the skills that they obviously possessed if it were *not* for some of the development agencies. For example, the women learned about organic compost through development workshops held by the district office, learned how to grow mushrooms through their local farming organization, and were planning on receiving first-aid training through the Red Cross. Between them, the women had attended a plethora of workshops from how to manage small farms to becoming "change agents." The government and non-governmental organizations that provide these various workshops were funded by, and were influenced by, the external development agenda. Although at a cursory glance, there may seem to be some positive impact of the ngos, at what costs I cannot be sure. For example, were these "skills" preempting traditional knowings? Did these organizations encourage a dependency (even if unknowingly) and a belief that "the women need to be developed?" Did the external influences jeopardize local initiatives? And would the external development activities actualize positive change or would they simply keep women in their place? Whether development "does good" or not is not only beyond the scope of this enquiry, it is a question that leads to a dichotomous and unproductive discussion (Murdock, 2003). Further, the question does not give credit to the people, the women who live at the grassroots, as intelligent, conscious decision-makers. These arguments tend to treat people as passive recipients of development initiatives and, as demonstrated, this is certainly not the role in which I observed the women of Agabagaya.

I also want to note that based on my observations, the development agencies did not directly support the grassroots initiatives with which the women of Agabagaya were already engaged. For example, the women actively supported the formation of other women's groups in their village. There were numerous and obvious ways that the women could have been

supported in these grassroots endeavours by external agencies. However, it appeared that external development agencies did not function in this manner. It did not appear that the women could have say in what supports external agencies could provide. However, I also imagine that this could become a slippery slope. For example, when does being supported by an ngo shift into being directed by one? Although post-development theorists encourage grassroots initiatives, this example illustrates the possibly treacherous nature of that type of relationship. For example, on whose terms does the relationship between local people and external agencies begin and where do these relationships end (up)?

I found that the post-development literature gives a sense that external development is a large, single body of ideals that stems from colonial rule and continues to oppress others. Development is often described as a negative and even destructive force (Escobar, 1995; Okin, 2003). For example, Escobar (1995) argues that development by the West "objectifies" those in developing countries, and insists that the notion of development be rejected altogether by calling for "alternatives to development" (p. 215). Elabor-Idemudia (2002) states that development initiatives are often undermining and exploitive and demand greater participation and empowerment of local people in development research. Although I strongly object to the hegemonic and colonial underpinnings of development, it seems to me that an argument of "alternatives to development" overlooks the fact that external development is already embedded and enmeshed in the politics, histories, economies, societies and cultures of many people's everyday lives. 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.

Although I agree that development by "outsiders" (as opposed to the community development that occurs from within) maintains a form of colonialism and generally oppresses rather than supports local people, I find that the literature does not often account for the individual responses within local development initiatives. The role that I observed the women of Agabagaya playing was not that of passive receivers of a hegemonic development, but rather that of individuals who were aware of the external development, and its discourse and employed it to suit their needs. These women sometimes approached outside development organizations for support or to gain knowledge and, at times, appeared to benefit from those agencies' initiatives. At the same time, however, these women proceeded on a course of grassroots activities that they initiated in an effort to best meet their needs and support their goals (more of a local, grassroots development). I found these nuances of the relationships between local people's community development and external development, which are fluid and complex, are often overlooked in the literature.

Post-development literature calls for empowerment and participation which, at times, seems to be propped up by romantic notions of development and once problematized leads to critical questions of power and inequity. For example, who gets to be empowered? Who does the empowering? Who participates in what activities and who decides? Further, what constitutes participation (Crewe & Harrison, 1998), answering someone else's questions or being allowed to ask your own? Crewe and Harrison (1998) assert that "…the moral notion of allowing people to define their needs is weakened by the fact that it is the same individual, or group, who is in the relatively powerful position of choosing to allow something" (p. 161). So, although post-development theorists call for empowerment of local people, the questions of who has power and who gives power remain unanswered. Within post-development's

asserting of empowerment and participation, I am left wondering how local people are empowered, by whom and who decides?

Post-development advocates support development that is responsive to peoples' needs and supportive of grassroots endeavors (Escobar, 1995). Although the literature often calls for empowerment (Elabor-Idemudia, 2002; Freire, 1970), I question along with Parpart (2002) how this is truly possible:

> The alternative/post-development critique has urged development practitioners to abandon Western notions of modernity and development, and to embrace the local and traditional. This romantic, uncritical evaluation of development discourse ignores the complexity of social change in the South (and North)…and fails to see the need for a more interactive, grounded approach to development. (p. 54)

I would like to think that the interactive, grounded approach that Parpart is talking about refers to women taking control of their local development. In the case of Agabagaya, these women knew what they wanted, worked towards it and were achieving great things for themselves and their community. What would it look like if outside development could be of assistance to them, on their terms, satisfying their requests? Can development be a collaboration where the relationships are reciprocal and both parties benefit?

Parpart (2002) examines the divide within post-development theory between those scholars and activists who reject development altogether and those who acknowledge development issues but are critical of top-down approaches. Parpart (2002) asserts that this latter group calls for:

> …a more bottom-up, participatory approach—one where development 'experts' become 'facilitators' working with the poor rather than directing them. ...It requires

attention to local knowledge and accumulated wisdom, respectful partnership and

participatory practice that will empower the poor so that they can define their own

development problems, goals and solutions. Thus, participation and empowerment

from this perspective, are the essential building blocks for grassroots, people-oriented

transformative development. (p. 44)

It is not often in the literature that I get such an agreeable definition of empowerment. I agree

with Parpart (2002) that the term often becomes one of meaningless theoretical jargon,

implying that 'we' give power to 'others,' and as Pam Simmons (1997) writes, "smack[s] of

condescension when spoken by those in power" (p. 253).

In the case of Agabagaya, the women already had power, considered themselves

powerful and in the context of community development exerted power to accomplish their

goals. So how does Parpart's definition of empowerment work within the context of

Agabagaya? I agree with Parpart in theory. However, in this case, her definition sounds

slightly patronizing, and for me, still echoes a colonial tone. The women have defined their

own problems and goals, and are engaged in people-centred transformative *community*

development. Of course, participation and empowerment are central themes in post-

development theory, but what does this look like in action? How are development agencies

working towards this *with people* at the grassroots? Like Parpart (2002), I ask how post-

development theory moves from theoretical understandings into practice.

The fact is that external development, with its ngos, discourse and experts are

enmeshed in the lives of the people I observed in Kihande and presumably in the lives of

many others in developing countries. Completely abolishing development is an impossibility

and calling for an "alternative" is vague and lacks direction. As Elabor-Idemudia (2002)

notes, a grassroots approach is easy to call for but fails to acknowledge that "we" cannot be

at someone else's grassroots. It is a personal, cultural and historically influenced place,

intimately known only by those who live there. Elabor-Idemudia (2002) says:

> Real and effective community control is possible only if the development agenda
>
> seeks to make indigenous knowledge systems critical in the search for solutions to
>
> human problems. This means articulating an alternative conception and praxis of
>
> development, one that does not reproduce the existing total local dependency on
>
> 'expert advice.' Local input must be from the grassroots and should tap the diverse
>
> views, opinions and interests manifested in the communities. How we can help to tap
>
> such local knowledge to assist the development process is our challenge. (p. 241)

The women of Agabagaya are a practical example of Elabor-Idemudia's assertion. It was not

the external "development" that really made a difference in the women's lives, it was the

women themselves, their initiatives and they way they chose to interact (or not) with the

external development agenda. It was the local people and the choices they made in regards to

internal and external development that had positive influences.

In working to understand women's knowledge and position, I need to be cognizant of

the fact that some of the literature suggests that women do not have access to or control over

local knowledge. Parpart (2002) suggests that, "Control over knowledge is often an essential

element of local power relations and structures. It reinforces local hierarchies, and is often

highly gendered" (p. 49). Although I understand how this is possible and could have been

true in the case of Agabagaya, I did not see evidence of this. This could be due to the

relatively short period of time that I was with the women, the care in which they crafted what

I observed, my inability to "see" it, or simply because it was not an imposing force with this

group. Although women in Uganda live in a patriarchal society with male-biased cultural expectations, I observed and demonstrated via examples, that the women were quite assertive in accessing and pursuing knowledge and resources.

The women of Agabagaya themselves had formal education opportunities in the form of public schooling (which in itself would not have been typical of all Ugandan women), and I wonder if this influenced the active seekers of knowledge that they became. Although I cannot argue that formal education is not important to these women personally and their community commitment, I do wonder to what extent formal education influenced them as learners. Freire's (1970) work on pedagogy has remained popular in the development literature and is generally theoretically agreeable. Freire works from the assumption that freedom comes from becoming educated and asserts that the student must dialogue with a teacher through problem-posing education to realize her ability to change the world in which she lives. Although I feel that his pedagogy is sound, he fails to explicitly acknowledge the knowledge that people value, share and already pursue within their own community and lives and suggests that the only path to living a liberated life is through education—education with a teacher. From my experience, the women of Agabagaya did not require a formal education setting with a teacher to achieve liberation. Like Belenky et al. (1986) assert, women possess valuable knowings of their own and draw on relevant educational activities as they arise. The women relied on the knowings of others and shared knowings among themselves to pursue their goals. The women of Agabagaya strongly valued their own knowings, actively pursued knowings and shared knowings among themselves and with others. The women of Agabagaya did not need to be in dialogue with a problem-posing teacher to realize consciousness of their situations.

Also, Freire's theory does not recognize assertively enough the knowledge that women already possess about their lives, communities and situations. From observing the Agabagaya Women's Group it is easy to agree with and support the post-development literature that insists on valuing women's local knowledge. For example, Elabor-Idemudia (2002) writes:

> They are able to give their own accounts of what is happening in their lives, what their needs are, what they are doing, what they can do and what they intend to do about their issues. Through this process, their local experiences and indigenous knowledge formulate the cultural environment that informs the social and political life of the community. …There is a disturbing failure to recognize that these peoples do theorize in their communities as part of their community life, and that they are not only articulate but also able to interpret their experiences. (p. 227)

The women of Agabagaya definitely possessed these characteristics and highlighted for me firsthand the importance of listening to and valuing the knowledge that people possess about their own lives and communities. I must admit, however, that this is sometimes more easily said than done and that understanding women from different cultures and experiences is a difficult task indeed. I connect with Parpart (1995) when she writes:

> Truly listening to others entails moving outside your own conceptual frameworks, especially the binary thought structure and patriarchal character of most Western knowledge. It requires the recognition that differences, and different voices, cannot just be heard, that language is powerful and that subjectivity (voices) are constructed and embedded in the complex experiential and discursive environments of life. (p. 239)

Parpart explains that not only is communication challenging, but she also underscores the necessity to work towards understanding, not only my own subject position, but also trying to gain an understanding of the position in which the women were located. Understanding each other is more than listening to spoken words, more than dialogue.

Although in the literature review I explored and drew parallels between Freire (1970) and Belenky et al. (1997), I see now that both of these theories, although they profess to be "problem-posing" or "connected teaching" fail to underscore strongly enough the position of the learner, the power that exists within scenarios of teaching and learning, and the situational nature of the knowledge that the learner brings. Knowings are not caused by an essentialized understanding of gender and are relative to an individual's race, culture, class, and life-context (Harding, 1996). The more recent work in post-development theory (Elabor-Idemudia, 2002; Parpart, 1995) addresses these areas that Freire and Belenky, et al. do not.

This is where I see the greatest gap in the literature: between the understanding of post-development theory and learning theory for women in developing countries. There seems to me to be a need for more dialogue between post-development theorists and those who work within "development" milieus, who are concerned with local knowledge, its prevalence and importance. And, of course, I must ask, "Where and how do local women fit into this conversation?" "We" cannot have a conversation about "them;" we all need to be dialoguing together about our concerns and our hopes for our futures. If we believe, as I do, what Elabor-Idemudia says about local knowledge, then our conversations about development must first start with the voices of local women. The women's voices must be heard and respected and may be responded to, but only if invited.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

As this research draws to a close, I find I have fewer answers than when I began and a mountain of new questions that seems to grow every time I consider a different aspect of this project. However, the project is completed and the lessons learned have been invaluable and are continuing to develop. I am pleased that I had an opportunity to attempt a feminist ethnographic research project. Actually conducting research and putting into practice what I read was an invaluable experience and allowed me to develop a greater understanding, a lived understanding, of what the theorists write. I have learned from a new perspective that the relationships between participants and researchers are not just a foundation of feminist research but are at the core, the heart of the process. The relationships allowed for experiences that cannot be obtained merely from observations and interviews—the experiences came from my interactions, my connections with the women. The women solidified my understandings of women as knowers, and demonstrated the multitude of ways that they share knowledge among themselves to support their families and communities. The women of Agabagaya taught me an enormous amount about post-development theory. The ways in which the women educate themselves through the sharing and pursuit of knowledge was a true experience in grassroots development and has lead to new questions for me about development and education and the importance of respecting what is already occurring at the grassroots level.

Although I have written about my experiences with the women of Agabagaya, I cannot/do not assume to speak on behalf of the women, nor to generalize my experiences to the entire "Third World," to other women's groups, or to other research experiences. I do not

profess to know more about "women in developing countries." I have, however, gotten to know a little about the Agabagaya Women's Group, their strengths and challenges, about what it means to be a researcher and the constant alertness and reflexivity that this entails. I have a far greater understanding of what post-development theory means and what it now means to me. I have learned about the complexities of relationships, especially in cross-cultural settings, the importance of recognizing power and the long road ahead in regards to women's equal place in this world.

It is obvious that more time would have been beneficial for this research. I would have liked more time with the women so that I could have collaborated with them on some of the analysis, especially in regards to our relationships, their relationships with others, and the power imbedded within these. I would also have liked more time in Kihande for the simple fact that I so enjoyed being with the group. But I did not have more time and still there was so much value to the process. Perhaps there is a place in the research world for snapshot ethnographies, a space to get to know others a little more, to try out our understandings and to bring these new understandings home.

Although I have new understandings, I still have so many wonderings. I wonder now about the women's perceptions of development and how these perceptions impact their lives and their work. I wonder where their drive comes from, what sustains their energy, and what the group will be like in a year or five or ten. I wonder how the sharing of knowledge among themselves will change their futures and how they will conquer new challenges. I wonder how I can influence the monstrous international machine of development to pay closer attention to these small groups of powerful and influential women who are practicing what post-development theorizes. How can we mainstream the conversations that challenge the

discourse of development? What is already occurring in so many communities around the world that is overlooked and undervalued? My guess would be that there are many groups like Agabagaya, working in small groups, cooperating, sharing and doing incredible things at their grassroots. That is a powerful thought.

Although this is the final part of this thesis, I continue to reflect on my experiences, to remember the women and to contemplate "what now?" It seems that something so important, that the relationships I have made should not end just because my assignment is complete, my task done. How do I integrate my new learnings and understandings into my life? Where do I go now as a teacher, as a learner and as a woman sharing this same planet? How do I use these new understandings to positively impact my little corner of the earth? At this point, I am not sure.

At times, I have wondered if my recollections of my experiences have become too romanticized? What happened to the problems and the difficulties I encountered? Although they are recognized within the analysis they seem to be tempered. I have tried to remain true to my experiences but I wonder if, like many memories, I have glossed over some of the difficulties and romanticized the challenges. How do ethnographers combat these human tendencies? It reminds me of what an Aboriginal elder once said, "I'm not sure if this story is true or not, but this is how I remember it." This statement so accurately reflects my feelings about this research experience.

The women continue to write to me and I to them; I enjoy hearing about their news and activities through my friend Dominique who remains in Masindi. I plan to sustain this letter-writing relationship with the women as long as they are interested. And, although I may have believed it before, I can now say with certainty that the world, our communities locally

and internationally, depend on positive, respectful and reciprocally pleasing relationships. These relationships continue to bring people together, to generate greater understandings of each other and to be the foundation on which to begin a new dialogue about what is best for each of us.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

General Info:
    Name, age, level completed in school
    Marital status
    Children: names, ages and level in school

Please tell me how you became involved in the Agabagaya Women's group. Why did you become involved?

How do you benefit from being involved in the group? Your family? Is there a downside to being involved in the group?

Do you consider your group successful? Why? In what ways is it successful?

What would you like your group to be able to achieve in the future?

How does the group find things out/gain knowledge?

Who do you learn from in the group? What types of things do you learn from that person?

Who do you teach in the group? [Who do you share knowledge with in the group?] What types of things do you share?

Are there times when knowledge is created together?

What can other women learn from your group?

What have you learned about yourself from being in the group?

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

Site Comparison Chart

Site	Target women?	Location	# of learners	Schedule of classes	Location of classes	Teacher female?	Languages spoken	goals
Agabagaya	Women	Kihande, 2km outside of Masindi	8-20	Sat: Runyoro Sun: dev't mtg Wed: dev't mtgs	Secondary school in Kihande village	Yes	-lit classes are for Runyoro -partic. speak Eng. -first lang is Runyoro	-dev't projects -education -trips/tours -seminars -socializing -eradicating illit. -short term loans
Uganda Old Women Welfare Foundation (UGOWWF)	Women and men	Nukalabye, Kampala	16 women 2 men	Tues and Fri at 3:00	Under a tree in the local comm.	Yes	-Luganda only spoken by learners -teacher speaks Eng and Luganda	-Luganda literacy -crafts with environ'l focus (i.e. using recycled material)
Kiryowa FAL class	Women	Njeru (in Mukono)	19 women, 1 man	Thursday at 2:00	A school in the village	No	-Luganda only spoken by learners -teacher speaks Eng and Luganda	-Luganda literacy -functional activities (farming, cooking)
COBAP (Comm. Based adult literacy projects)	Men and women	Nukalabye, Kampala	13 women, 1 man (in 2 classes)	Sat 9:30- 12 or 1:00	In school in village	1 male 1 female	-Luganda spoken by learners; some had basic eng -teacher speaks Eng and Luganda	-Luganda literacy -functional activities (health, aids awareness, cooking)

-Kiryowa – although an excellent site, not a viable option b/c it is in Mukono, 11/2 hrs east of Kampala. I have no accommodation there and transport is difficult.
-UGOWWF – none of the learners spoke English; the comm. did not have clearly defined boundaries, i.e. because it was an urban setting, I could not easily tell where the learners were from. Comm would therefore be difficult to observe/define/contain
-COBAP – a large, well established project, with many activities (youth programmes, care component for people with HIV/AIDS, capacity building component and child/orphan care programmes. Although well-established and organized, seems too big, not an initiative BY the women

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Map of Masindi Area
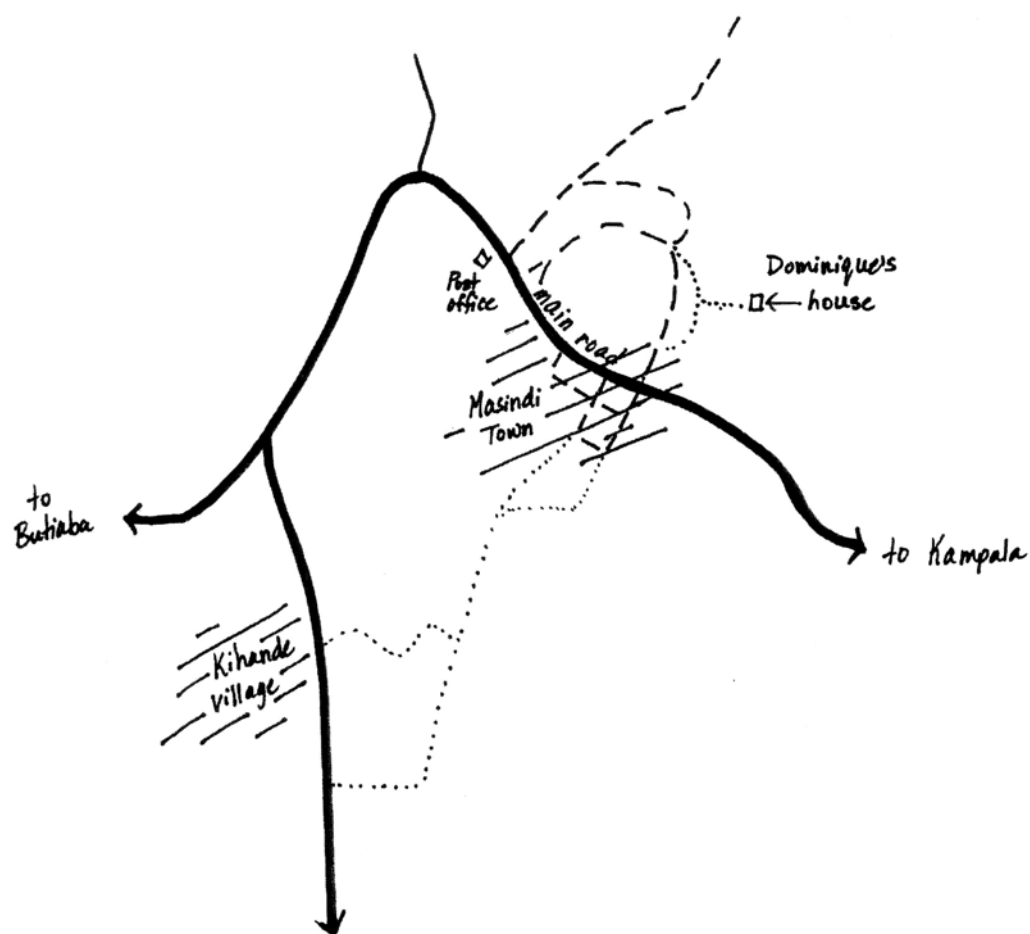
APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

Agabagaya Song

Agabagaya Women's Group Kihande
Ekitebe kyaitu kyabakyara
Kyokybiho obunaku nobutumanya
Hamu nokuleta enkurakurana

Mwime murugeyo inywena
Mumihanda egyo embi eyobunaku
Itwena tukolere hamu
Tubeinge obunaku nobutamanya

Mwebale abadyara bakihande I
Mwebale kukolera hamu inywena
Hamu nokuhereza eihanga
As our motto stands united we serve

Okutunga enkoko okulima obutuzi
Okulisa ente hamu no kulima
Ebyo nibyo ebibinga obunaku
Omu Agabagaya women's group

Agabagaya – to rise up

Agabagaya women's group Kihande
It is our women's group
To kick poverty and ignorance

Come all and move away from
The bad way
Let us all work together
And we kick poverty

Thank you women of Kihande
Thank you for working altogether
And to serve all the country at large
As our motto stands united we serve

To get hens, mushrooms
To get a heifer, agriculture
All are found in Agabagaya women's group.

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E

The Constitution

1.	Preamble

We women of Kihande 1 Masindi Town Council, Uganda, realizing the necessity of uplifting the welfare of the people, in strong belief of our potent do hereby resolve to write and work for progress with in powers instituted in this constitution.

2.	Conscious

To foster sensitization, unity, patriotism and peace in progress of our village and the whole country at large, well aware that by the position we occupy in society, there is a duty of us be endowment and sacrifice to play a leading role in the development of our village.

Now therefore, we the representatives of the association do carefully resolve to write this constitution in pursuant of our goal and aspirations to all women yet to come operating under this constitution.

Article 1

	Name of the Association

The name of the Association shall be called "AGABAGAYA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION," "AGAWAS."

All members shall respect the Anthem and the rules of the Association.

Article 2

	Membership
(i)	Pay the membership feel of 1000/= (one thousand shillings) non-refundable and 2000/= (two thousand shillings) as subscription fee payable every month which is refundable after failing to continue with the association.
(ii)	New members shall pay in accordance to the decision of the old members.

Article 3

	Aims and Objectives
(i)	Setting developmental projects.
(ii)	Conducting educative programmes through sensitization.
(iii)	Instilling discipline to the rest of the people.
(iv)	Carrying out trips and tours plus picnics to different places in order to be exposed to some important things.

(v)   Socializing with the rest of the association for more skills.
(vi)   Conducting seminars and perhaps debates to get more educated on some issues.
(vii)   Eradicate illiteracy/ignorance.
(viii)   Fighting poverty by giving out money on short-term loan scales.

Article 4

Meetings

(i)   Any member in the committee should not miss any meeting if informed. If such is done she should be dealt with accordingly.
(ii)   All members shall attend meetings without fail and if such is done without any serious problem and without informing the Association in writing, she will be dealt with accordingly.
(iii)   Late coming is also punishable by payment of 300/= (three hundred shillings) and absenteeism on any meeting(s) with out clear reason(s) shall pay 500/= (five hundred shillings) as a fine next meeting to be paid with in a weeks period.
(iv)   There shall be a provision for special cases and commitments on approval.

Article 5

Composition of the Administration Organ
Section 1

(i)   The Association shall constitute the general assembly.
(ii)   The executive committee shall comprise of
         The Association chairman/chairperson
         The Association vice chairperson
         Secretary to the Association
         Vice Secretary
         The Association Treasurer
         Committee members
(iii)   There shall be a disciplinary committee headed by the Association chairperson. The chairperson shall nominate another three people from the executive committee.

Article 6

Powers and Duties of Association Organs

Section 1

1.   The Chairperson shall:
(i)   be the executive head.
(ii)   give guidelines to the proceedings of the association.
(iii)   help the members in problem solving.
(iv)   chair the meetings unless otherwise.

(v)   address the problems of the Association to the members.

(vi)   nominate the executive members to the Association executive committee and change the members of the committee from one area of work to another.

Section 2

2.   The Vice Chairperson shall:

(i)   deputise the chairperson.

(ii)   act on behalf of the chairperson in case of absence or if requested to do so.

(iii)   carry out other duties as shall be assigned to her from time to time by the Association chairperson.

Section 3

3.   The Secretary shall:

(i)   be the secretary to the chairperson and the committee proceedings.

(ii)   draw up and publish agenda for meetings.

(iii)   give dated notices of all meetings of cabinet, council and general assemblies.

(iv)   keep all records and proceedings of all meetings.

(v)   receive and forward correspondence pertaining to the association community and seek for reply.

(vi)   be co-signatory to all resolutions made by any of the Association members.

(vii)   Carry out any other official duties as may be assigned to her by the Association chairperson as a council.

Section 4

4.   The Treasurer shall:

(i)   keep all the financial documents of the association and prepare auditing.

(ii)   be a co-signatory of all financial documents of the Association together with the chairperson.

(iii)   be the head of the financial committee and preside over its meetings.

Section 5

5.   The Adviser shall:

(i)   give advice to the Association if consulted.

(ii)   advise the Association on how to operate.

(iii)   meet committee members in case of any problem forwarded to him/her.

Article 7

        Term of Office

The Association shall change/renew members in the administrative structure every three years.

Article 8

Elections
(i)   These shall be conducted by the chairperson.
(ii)   This shall be conducted after the expiration of the term of office of present members.

Article 9

Voting
This shall be effected by use of kangaroo system (lining up). The chairperson shall not allow voting for or choosing any member in office if she is not present unless the notification letter is made.

Article 10

Prohibited Acts
Members of the Association shall not be involved in the following:
(i)   theft or robbery
(ii)   embezzlement of funds
(iii)   unnecessary strikes unless with genuine reason
(iv)   decampaign of the Association
(v)   telling lies
(vi)   gossiping and rumour mongering
If such is done, the victim will be dealt with accordingly.

Article 11

Vote of No Confidence
This shall be done to:
(i)   any member who will have misused her term of office, misused her powers, failure to execute her duties.
(ii)   For a vote of no confidence to be passed, to any member of the Association. It is supposed to be passed by 2/3 (two-thirds) of the members of the general assembly shall vote in favour to do so.
(iii)   At least a fortnight notice shall be given to the chairperson by the mover of the motion before a vote of no confidence is rendered and debated.

Article 12

Resignation
(i)   Should the Association chairperson wish to resign, she will have to hand in her resignation letter to the vice at least one month before leaving office.
(ii)   In case the chairperson wishes to expel or suspend any member of the executive or general assembly, she has to forward the matter tot he executive which will grant

(iii)   the accused a chance to defend herself.

Article 13

     Expulsion:
(i)   The member(s) shall be expelled when she fails to support the general activities of the Association without informing the committee in writing and with clear proof or evidence.

Article 14

     Amendment of Constitution
(i)   This shall be done when one of the members raises the serious point(s) for amendment.
(ii)   The suggestion bearer shall put in writing to the speaker with reasons defending the suggestion.
(iii)   The chairperson shall not allow the amendment of any article or section or paragraph of the constitution without consulting the general assembly.

Declaration
For any article, section, paragraph or phrase consistent to the constitution of the republic of Uganda shall be null and void.

The following shall be remembered of making this constitution and their individual patience, kindness and generosity towards this association.

1.	Ms. Byesigwa Shakillah	Chairperson
2.	Ms. Baguma Harriet	Vice-Chairperson
3.	Ms. Kyobutungi Lois	Secretary
4.	Ms. Bagonza Joy	Vice-Secretary
5.	Ms. Mwirumubi Dorcus	Treasurer
6.	Ms. Wamala Sally	Advisor

As our motto stands:

"UNITED WE SERVE"

APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F

Certificate of Recognition

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MASINDI DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS
(CBOs)

This is to certify that ...... AGABAGAYA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION ...... a Local Community
Based Organisation (CBO) is fully Registered with Masindi District Council.

It is involved in ..POULTRY.. ZERO GRAZING ▸ORGANIC FARMING.. which activity/intervention is in line with the
Masindi District Local Government 3 Year Development Plan and the District Mission Statement.

Certified and Registered under my hand this day .26th.. of ...... March.., 20.04

....
Senior Community Development Officer
MASINDI DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

....
Chief Administrative Officer
MASINDI DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

For CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
MASINDI DISTRICT

APPENDIX G

APPENDIX G

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT (participants)

(on University of Manitoba, Department of Women's Studies letterhead)

Research Project Title: Relationships and Learning: Examining Relationships
Between Students, Teacher and Researcher and the Implications
for Learning

Researcher: Melanie Janzen

Research Summary: Learning is a social process and is enhanced by the positive relationships in which learners are engaged. This research is a feminist ethnographic study in a women's learning centre in Uganda and in the local community in which the learning centre is situated. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the sharing of knowledge occurs within women's relationships. The participants/learners in this study are adult women students, their teacher and the researcher. The researcher will explore how knowledge is shared between the participants (students, teacher and researcher) and the role that relationships have in this knowledge transfer. The research will be used for the researcher's Masters thesis.

I have read this consent form and have had an opportunity to discuss it with the researcher. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research and have had my questions answered. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question.

I understand that the researcher will use a notebook and a tape recorder to record observations and discussions in the classroom and in the local community. The researcher will also use a camera and will invite the participants to use the camera to record aspects of the classroom. The researcher will observe our learning centre and our community for a period of about six weeks. The researcher will not document (in her notebook, on tape or by photograph) anyone who has not consented to be in the research project.

I understand that the researcher will store notes, tapes and photographs securely during the project and upon return to Canada. I understand that my photographs may be included in the final thesis and therefore that my anonymity is not guaranteed. I understand that the researcher does not intend to use the photos elsewhere. If for some reason this changes, she will seek and receive my permission prior to using the photos elsewhere.

I understand that I will have an opportunity to discuss observations with the researcher and that I will have an opportunity to view photographs taken during the study. I understand that I may ask the researcher to read her field notes to me. I may choose to withdraw statements I made, photographs of myself, or may decline participation from the study at any time without prejudice or consequence. I also understand that once the University of Manitoba accepts the researcher's final thesis, I will no longer be able to withdraw participation, statements or photographs.

I understand that I may not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study but that my participation may help others in the future.

I understand that my signature on this form indicates that I have understood the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive my legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I consent to being a participant in this research study as described above. _____

I consent to photographs of myself being used in the final thesis. _____

I consent to photographs of myself being used in other publications for
Canadian audiences resulting from this study _____

I consent to photographs of myself being used in other publications for
Ugandan audiences resulting from this study _____

I consent to my first name only being used in the study _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name of Participant _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact:
Melanie Janzen, (204) 661-6677, email melaniedjanzen@mts.net
or Dr. John Wiens, (204) 474 – 9001, email jrwiens@ms.umanitoba.ca
or Dr. Susan Heald, (204) 474-8131, email heald@cc.UManitoba.CA

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (University of Manitoba). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons. Or you may contact the Human Ethics Secretariat at 244 Engineering Building, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB. R3T 5V6 or phone (204) 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

APPENDIX H

APPENDIX H

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION (community leader(s)consent)

(on University of Manitoba, Department of Women's Studies letterhead)

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for Learning

Researcher: Melanie Janzen

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will explore how knowledge is shared between the participants (students, teacher and
researcher) and the role that relationships have in this knowledge transfer. The research
will be used for the researcher's Masters thesis.

I have read this permission form and have had an opportunity to discuss it with the
researcher. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research and have had
my questions answered. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I understand
that I will be given a copy of this permission form after signing it. I understand that
participation of this community is voluntary and that the community may choose to
withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question. I understand that all participants
will be asked to provide informed consent prior to the research commencing and in no
way does this permission assume consent of the participants.

I understand that the researcher will use a notebook and a tape recorder to record
observations of the participants in the class as well as in the local community. The
researcher will also use a camera and will invite the participants to use the camera. The
researcher will not document (in her notebook, on tape or by photograph) anyone who
has not consented to be in the research project. The researcher will observe the
participants for a period of about six weeks.

I understand that the researcher will store notes, tapes and photographs securely during
the project and upon return to Canada. I understand that photographs may be included in
the final thesis and therefore that anonymity of participants is not guaranteed. I
understand that the researcher will seek the organization's permission (i.e. the learning
centre's), as well as the permission of the participants prior to using the photos elsewhere.
I understand that participants will have an opportunity to discuss observations with the
researcher and that they will have an opportunity to view photographs taken during the
study.

I understand that participants may choose to withdraw statements made, photographs, or may decline participation from the study at any time without prejudice or consequence. I also understand that once the researcher's final thesis is accepted by the University of Manitoba, this community will no longer be able to withdraw participation, statements or photographs.

I understand that the community may not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study but that our participation may help others in the future.

I understand that my signature on this form indicates that I have understood the information regarding my/our community's participation in the research project and agree to my/our community's participation. I understand that all participants in the study will also be asked for their informed consent. In no way does this waive my/our legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I consent to this community being involved in this research study as described above.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Printed Title _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact:
Melanie Janzen, (204) 661-6677, email melaniedjanzen@mts.net
or Dr. John Wiens, (204) 474 – 9001, email jrwiens@ms.umanitoba.ca
or Dr. Susan Heald, (204) 474-8131, email heald@cc.UManitoba.CA

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (University of Manitoba). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons. Or you may contact the Human Ethics Secretariat at 244 Engineering Building, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB. R3T 5V6 or phone (204) 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX I

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION *(supervisor/governing body consent)*

(on University of Manitoba, Department of Women's Studies letterhead)

Research Project Title: Relationships and Learning: Examining Relationships
Between Students, Teacher and Researcher and the Implications
for Learning

Researcher: Melanie Janzen

Research Summary: Learning is a social process and is enhanced by the positive relationships in which learners are engaged. This research will be a feminist ethnographic study in a women's learning centre in Uganda and in the local community in which the learning centre is situated. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the sharing of knowledge occurs within women's relationships. The participants/learners in this study are the adult women students, their teacher and the researcher (myself). The researcher will explore how knowledge is shared between the participants (students, teacher and researcher) and the role that relationships have in this knowledge transfer. The research will be used for the researcher's Masters thesis.

I have read this permission form and have had an opportunity to discuss it with the researcher. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research and have had my questions answered. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I understand that I will be given a copy of this permission form after signing it. I understand that participation of this organization is voluntary and that the organization may choose to withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question. I understand that all participants will be asked to provide informed consent prior to the research commencing and in no way does this permission assume consent of the participants.

I understand that the researcher will use a notebook and a tape recorder to record observations of the participants in the class as well as in the local community. The researcher will also use a camera and will invite the participants to use the camera. The researcher will not document (in her notebook, on tape or by photograph) anyone who has not consented to be in the research project. The researcher will observe the participants for a period of about six weeks.

I understand that the researcher will store notes, tapes and photographs securely during the project and upon return to Canada. I understand that photographs may be included in the final thesis and therefore that anonymity of participants is not guaranteed. I understand that the researcher will seek the organization's permission, as well as the permission of the participants prior to using the photos elsewhere.

I understand that participants will have an opportunity to discuss observations with the researcher and that they will have an opportunity to view photographs taken during the study. I understand that participants may choose to withdraw statements made, photographs, or may decline participation from the study at any time without prejudice or consequence. I also understand that once the researcher's final thesis is accepted by the University of Manitoba, this organization will no longer be able to withdraw participation, statements or photographs.

I understand that the organization may not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study but that our participation may help others in the future.

I understand that my signature on this form indicates that I have understood the information regarding my/our organization's participation in the research project and agree to my/our organization's participation. I understand that all participants in the study will also be asked for their informed consent. In no way does this waive my/our legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

I consent to this organization being involved in this research study as described above.

Signature _____   Date _____

Printed Name _____

Printed Title _____

Printed Name of Organization _____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date _____

Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact:
Melanie Janzen, (204) 661-6677, email melaniedjanzen@mts.net
or Dr. John Wiens, (204) 474 – 9001, email jrwiens@ms.umanitoba.ca
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This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (University of Manitoba). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons. Or you may contact the Human Ethics Secretariat at 244 Engineering Building, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB. R3T 5V6 or phone (204) 474-7122, or e-mail margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

APPENDIX J

APPENDIX J

Transcript of Radio News Broadcast, June 08, 2004

<u>Transcript</u>:

"…Masindi Town council has introduced charcoal saving stoves in Masindi District.
Today members of the Njeru Women's Group from Mukono District, made a sample of
the charcoal saving stove for Agabagaya Group at Mrs. Byesigwa Shakillah, the
chairperson's, home. Agabagaya Women's Organization has 12 members with chickens,
organic manure, pigs, cattle, mushrooms, among others and intends to eliminate poverty
by creating self-help projects. Melanie Janzen, American student (sic) at the University of
Manitoba in Canada, …the two groups to share knowledge and develop each other's
[ways?]. The two-year old Agabagaya project is worth about two million *shillings* to
which the District Community Development Officer Masindi, Chris Muhereza has
praised them for their hard work. … and calls upon the women groups elsewhere to
emulate Agabagaya and Njeru women's groups. Some members of Agabagaya are due to
travel to Mukono district to teach their Njeru counterparts on how to make organic
manure. Zubria Byesigwa, the Kihande One chairperson says Agabagaya project has
helped women in trying to lessen the husband's financial burden. He said that the local
councils should help them in anyway possible."

APPENDIX K

APPENDIX K

The Programme for the Farewell Party of Ms. Janzen Melanie on June 20th 2004

9:00-11:00   Arrival of group members

11:00-12:00   Arrival of invited guests

12:00-1:10   Prayer

1:10-1:15   National Anthem

1:15-1:20   Group Anthem

1:20-1:25   Group Song

1:25-1:30   A speech from the chairperson organizing committee

1:30-1:35   A speech from the chairperson Kihande Village

1:35-2:00   A speech from the group representative

2:00-2:10   A speech from the [assistant] SCDO

2:10-2:20   A speech from the SCDO Mr. Muhereza

2:20-2:30   A speech from anyone who wants to say a word

2:30-2:40   A farewell song by group members

2:40-3:00   A speech from the Guest of Honour M/S Janzen Melanie

3:00-4:00   Lunch

4:00-4:20   A report from Mukono

4:20-5:00   Any other business

5:00-5:30   Closing prayer

APPENDIX L

APPENDIX L

Farewell Song Lyrics

(written by Lois and sung by the women of Agabagaya)

Farewell dear Melanie
Good-bye dear Melanie
Where ever you may be in this world
Since days of you
Might come no more
We say, dear Melanie good-bye

When we remember
Your smiles and laughter
For sure, we're going to miss you
When shall we meet
And share smiles again
For sure, we are missing you

When we remember
Your jokes and talks
For sure, we're going to miss you
When shall we meet
And shake hands again
For sure, we are missing you

Fare well dear Melanie
Good-bye dear Melanie
Until we meet again
Fare well dear Melanie
Good bye dear Melanie
Never forget Agabagaya

APPENDIX M

APPENDIX M

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEC	Adult Education Centre (in Mukono District)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MADFA	Masindi Farmers' Association
mnc	multinational corporation
NGO (ngo)	Non Government Organization
sap	structural adjustment programmes
SCDO	Senior Community Development Officer
UGAADEN	Ugandan Adult Education Network
Ush	Ugandan Shilling
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas (The abbreviation is often used to identify a VSO volunteer. For example, "She is a VSO who is working here.")

APPENDIX N

APPENDIX N

Glossary

Agabagaya - From the proverb: *Agabagaya nigo gabutosa*. Roughly translated means: You might think that the little water that you add to the millet will do nothing, but you are surprised that it does a lot.

Boda boda - a common form of taxi transportation in Uganda. The passenger sits on a padded cushion on a bicycle behind the driver. A boda boda can also refer to taxi transport on the back of a motorcycle. The word originated in Eastern Uganda when passengers would call out to passing bicycles to take them to the Kenyan border, "Border! Border!"

Break tea - the term used to describe a coffee break. Break tea usually occurs in the Late morning and consists of milky tea and a banana, bread or plain doughnut. Break tea can also be served in late afternoon or early evening prior to the evening meal which is usually served quite late.

Dodo - a leafy green vegetable, with a mildly bitter taste, served boiled as a side dish.

Empaako - a pet name given by the tribe in Masindi district. Not all tribes in Uganda use *empaako* names. The name for each person is chosen from about a dozen possibilities and has attributes that reflect a person's characteristics. My pet name was Abwole, which refers to a cat, long and agile.

Gomez - a traditional dress worn by Ugandan women in some regions. The *gomez* has sleeves that are puffy on the shoulder and has fabric gathered at the side to make the dress look fuller and the woman look larger. The dress

also has an additional wrapped skirt under the dress also to create an
appearance of the woman being larger. (Larger women are considered
healthier.) The *gomez* is complimented by a long wide belt that is wrapped
around the waist and tied in a large knot in the front of the dress.

Introduction ceremony - this ceremony officially introduces the husband-to-be and his
family to the bride-to-be's family. The lengthy ceremony is hosted at the
woman's family's home. A bride price is paid, a wedding date is
confirmed and the woman's family provides a huge feast for all those in
attendance (usually hundreds of people).

Kabalagala pancakes - a small cookie-sized pancake made out of banana and deep-fried.
Sold by street vendors and at markets and eaten as a cold snack.

Kipoli - a spread made from peanuts (called 'g-nuts,' short for ground nuts) and
sometimes has sesame seeds added to it. The nuts and seeds are cleaned,
sorted, roasted and then taken to the mill to ground, or can be ground by
hand using a mortar and pestle.

Luganda - the local language spoken in the Mukono district of Uganda.

Matoke - a local staple made from a variety of green, firm bananas. The matoke
banana is peeled, wrapped in banana leaves, steamed and served with most
meals. The matoke is bland and tends to take on the flavours of the sauces
with which it is usually served.

Mzungu - a Swahili word, originally used to identify travellers, now used exclusively
to refer to a white person.

Runyoro -   the local language spoken in the Masindi area of Uganda

Shilling -   refers to the Ugandan shilling, the currency (represented with the symbol

/=) of Uganda. At the time of writing, one Canadian dollar equaled about

one thousand three hundred Ugandan *shillings* ($1 = 1,300 /=). One

thousand *shillings* could purchase two taxi rides or two large bunches of

bananas. A soft drink or bottled water ranged from 500/= to 1000/=.