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Chapter 2

Women's Human Rights and Empowerment in a Transnational, Globalized Context: What's Psychology Got To Do with It?

Shelly Grabe

As the field of transnational feminism grows in response to globalization, the discussion of women's human rights becomes ever more relevant. However, the very premise of transnational feminism that distinguishes it from international feminism or global sisterhood—that is, favoring a diversity of women's agency rather than universalized notions of Western feminism (Naples & Desai, 2002)—makes it seemingly impossible to advocate for universal recommendations regarding women's human rights that can cross borders in the same manner that the resources and labor that define the modern globalized economy cross borders. Nevertheless, the development field has begun a concerted effort to broadly address women's human rights and empowerment with organizations ranging from the World Bank, to grassroots nongovernmental organizations, to the United Nations (UN), all advocating for women's human rights and empowerment in an effort to address UN Millennium Development Goal 3—"to promote gender equality and empower women" (UN, 2000). This chapter will discuss why women's human rights warrant increased focus in the context of globalization and how psychology can provide the currently missing, but necessary, links between transnational feminism, the discourse on women's human rights and globalization, and the international attention given to women's empowerment, to effectively fill in gaps in our

understanding, and to contribute to systematic change in women's well-being worldwide. As such, this chapter integrates theories of women's human rights and capabilities with current understandings of empowerment from both academic and development approaches and concludes with a case example that draws together theory, intervention, and assessment to evaluate a program that has enormous implications for women's well-being in a globalized, international context.

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

One major consequence of the restructuring of the world economy of the 1980s and 1990s—or globalization—is that it exacerbates or maintains violations of human rights. As such, several transnational social movements and advocacy networks have emerged in response to globalization to highlight its impact on human rights and justice (Moghadam, 2005). Transnational feminism, in particular, is one movement that argues that women bear a disproportionate burden of the economic and social dislocation that result from the neoliberal economic policies that characterize the global economy (Naples & Desai, 2002). For example, it is well documented that the structural adjustment of social welfare policies, the increased international activity by multinational corporations, and the deregulation of markets and free trade agreements that characterized the 1980s and '90s has had unique outcomes for women (Naples & Desai, 2002; Moghadam, 2005). Some of the consequences of this economic and social restructuring include the following: (1) the feminization of labor and/or poverty whereby women have expanded their unpaid labor in the home and community to compensate for the increase in poverty and loss of local resources, (2) biases in economic policies favoring men, (3) an increase in the number of women trafficked for what is often involuntary sex work, and (4) an exacerbated sexual division of labor (e.g., Acosta-Belén, & Bose, 1990; Moghadam, 2005).

Such trends continue unabated, despite widespread international commitments to draw increased attention to women's rights. For example, at a UN conference in 1995, 189 governments adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, an international agenda for women's empowerment and a statement of women's rights as human rights (UN, 1995). Importantly, the mission statement of the Beijing Platform for Action explicitly states:

The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political

decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development. A sustained and long-term commitment is essential, so that women and men can work together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Indeed, the 1990s was a period of monumental political transformation that witnessed a growing international women's movement linked through subregional, regional, and international networks to collaborate on efforts calling attention to unequal rights and mechanisms through which female subordination is sustained and reproduced (Kabeer, 1994; Razavi, 2003). Therefore, not surprisingly, in the midst of international attention to women's rights from advocacy groups and the United Nations alike, there has been growing awareness and interest in the empowerment of women among development programs and policies (Narayan, 2005). Yet, what remains unclear in this growing global awareness is whether or not a *universal* set of human rights exists and, if they do, how *empowerment* is related to them. Furthermore, what does the development community—and the economists who have staked a claim in this area of research—mean by women's *empowerment*? Stronger conceptualization and assessment of empowerment, which I will demonstrate is an inarguably psychological process, as well as how it relates to human rights, can greatly contribute to and fuel efforts aimed at enhancing women's well-being. This chapter aims to establish that if we are to have a better understanding of women's psychological empowerment, contributions from psychology are necessary to integrate feminist scholarship, debates regarding human rights, and the increasing attention given by the development community to women's rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT IN DEVELOPMENT

Discussions of human rights often imply a universal language of rights and equality, suggesting that norms of justice can be applied across societies. However, such simple notions of universalism raise concern. First, in many countries, "universal" discourse is taken to mean that defined by the West. As such, even when universal categories are introduced by women who live and work within the country in question, they are commonly accused of pandering to a Western

political agenda (Nussbaum, 2000; Tripp, 2002). This area is therefore fraught with intellectual and political complexity. For example, one could argue that holding standards of human rights is another example of colonial domination—an imposition on people who are capable of determining their own definitions of justice (Phillips, 2002). Certainly this is consistent with the tenants of Transnational Feminism, which argue precisely *against* universal definitions of feminism in favor of a feminism that is relative to the society in which it was formed reflecting the values and practices unique to the culture.

In contrast to universalism, a culturally relativistic approach argues that norms of justice are always relative to the society in which they are formed, reflecting values and practices that vary enormously from one society to another, and that it is therefore inappropriate to take the norms that emerge within one society as the standard against which to assess the norms of another (Phillips, 2002). The value of this position is that it captures the situated nature of any principles of justice. However, while cultural relativism addresses the contextual nature of justice, it carries its own set of concerns. For example, cultural relativism does not take into consideration that norms of justice are not constructed under the principles of gender equity. Those who defend practices that are harmful to women, in the name of preserving “culture,” are often the same individuals or leaders who make decisions and allow change that serves to protect their own political and/or economic interests (Phillips, 2002; Tripp, 2002). Indeed, many of the structural adjustments and development interventions stemming from neoliberal policies have produced substantial cultural changes; however, because these changes are often advantageous to those already in positions of power, concerns of cultural relativism are not often invoked. What this suggests is that cultural practices and change are tied to broader political and economic contexts that extend beyond gender and, in this way, the suppression of women’s rights is not essential to the uniqueness of any particular culture (Tripp, 2002).

It therefore seems that when evaluating women’s rights, both approaches (i.e., universal principles that fail to adequately address differences, and those ignoring women’s rights for fear of cultural imperialism) should be suspect in the context of this discussion. If one follows the principles of universalism, strict equality in rights may perpetuate inequality if no attention to differences in background or demographics is paid. In other words, ignoring differences in gender tends to equate equality with sameness, thereby leaving untouched systematic differences in power (Phillips, 2002). For example, equal rights to hold property or to have access to clean water are not realized when traditional gender roles prevent many women from ownership or control over these resources, despite their legal rights (Deere & Leon, 2001; Lastarria, 2001, 2008; Molyneux & Razavi, 2002). This concern is

becomingly increasingly relevant, as many countries have revised their constitutions or laws to legalize women’s rights in the past several decades. However, although legal rights are an important first step, customary law or cultural practices still largely prohibit women from taking advantage of their rights and essentially render women *incapable* of realizing rights they might otherwise choose. As a result, universalism, in extending equal rights to everyone regardless of background, may have the unintended consequence of perpetuating or exaggerating inequalities. The political implication here is that some groups may need different interventions to achieve the same kind of outcomes. Therefore, it appears that some combination of universalism and relativism is needed. In other words, it must be possible to be both equal and different.

In an approximate combination of these approaches, Martha Nussbaum proposes a universal approach to human *capabilities*, rather than human *rights* (2000). She suggests that there are central elements of truly human functioning that are particularly essential to human worth and dignity, and that each person should be *capable* of having these basic elements in their lives. She proposes a list of basic elements and suggests that they might serve as the moral basis of constitutional guarantees cross-culturally. Among the eight proposed capabilities or essential human elements, “having control over one’s environment” is most relevant to the current discussion. She defines this capability in two primary ways: (a) political: being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life; having the right to political participation, protections of free speech and association, and (b) material: being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), not just formally but in terms of real opportunity; having property rights on an equal basis with others; and having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others. In this way, being *capable* means that in addition to having the legal *right* to, for example, political participation, a person should be free to pursue the right, presumably without consequence or undue obstacle. Thus, capabilities may require not only material and institutional resources, but legal and social acceptance of the legitimacy of women’s claims or participation.

Importantly, and consistent with the aims of this chapter, Nussbaum also argues that the structure of social and political institutions should be established, in part, to promote at least a threshold level of these human capabilities, that basic rights become *institutionalized* such that everyone has the opportunity—or is capable—of realizing their rights. In the past two decades, this view has become incorporated into the development community, and it has become accepted to evaluate development in terms of human capabilities and enhanced well-being (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Sen, 1999). In particular, the increasing recognition in the development discourse regarding women’s rights has led

to a proliferation of programs aimed at women's empowerment. However, the inclusion of women in development programs has largely come through the focus of income-generating programs—most notably microcredit loaning (Goetz & Sen Gupta, 1996). However, while income generation that stems from microcredit loans may improve a household's economic status, women's receipt of the loan, or the labor associated with the loan, does not contest gender relations in the same manner that structural or institutional interventions might. Although research suggests that loans may increase women's economic activity, they do little to diversify women's labor, resulting in an adherence to a traditional occupational structure that sustains male dominance (Kabeer, 2001). For example, it is not uncommon that a woman's labor does not belong to the woman, but falls under the control of her male partner (Bartky, 1990). Thus, male control of the economic or material output that may stem from women's microcredit borrowing may maintain and support the domination and control of women and their work. Indeed, in a review of credit programs in Bangladesh, 63 percent of female loan holders reported having only partial, very limited, or no control over the loans they had procured (Goetz & Sen Gupta, 1996). In support of the argument that economic activity does not increase women's power and control, Panda and Agarwal (2005) found that levels of employment status (unemployed, seasonally employed, and regularly employed) did not affect women's receipt of physical violence, whereas land ownership did, suggesting that economic activity did little to alter the gender dynamics that predict patterns of violence against women. Effectively targeting poverty may ensure that short-term, material needs are met but may not alter women's status or effectively give them voice in their relationships or their community. In sum, although there has been a proliferation of gender-focused programs among development organizations, there is limited investigation into the role of structural interventions in addressing women's rights, capabilities, or empowerment.

The influence of the capabilities approach on the development community is also witnessed through assessments such as the *Human Development Reports* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which now includes quality of life in assessments for governments and international agencies in addition to the previously narrow focus on gross domestic product. Moreover, two gender measures were introduced in the 1990s to assess the status of women in human development (UNDP, 1995). However, neither assesses empowerment in ways that will be conceptualized in this chapter. Specifically, the Gender Related Development Index was created to assess inequalities between women and men on factors such as life expectancy, educational attainment, and income. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) was introduced to address the noted gap in assessment

measures and is widely acknowledged as a measure of women's agency. However, it assesses gender equality in economic and political participation and decision making, reporting factors such as the percentage of women in governmental positions and the ratio of female- to male-earned income. Thus, while the GEM is currently held as a model for assessing levels of women's empowerment, I argue that it does not adequately measure empowerment or agency; rather, it measures the outcomes of women's empowerment. Thus, while there has been considerable theoretical interest within the development community regarding questions of empowerment, agency, and well-being, there has been little empirical investigation into these exact processes. What has resulted is a full-fledged, albeit much needed, internationally coordinated effort to enhance women's empowerment in the absence of a sound understanding of what *disempowers*—or subordinates—women, a clear conceptualization of women's psychological empowerment, and virtually no adequate assessment or evaluation of progress aimed at enhancing women's well-being. In other words, despite the proliferation of empowerment rhetoric in championing of social interventions, the explicit connections between policy or program development and empowerment theory and research are in most cases tenuous (Perkins, 1995). The empirical gap in the literature surrounding how women's empowerment processes operate may largely reflect a lack of clear-cut definitions and appropriate assessment tools (Goetz & Sen Gupta, 1996; Holvoet, 2005). Psychology can substantially contribute to this area of investigation by (a) conceptualizing and defining women's empowerment as it relates to women's human rights, and (b) assessing and analyzing the processes of empowerment in a development context.

CONCEPTUALIZING EMPOWERMENT

In an attempt to address development's shortcomings, many have turned to an "empowerment" approach, which has become popular, and largely unquestioned, in part because the lack of a clear definition lends to a "common sense" acceptance of it (Sharp, Briggs, Yacoub, & Hamed, 2003). Therefore, it is not quite clear what practitioners or scholars mean by using the term empowerment, nor how it is achieved. Yet, empowerment has become a vital construct for understanding women's well-being and a central focus across disciplines and fields, despite that it remains loosely defined and inadequately conceptualized (Hill, 2003; Narayan, 2005; Perkins, 1995). To date, empowerment has been discussed by economists as a process of "undoing internalized oppression," and therefore, when focused on women, it involves changing the social and cultural norms inherent in patriarchy that sustain women's subordination (e.g., Agarwal, 1994). It has been similarly argued that empowerment increases women's sense of agency

or what has been termed "power within" (Deere & Leon, 2001; Kabeer, 1994). Kabeer (1994) argues that while agency has been operationalized in the social science literature as decision making or negotiation, it is a broader construct reflecting one's ability to define goals and act upon them. She defines empowerment as a process related to resources, agency, and achievement (Kabeer, 2005). In this way, agency is central to empowerment because through agency choices are made and put into effect. Sen (1985, 1999) similarly defines agency as freedom to achieve whatever goals or values a person regards as important. He argues that traditional gender roles curtail women's agency by assuming their interests lie within the home and not within their person (Sen, 1995). As related to empowerment, agency includes not only exercising choice, but doing so in a way that challenges existing power relations. Importantly, it also has been highlighted that issues of empowerment are distinct from psychological well-being but that each are important when assessing change (Sen, 1985). While collectively there appears to emerge a working understanding of empowerment, there are notable limitations present in this literature. First, the authors addressing women's empowerment in the context of development are largely economists and, while they have pioneered this field and great strides have been made with tremendous attention being paid to women's rights, because empowerment is an inherently psychological process, understanding in this area can only be advanced by the conceptual and methodological tools offered from within the discipline of psychology. Second, despite increasing attention to issues of empowerment and capabilities in the development literature, current evaluative assessments do not adequately reflect the processes surrounding women's empowerment (Hill, 2003). Finally, limitations posed by multiple nonoverlapping disciplines have not adequately connected human rights or capabilities to empowerment. Thus, as it stands, there is a divide between the theoretical or philosophical approaches to human rights and capabilities and the interventions evaluated by development practitioners and scholars. The discipline of psychology is well positioned to address these gaps with both theoretical and methodological contributions.

Psychologists define empowerment as a process by which people gain control and mastery over issues of concern to them (Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 1995). Within psychology, empowerment theory links subjective (personal) well-being with larger social and political contexts (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). Importantly, empowerment research focuses on identifying *capabilities* and exploring environmental influences on social problems such that empowerment-oriented interventions enhance well-being, while they also aim to ameliorate problems (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). In fact, within psychology, empowerment has been described as a process "through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain

greater access to and control over those resources" (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989). Psychological empowerment, in particular, refers to empowerment at the individual level of analysis and integrates perceptions of personal control, a proactive approach to life, and a critical understanding of the sociopolitical environment. Although the study of empowerment among psychologists has focused on U.S. community groups, organizations, and neighborhood associations (e.g., Perkins, 1995; Zimmerman, 1990), and there has been very little attention internationally despite that empowerment has become the premier paradigm for development programs and policies, there are some obvious and important applications for the understanding and study of women's international rights and well-being. First, the overlap between Nussbaum's definition of capabilities (i.e., having control over one's environment) and psychology's definition of empowerment (i.e., a process by which people gain mastery over issues that concern them) is striking. Both articulate that a sense of personal control and freedom for self-chosen activity is fundamentally linked to well-being, and that individuals' capabilities can be supported by access to and control over resources. With these clear and overlapping definitions, we can begin to more adequately conceptualize empowerment in the context of human rights.

Given the complexity involved in empowerment processes, accurate conceptualization cannot be captured by a single operationalization or measurement, nor divorced from context (Zimmerman, 1995). For example, because powerlessness is embedded in cultural practices and unequal institutional relations, adequate conceptualization and assessment involves investigation of the formal and informal institutional barriers that prevent women from taking effective action to improve their well-being within the household and society at large. Similarly, notions of self-efficacy, competency, and control are key to measuring empowerment, as are processes by which people engage in democratic participation and shared leadership within communities (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Furthermore, because conceptualizations may differ across levels of analysis, measurement of empowerment must assess when individuals believe they have the *capability* to influence a given context (e.g., perceived agency), have perceived control in various situations (e.g., marital power/control, individual mastery over environment), have an understanding of their sociopolitical environment (e.g., gender ideology), interact with others to successfully master social or political systems (e.g., marital control or power), and engage in actions to directly influence outcomes (e.g., participation in decision making). A thorough assessment would therefore require an interdisciplinary, culturally relevant approach that incorporates individual, relational, and societal aspects of empowerment that are sensitive to sociopolitical contexts.

While there is a great deal of attention given to empowerment in development policies and interventions, there is little to no empirical investigation into these processes (Perkins, 1995). In fact, despite the complexity involved in empowerment processes, the majority of investigations into women's empowerment conducted among scholars employ a rather narrow conceptualization by routinely assessing household decision making as the primary indicator of women's empowerment (Hill, 2003; Holvoet, 2005; Kabeer, 1999). A more thorough and accurate conceptualization and assessment of empowerment would include not only intra-household decision making, but also indicators of status and traditional gender ideology; women's power and control within the marital relationship; women's levels of agency, autonomy, and mastery; psychological well-being; and outcomes that may reflect empowerment such as freedom from domestic violence or agency in reproductive health choices. What follows is a focused discussion of structural factors (i.e., the formal and informal institutional barriers), specific to the context of globalization, that contribute to gendered power imbalances and women's subordination.

GENDERED POWER, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND DEVELOPMENT

The disruptive consequences of the new economic policies of the 1980s and '90s introduced or exacerbated several structural factors that have contributed to rising levels of gender inequity and marginalization. This has been particularly visible within the area of natural resources (Razavi, 2003; Rocheleau & Edmunds, 1997). In fact, pervasive gender inequities in access to resources, land in particular, has been recognized by a large body of international work (e.g., Food Agriculture Organization [FAO], UN Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW]) and postulated as a necessary human right (Ikhdahl, 2008). Thus, not surprisingly, feminist scholars in the area of globalization and development argue that women's empowerment and well-being can be enhanced by expanding women's management of resources (Deere & Leon, 2001; Razavi, 1999). This is consistent with the tenants of empowerment theory, which argued that control over resources was central to empowerment. However, that lack of secure access to and control over natural resources contributes to a system in which female subordination is sustained and reproduced, prohibiting women from exercising control over their environment—or, in other words, limiting human capability or empowerment.

Many scholars argue that most development interventions have been formulated from the ideological and economic interests of the industrialized countries that are promoting projects to "modernize" the "Third World" (e.g., Acosta-Belén & Bose, 1990). Among those interventions

has been the tendency to shift from customary tenure systems, or cooperative arrangements in which natural resources such as water, forestry, and land that were traditionally viewed as community resources have become privatized systems of individual ownership (Agarwal, 2001; Lastarria-Cornheil, 1997; Zwartveen, 1997). Therefore, the structural adjustments of privatization have created a context whereby natural resources have become commodities, and markets have developed for rights or titles to these resources (Zwartveen, 1997). Moreover, in many countries, this is occurring at the same time that population pressures have begun to affect availability of natural resources, resulting in scarcity, even in remote areas where resources were once considered part of the commons (e.g., Lastarria-Cornheil, 1997; Shiva, 2002). As a result, natural resources such as water, firewood, and land for grazing—which are all vital resources necessary to sustain livelihood in rural areas—are being bought up and controlled in private, for-profit scenarios. This has obvious and dangerous implications for poor people worldwide, but it has specific implications for gendered imbalances in power and therefore women's capabilities and empowerment.

As argued earlier, the international focus on interventions such as microcredit lending, which fit perfectly into the globalized, neoliberal market-driven economy, do not adequately address the structural obstacles that determine women's status and, ultimately, their well-being. In the context of addressing violations of women's rights, it is imperative to distinguish between those programs that seek to reduce poverty or enhance productivity from those that seek to *empower* women. Although gender scholars have been making a case for using a gender analysis of natural resource management in the context of global changes for nearly a decade (e.g., Rocheleau & Edmunds, 1997), the literature on natural resource control and gender remains scarce.

The Theory of Gender and Power (Connell, 1987) postulates that gender-based inequalities are pervasive societal characteristics, which result in men's disproportionate power in society and control over a number of areas, including women and their bodies. Wingood and DiClemente (2000) extended this theory to the areas of public health and psychology. They argued that unequal control over resources leads to power imbalances and gender-based norms that create risk environments that adversely influence women's health and safety. There are clear structural components that contribute to the construction of dominance and thereby legitimize and perpetuate women's subordinate status. Although limited, the following review will demonstrate that in the context of globalization, the unequal gendered distribution of control over natural resources, in particular water, trees, and land, is one structural component that contributes to dominance and therefore places women in a subordinate position within both the household and the larger society. Because violations of women's human rights often

reflect a societal problem requiring changes in sex-role ideologies and social structures that perpetuate gender hierarchy (Ozner & Bandura, 1990), examining the structure of resource ownership and control provides a compelling area of investigation into one potential structure by which violations against women are supported and sustained. More specifically, this review will demonstrate that entrenched inequalities in the distribution of power and resources between women and men create a risk environment that perpetuates women's disempowerment and that a redirection in the development approach to a more inclusive position on gender would greatly facilitate the empowerment agenda that is promoted by international agencies.

WATER

The 1990s witnessed large changes in water policy generated by a number of different development trends driven largely by the neoliberal economic agenda of large donors (Coles & Wallace, 2005; Shiva, 2002; World Bank, 1993). Among these trends was the tremendous shift toward irrigation to support large monocropped commodities grown for export. Water development projects in line with export agriculture often involve privatization of water sources and massive damming to accommodate newly irrigated agricultural landscapes (Khagram, 2004). Importantly, rights to water use in irrigation systems are granted to farmers or landowners, with the assumption that women will indirectly benefit from their husband's access to water. As such, water rights are intimately linked to the existing social and cultural organization and relations of authority and power (Shiva, 2002). Within this new economic structure, access to water has taken on a new meaning—one that involves gender (Zwarteveen, 1997).

However, the limited attention to gender and water in the literature and development discourse may be due to the notion that women's involvement with water mainly occurs in the domestic sphere, in implicit opposition to men's water use, which is assumed to be mainly market-oriented (Zwarteveen, 1997). Additionally, it has been argued that women's involvement in water development projects has been promoted for largely economic reasons assuming that women's participation improves efficiency of water projects because of their interest in responsibly managing reliable supplies of water (Coles & Wallace, 2005). The limited analysis of gender in the management of water effectively hides that the most important aspect concerning water resources lies not so much in gender differences of water *use* but in differences with respect to access and control of water sources.

Recently, geographers have highlighted how changes in water use and control over water resources can alter gender relations and further divide men and women's power balance by exacerbating the

marginalization of women. For example, in a study of water irrigation and gender in the Anatolia region of southeastern Turkey, Harris (2006) documented how water management became important in the maintenance and exacerbation of gender inequalities. First, among the consequences of irrigation projects are the construction of water management committees that create new patterns of inequality in relation to access and power associated with the management of water as a vital resource. Specifically, in the sample studied in Anatolia, membership in water committees or organizations is often restricted to heads of household, which, in most countries, are traditionally husbands or fathers. Similarly, the formal procedures for identification and selection of water beneficiaries implicitly or explicitly exclude women. For example, common mechanisms for obtaining water rights in the large or newly developed irrigation systems in southeastern Turkey include the following: (1) through owning land in the area being serviced, (2) through participation in construction of the dams, and (3) by being a member of the water management committee. In most countries throughout the world, those with the most power have the most possibility to own land and be part of committees that allow access to water (i.e., men; Lastarria-Cornheil, 1997). Therefore, women are effectively excluded from realizing their own right to water and instead obtain access to water by making use of the water rights of their husbands, or other male relatives. In this manner, unequal control of water resources exacerbates women's subordinate status.

In addition to the exclusion of women from access to water or participation in the decision-making water committees, Harris (2006) documents how daily practices of water use and water management further widened the gender division of labor among men and women in southeastern Turkey. For example, prior to irrigation, women were the predominant actors in animal husbandry and sold products from animals that had been herded on open fields to earn income and provide sustenance for their families. Women were also able to meet many subsistence needs by growing and consuming food directly from the land. However, the introduction of large, irrigated export crops into the area resulted in land scarcity, and the lack of land largely extinguished the practice of animal husbandry. As such, families in many places now purchase the produce and animal products that once determined women's limited livelihood. Thus, in effect, women's work roles were usurped by the need to engage in unpaid, labor-intensive tasks such as weeding and picking in their husbands' crops. In contrast, their husbands were engaged in decision making regarding the uses of water and products of the land. These changes enhanced men's relative contributions to the household and further divided the gendered power imbalance. In this context, irrigation and control of water—regardless of domestic use—has meant an increased work burden for women,

greater difficulty meeting the family's subsistence needs, and an exclusion from decision making. Moreover, this new labor economy has led to a higher desirability for wives' unpaid labor, and therefore, has altered the politics of bride prices in the Anatolia region, leaving young women dreading the heavy work burdens that come with their inevitable marriage. Finally, the changing conditions of market consumption, driven by the introduction of irrigated export crops, have also meant that men now travel to the market (for purchase and sale of food commodities their wives once produced) and develop social networks, whereas, in contrast, women remain largely prohibited from traveling to urban areas. This further exacerbates the social differences between women and men by increasing both women's isolation and men's socializing. The example of water use and management and gender offered by Harris demonstrates that new water-management institutions in line with globalization serve to "solidify, cement, and rigidify social-power differentials" (2006, p. 194). A stronger security of women's water tenure could significantly alter women's participation in the new economy and serve to *empower* rather than *disempower* them in the context of the increasingly limited availability of water.

FORESTRY

Similarly to the development practices in water resource management, several countries (e.g., Mexico, Nepal) have privatized forests or, more recently, organized Community Forestry Groups (CFGs) to manage forest resources in response to diminishing availability of fallen timber for firewood collection due, in part, to conversion of forestland for agricultural purposes (Taylor & Zabin, 2000; Varughese & Ostrom, 2001). Interestingly, the formation of CFGs was a focused attempt to move toward establishing greater local participation and community control among citizens in the promotion of sustainable forests (McCarthy, 2001). However, similar to water management, while major donor agencies give token gestures to participation, a large focus remains on economic aspects of resource management that include rigid exclusion of nonmembers from resource use (e.g., Magrath, Grandalski, Stuckey, Vikanes, & Wilkinson, 2007).

Although gender is typically excluded from community forestry discussions, based on extensive fieldwork among CFGs in India and Nepal, Agarwal (2001) documents how gender constrains participation in CFGs and how participatory exclusion over control of timber products has implications for gender inequity. First, not unlike water committees, both formal and informal rules for CFGs membership exclude women. Specifically, only one member per household, the head of household (i.e., typically the male), is allowed membership. Moreover, long-standing conventions in South Asia exclude women from public

decision making forums and, thereby, deny women access to CFGs, despite that women are predominately responsible for gathering their households' firewood. Among the additional obstacles for women's participation in the CFGs is included the fact that women's responsibility for housework restricts them from attending meetings held at inconvenient times, aggressive male behavior prohibits women who can and do attend from speaking at meetings, and social hierarchies position women on the floor at meetings where men are seated in chairs. As such, women's voices were not considered in the decision making regarding the use of forest products or the discussions surrounding the use of the community funds raised from the management of the forest. Moreover, because many CFGs invest access rights to single "owners," women's access to firewood timber, a once communal resource, is severely restricted. Therefore, the customary exclusion of women from village decision making bodies regarding the management of forestry perpetuates or exacerbates gendered imbalances in power.

In the same study conducted in South Asia, Agarwal (2001) also demonstrated how these imbalances in power are evidenced in increased gendered divisions in labor. First, simply restricting/privatizing forestry areas means that women, who could previously meet some of their timber collection needs in that area, are now forced to travel to neighboring sites adding sometimes between several hours or as much as a day's time to the chore. In some areas, women's collection time and distances traveled for a headload of firewood increased sevenfold (from 0.5 hours to 3-4 hours in Vena; from 0.5 km to 8-9 km in Karapara; Agarwal, 2001). In addition, women substitute fuel sources and burn twigs or agricultural waste with detrimental consequences. For example, the fumes from inferior fuels have negative health affects and the additional time it takes to keep them lit prevents women from doing simultaneous work. In sum, limiting women's access to and control over forest resources has resulted in a substantial increase in women's workload. By excluding women from control and decision making regarding timber, the community forestry efforts are perpetuating status differences and further marginalizing women and thereby prohibiting women's capabilities and empowerment.

LAND

Issues of agrarian change and land tenure systems also have been impacted by the imposition of a neoliberal agenda and donor agencies that have influenced developing countries to move from customary (often communal) systems toward private land ownership (Lastarria-Cornheil, 1997; Razavi, 2003). In many countries, structural adjustment came with land reform guided by policies that favored large-scale export agriculture, and male control over land became the dominant

discourse supplanting previously customary laws that had provisions regarding women's interests in land (e.g., Tsikata, 2003). Thus, one of the imposed difficulties in the transfer to privatized systems in regard to women's rights is that there has been an erosion of the few rights that were previously held under customary systems. In many countries, social constructions of gender, combined with cultural practices of restricting women's access to land, have contributed to the continued abuse of women's rights to land ownership (Lastaria-Cornheil, 2001). Therefore, although many countries have legislation that declares that men and women have equal rights to hold property, in most places customary law dictates that men are owners of land and that women have access to land through a male relative (Lastarria-Cornheil, 1997).

Feminist scholars suggest that restrictions on women to land ownership share core ideologies that are embedded within constructions of masculinity and femininity and the "proper" roles that men and women should assume in public spheres (Deere & Leon, 2001). For example, women are not only marginalized from ownership of and access to what was previously communal land, but their ability to benefit fully or equitably from their labor on the land is threatened because the landowner determines not only how the land will be used, but also manages the products and labor of the land (Lastarria-Cornheil, 1997). As a result, there has been an intensification of women's unpaid agricultural labor (Razavi, 2003). In addition, property ownership affords the landowner the opportunity to participate in a market-based system by renting the land, using it as collateral to borrow money, and/or selling it or giving it as an inheritance to children (Deere & Leon, 2001; Lastarria-Cornheil, 2001). As such, privatization of land and exclusion of women as owners in patriarchal societies has enforced and strengthened male's dominant position while exacerbating women's dependent position on their husbands.

Despite slow progress, women's property rights in some countries have improved, with land titling efforts in several Latin American and Asian countries recognizing women's rights as beneficiaries (FAO, 2004). Moreover, since the structural adjustments of the 1980s and '90s in the agricultural sector, there has been a great deal of attention to women's property rights from scholars in developing regions across Africa (Lastarria-Cornheil, 1997), Latin America (Deere & Leon, 2001), and South Asia (Agarwal, 1994). Nevertheless, global data on women's land ownership is lacking. For example, halfway through the timeframe for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), a progress report reviewing the security of women's property rights concluded that, despite the international call for attention to these rights, there was insufficient data to track progress on women's property ownership (Grown, Rao Gupta, & Kes, 2008). Data collected regarding assets and property ownership continue to be gathered at

the household level, rather than at the individual level, prohibiting an accurate understanding of women's position as owners.

In summary, the limited review on natural resource management, in particular water, forestry, and land suggests that strong gender biases, and assumptions based on gender roles (e.g., decisions should fall largely to male community leaders), exclude women, for the most part, from decision making processes when it comes to access to and control over vital resources. This suggests that unequal abilities to exercise control over resources may lay the foundation for power imbalances. In the context of development, this is a missed opportunity to restructure gender and alter women's status. Development should build institutions that manage common resources in a way that empowers all members of the community, as opposed to further dividing existing power structures. Moreover, while there is growing, albeit limited, attention to the role of resource control in further marginalizing women, there is virtually no empirical investigation into how a *renegotiation* of women's roles may impact their empowerment. In the context of rising threats to women's human rights and the continued opportunity for a gender analysis in the expansion of development interventions, this work is imperative. What follows is a detailed discussion and case study of how and why land ownership, in particular, may impact these processes and ultimately lead to women's empowerment, well-being, and physical safety.

LAND OWNERSHIP AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A PSYCHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Based on the literature reviewed, ownership and control over natural resources among women should substantially challenge traditional gender roles, increase women's power and influence within the household and, in turn, provide a stronger base for women's empowerment. In other words, ideologically shifting how women are viewed in the household and on a societal level—through the process of resource management—can reposition women and provide structural or institutional support for human capabilities. I argue that land ownership, in particular, is a material basis, or structural inequality, that contributes to the subordination of women.

Central to this argument, however, is that, as landowners, women need to effectively administer control over their property. In other words, it is not merely possessing the title to a plot of land, but the control or administration of it that contributes to change (Agarwal, 1994). Moreover, while benefits to several forms of land *use* are possible and do exist (e.g., cooperative arrangements), it is important to note that women's power regarding land occurs when they function independently as decision makers with control over the land. While

economic security may be attached to property ownership, it is the psychological process that emerges from ownership that empowers a woman to assert control over her life and her body. In other words, the processes involved in owning and controlling land can transform the conditions in which women exercise agency and, in turn, become empowered to confront aspects of their subordination—as reflected, for example, by violence against women. Indeed, violence against women is considered the most pervasive human rights violation in the world and entrenched inequalities in the distribution of power and resources between men and women create environments that support high levels of gender-based violence (UNIFEM, 2006). Because land ownership repositions women, and is a form of political and symbolic status, it puts women in a privileged and empowered position. By empirically examining the processes linking land ownership and control to broader cultural ideologies, and to gender relations, a greater understanding of the relationships between structural inequities, power/dominance, women's empowerment and well-being can be gained.

In 1994, a link between property rights and women's rights was introduced in the literature with the suggestion that formalizing property in a woman's name could lead to beneficial transformations in gender relations and, in particular, a decline in violence against women (Agarwal, 1994). However, it was nearly a decade later that the first and only published survey in this area found that in Kerala, India, as many as 49 percent of women who did not own property suffered long-term physical violence, compared with 18 and 10 percent, respectively, of those who owned either their land or house, and 7 percent of those who owned both assets (Panda & Agarwal, 2005). The authors suggest that owning land provides women with economic security and a tangible exit option to escape violent partners. However, a wealth of research in psychology suggests that a number of factors unrelated to economic status prevent women from leaving violent relationships (e.g., fear of retaliation; Hendy et al., 2003). In fact, the Kerala study reported that levels of violence did not differ between women who were regularly employed, seasonally employed, or unemployed, suggesting that land ownership provided a different kind of empowerment than did employment. These findings support the notion that it was not solely economic freedom that resulted in reduced receipt of domestic violence. On the contrary, the findings suggest that eliminating the practice of violence against women requires structural and ideological changes that extend beyond economic opportunity and are focused, rather, on structural factors such as land ownership.

In 2006, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) expanded on Panda and Agarwal's (2005) research through qualitative interviews with women landowners in Kerala and West Bengal to examine the role of land in women's empowerment. They suggested

that property ownership extended women's negotiating power within the marital relationships and their ability to confront subordination, thereby decreasing levels of domestic violence. However, a major limitation of these investigations in South Asia is that they were in communities where bilateral property ownership was the norm. Female ownership of land did not necessarily challenge existing gender attitudes and roles. Nevertheless, these studies put forth a framework for investigating the links between land ownership, women's empowerment, and violence.

Despite these groundbreaking findings, this line of inquiry remains underexplored. Moreover, there has been no investigation into this topic in other developing regions, such as Latin America or East Africa where land reform has received a great deal of attention. Furthermore, virtually no attention has been given to these processes by psychologists. However, empirical examination of land ownership among women may contribute to the discussion of women's empowerment in the context of development, in general, and, in particular, to discussions surrounding property ownership and control. What follows sets the context for replicating the Panda and Agarwal findings and expanding this investigation and examining these processes in another region.

NICARAGUA

Of the Latin American countries that have implemented gender-progressive agrarian reform policies, Nicaragua stands out in terms of female participation (Deere, 1985). For example, the Agrarian Reform Laws of the 1980s and '90s that recognized equal rights for both sexes were acknowledged as one of the most forward-looking reforms in Latin America because, in theory, it made it possible for women to become direct beneficiaries of land allocation. Indeed, the women-specific measures adopted in Nicaragua have benefited a greater proportion of the female population than in countries where the titling programs are gender neutral (Deere, 1985). Although data from the rural titling office indicate that between 1979 and 1989, women accounted for 8 to 10 percent of beneficiaries under the agrarian reform, these low numbers reflect that land was still being allocated primarily to male "heads of household," whereas titled women were likely widowed or unmarried women living alone.

In 1995, a major legislative leap was taken by the Nicaraguan Women's Institute by introducing provisions in agrarian legislation that encouraged joint titling of land to couples, thereby recognizing married women's rights to land (Act 209/95, Article 32). Subsequently, joint titling became compulsory for married couples and for those living in stable relationships (Act 278/97). However, as evidence of the

customary or cultural norms, the term "joint" in the Joint Titling Act was interpreted literally as "two persons" within the family unit. Hence, this act did more to promote joint titling for men (fathers and sons) than for women. Thus, despite considerable legislation that positions Nicaragua as cutting-edge in mainstreaming gender in agricultural policy, the relatively low percentage of women landowners reflects the reality that women's access remains restricted by cultural practices that prevent the recognition of their role in property ownership and control. Nevertheless, in contrast to many other countries, Nicaragua has the political framework for implementing development interventions aimed at land resource distribution. However, to date, there has been shockingly little data collected to examine the effects of women's land ownership among women who have benefited from some level of reform or intervention. The following study is aimed at providing the empirical support necessary for state and development interventions to implement more equitable policies aimed at land ownership.

THE STUDY¹

A two-group study was designed to examine whether owning land was related to women's status and power within the marital relationship and to their overall empowerment and psychological well-being, each of which was hypothesized to explain how and why owning land contributed to lower levels of domestic violence. As such, a household survey was administered to two different groups of women—one predominantly landowners and the other predominantly non-landowners. The two groups were chosen from the same geographical location within Nicaragua in order to most closely match them on a number of variables. Because customary practices still largely prohibit women from owning land, our research team collaborated with a women's organization that had a program specifically aimed at facilitating women's ownership of and titling to land ("intervention" group). The second group of women was selected from neighboring communities in the same municipality and was not actively involved in the organization with which we collaborated ("control" group). As such, the primary difference between the two groups of women is that the majority of women in the first group own land, whereas the majority in the second group do not. This design allows for direct comparison of women involved in land resource allocation aimed at empowerment and women who were not.

Data were collected from 314 women following the guidelines on ethics and safety developed by the World Health Organization for the Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women that were adapted for this study (WHO, 2005). The

household surveys included the following: (1) demographic characteristics; (2) questions assessing land acquisition and land ownership adapted from assessments used by the ICRW; (3) gender ideology as measured by the Attitudes toward Women Scale (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973); (4) power in the marital relationship from the Relationship Control Subscale of the Sexual Relationship Power Scale (Pulerwitz, Gortmaker, & DeJong, 2000); (5) partner control indexed by asking women whether their partners generally prohibited or controlled their possibilities to carry out everyday activities, or exhibited controlling behavior or jealousy using items from the WHO (2005); (6) empowerment as indexed by mastery over one's environment and individual autonomy from two of the six subscales from Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989); (7) psychological well-being as assessed by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Baños & Guillén, 2000) and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (Grzywacz, Hovey, Seligman, Arcury, & Quandt, 2006); and (8) intrahousehold decision making from two subscales that were designed by ICRW (2004) to measure decision making within the marital relationship. Finally, to assess women's control over their bodies—an outcome of empowerment—history of women's violent experiences were measured with the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1996).

The average age of the respondents was in the early- to mid-forties ($M = 45.33$ intervention group, $M = 42.13$ control group), although the majority of the women fell between 25 and 34 years old. Approximately three-quarters of the sample were in partnered relationships between six and ten years in duration. Most of the women respondents were literate, although approximately a quarter of the sample never received formal schooling.

MAIN FINDINGS²

Before proceeding to test the potential links between land ownership, women's empowerment, and receipt of violence, a series of one-way analyses of variance tests (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine differences in levels of empowerment and violence between the two groups. The intervention and control groups differed on several markers of empowerment in the expected directions, suggesting that women in the intervention group reported higher levels of empowerment and well-being than their counterparts. Specifically, ANOVAs revealed that the two groups were significantly or marginally different on several markers of women's empowerment: gender ideology $F(1, 308) = 69.60, p < 0.00$; relationship power $F(1, 308) = 14.72, p < 0.00$; partner control/mobility $F(1, 308) = 2.76, p < 0.10$; household decision making $F(1, 308) = 5.99, p < 0.02$; financial decision making $F(1, 308) = 2.79, p < 0.10$; autonomy $F(1, 308) = 3.62, p < 0.06$; and

self-esteem $F(1, 308) = 5.40, p < 0.03$ —indicating that women in the land-owning group reported higher levels of empowerment than their counterparts. Similarly, women from the intervention group reported marginally less violence in the past 12 months than women in the control group: $F(1, 308) = 2.13, p < 0.15$. Finally, and importantly, main effects from an ANOVA with employment status (employed vs. non-employed) predicting receipt of current violence were not significant.

A number of sociodemographic variables related to the empowerment outcomes in one or both groups of women—age, education, and partner alcohol use—were controlled in the subsequent analyses examining the relationships between variables. To establish that land ownership was indirectly related to decreases in receipt of violence via women's empowerment, both the Baron and Kenny (1986) criteria for mediating conditions and a product of coefficients test were used (MacKinnon, 2000; Sobel, 1990). Variables in the proposed model were conceptualized in the following order: ownership status; empowerment and psychological well-being; and violence. Specifically, we hypothesized that land ownership would directly predict levels of empowerment and psychological well-being, which in turn were hypothesized to directly predict women's receipt of violence in the past 12 months. To test for the first condition, several regressions were run to examine the effect of land ownership on women's empowerment. As expected, land ownership was marginally or significantly related to gender ideology, relationship power, partner control/mobility, financial decision making, autonomy, mastery, self-esteem, and depression.

To test for the second condition, several regressions were run to examine the effects of women's empowerment on receipt of physical violence in the past 12 months. Relationship power, partner control/mobility, autonomy, mastery, self-esteem, and depression were all related to violence. Finally, to test whether land ownership was significantly indirectly related to violence via empowerment, we calculated a products of coefficients test for each pathway that met the first two criteria (i.e., that the pathway from the independent variable to the process variable and the pathway from the process variable to the dependent variable were both significant). Results from this test provide marginal to significant support for the indirect relation of land ownership via: relationship power $t = 2.78 (p < 0.01)$; partner control/mobility $t = 1.87 (p < 0.10)$; autonomy $t = 1.33 (p < 0.20)$; mastery $t = 1.88 (p < 0.10)$; self-esteem $t = 1.65 (p < 0.10)$; and depression $t = 1.69 (p < 0.10)$ —suggesting that land ownership leads to decreased domestic violence via several indicators of women's empowerment.

Given that the current study was the first comprehensive investigation of empowerment processes in the context of natural resource management, I examined the relations between the empowerment indicators, women's psychological well-being, and the standard indicator

of empowerment used in the social science literature—decision making (see Table 2.1). In addition, I hypothesized that (a) the empowerment process would effectively alter women's subordination such that higher levels of empowerment would predict less traditional gender roles, and/or (b) shifts in traditional gender ideology would enhance women's power within the relationship, which would be reflected in higher levels of empowerment and psychological well-being. Only longitudinal or experimental designs can answer in which order these processes occur; however, data from the current study indicate a pattern of significant findings that support a significant relationship between less traditional gender roles and women's empowerment. Specifically, the results suggest that less traditional gender ideology is significantly related to greater relationship power, less partner control, and higher levels of autonomy, self-esteem, and household decision making. Furthermore, as expected, psychological well-being (both self-esteem and depression) was significantly related to all of the indicators of empowerment (relationship power, partner control, autonomy, and mastery). Although the data do not allow us to discern the directional nature of these findings, the pattern of results lend support to Sen's suggestion that well-being is often influenced by agency or autonomy (1985). Finally, the relative lack of significant relations between decision making and the other indicators of empowerment lends evidence to our argument that current assessment strategies do not adequately measure empowerment or agency, and that researchers need to begin to more accurately assess the psychological mechanisms involved in the process of empowerment.

The findings from the current study therefore suggest that increasing women's ownership of and control over land may be an important component in addressing gender inequities, empowering women, and curbing high levels of violence against women. Indeed, the data suggest that land ownership can alter an risk environment that supports high levels of gender-based violence. Thus, at a minimum, state and development policies should alter the structural barriers that prohibit women from owning and controlling vital resources such as land.

CONCLUSION

Drawing together a very interdisciplinary literature and proposing a novel application of psychology in this chapter allows for several important conclusions and areas of future direction in the investigation of women's empowerment. First, the preceding review suggests that empowerment, as it has been approached to date, is more vaguely defined and confusing than could be useful for policy and program implementation. Indeed, it appears that if empowerment policies and programs continue with ambiguity and possible ineffectiveness,

Table 2.1
Correlations between empowerment, psychological well-being, and decision making variables

	Gender Ideology	Relationship Power	Partner Control/Mobility	Autonomy	Mastery	Self-esteem	Depression	Household Decisions	Financial Decisions
Gender Ideology	-	0.24***	-0.12*	0.29***	0.09	0.21***	-0.10 [†]	0.23***	0.00
Relationship Power		-	-0.64***	0.34***	0.32***	0.37***	0.38***	0.12*	0.18**
Partner Control/Mobility			-	-0.23***	-0.29***	0.35***	-0.41***	-0.04	0.09
Autonomy				-	0.51***	0.35***	-0.41***	0.04	-0.16**
Mastery					-	0.39***	-0.49***	-0.04	-0.22**
Self-esteem						-	-0.55***	-0.06	-0.05
Depression							-	0.02	0.16**
Household Decisions								-	0.17**
Financial Decisions									-

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$, [†] = $p < 0.10$.

International development interventions aimed at empowering women should be suspect. Therefore, the need for empowerment researchers who can empirically evaluate empowerment-focused programs is critical in creating political change and influencing organizations and policymakers who address women's human rights and capabilities especially with regard to globalization. Perhaps more than most, this area is ripe for interdisciplinary efforts and cooperative collaboration between interventionists, activists, and researchers working for women's human rights and social justice in an increasingly globalized context.

The findings have implications for gender and development theory, but more applicably for initiatives that aim to improve women's well-being and lead to more equitable policies for women. In particular, it was suggested that micro-credit loaning in the international development community may be misguided and that an evaluation of natural resource control should move to the forefront of our analysis of women's empowerment. The limited review suggests that projects and programs aimed at development in areas involving natural resources could better improve women's rights by guaranteeing women's rights to use of resources as well as ensuring positions in decision making in regards to natural resource management. Indeed, the findings from the Nicaragua study suggest that ideologically shifting how women are viewed on a societal level—through the process of land ownership and control—repositioned women and led to increased levels of empowerment, thereby reducing their levels of violence. In sum, this review highlights that there is an alarming need to view gender as a variable in policy changes and that projects should ensure that appropriate infrastructures exist to support women's capabilities to exercise their rights.

The findings also shed light on the mechanisms surrounding women's empowerment. The development literature is replete with attention to women's empowerment, although this has been in absence of an approach that adequately defines, conceptualizes, or assesses the complexity involved in empowerment processes. The Nicaragua study presented is a first attempt to apply empowerment theory, as conceptualized by psychology, to an understanding of the process by which structural changes in status can alter women's positions and allow them the capabilities to exert control and mastery over their own lives and bodies. The findings from this study provide robust data suggesting that land ownership plays an important role in (1) altering women's power and status within the household; (2) increasing women's empowerment and psychological well-being; and (3) decreasing women's receipt of domestic violence. As such, the findings suggest that land ownership substantially challenges traditional gender roles and increases women's power and influence within the household, in turn providing a stronger base for women's empowerment. This study also importantly demonstrates that the conceptualization and

methodological approach to empowerment from within the discipline of psychology bridged the theoretical arguments surrounding human rights with the practical implementation of development interventions, and provided empirical support that has yet to be demonstrated elsewhere. These groundbreaking findings uncover the psychological mechanisms surrounding women's empowerment and suggest that if we are to continue putting women's empowerment at the forefront of international attention, there is great need for psychologists in this area of investigation. Indeed, there is great need for social interventions that have the capacity to alter risk environments for women, particularly in countries or regions where rates of gender-based violence are high (Garcia-Moreno, 2002) and women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS (Dunkle et al., 2004). Through collaborative efforts, I believe the protection of human rights by development interventions, coupled with legislation that more broadly grants women rights, could effectively lead to the very notions of empowerment that are conceptualized by psychologists.

NOTES

1. This was a collaborative project bringing together distinct expertise of both science and grass roots community advocacy. It was the researchers' expertise that ensured a study design that had theoretically grounded research questions and an evaluation that used sound methodology and appropriate assessment. It was the collaborators and program implementers' expertise that brought gender and cultural sensitivity to all aspects of the project and maintained the community relevance. Each member of the research team served an absolutely critical role. Unique and invaluable contributions were made by (in no particular order) the women, effort, leaders, work, dedication, and change that make up the Xochilt-Acalt women's center; the CIERUNIC S.A. research team led by Verónica Aguilera Carrión; the suggestions, tireless translation, and support provided by Anne McSweeney; the dedicated driving, assistance, and support of Juan Pastor Solis Rojas; the translation and diligent commitment to women's well-being of Helen Dixon; the professional support and coordination from Sonia Arguto at FIDEG; and the encouragement, advice, and training provided by the Red de Mujeres Contra la Violencia.

2. For study details, analyses, and findings, please refer to the original manuscript Grabe & Arenas, (2009).

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Chapter 3

Missing Children and Child Abductions: An International Human Rights Issue

Michele A. Paludi
Katie L. Kelly

One missing child is one too many.

—John Walsh

Child abduction and missing children are problems that affect families around the world. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2009) reported that each day, an average of 2,185 children are missing. This means during the course of writing this chapter, more than 131,100 children were reported missing. Child Find of America (2009) and Boudreaux, Lord, and Etter (2000) reported that approximately 203,900 children each year are abducted by a parent or family member in violation of a court decree, custody order, or other custodial rights. Thus, during the course of co-editing and publishing this three-volume book set, more than 407,800 children were abducted by a non-custodial parent, and 1,595,050 children were missing in general.

Furthermore, the incidence of international child abduction increases each year as a consequence of the ease of international travel and increase in bicultural relationships (Moskowitz, 2005). The Report on Compliance with the Hague Convention (2008) indicated that in the 2007 fiscal year, the U.S. Central Authority assisted “left-behind” parents in the United States in responding to 575 cases of international parental child abductions involving 821 children. In addition, the Department of State assisted in the return to the United States in 2007 of 341 children abducted to or wrongfully retained in other countries. Of these 341 children, 217 returned from countries that are Hague