

**Gender Mainstreaming in Development Organisations:
Policy, Practice and Institutional Change**

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of Doctor of Philosophy*

by

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I hereby certify that this thesis is the result of my own work except where otherwise indicated and due acknowledgement is given

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Abstract

'Gender and Development' (GAD) is currently seen as the dominant theoretical model within international development for promoting social justice and equality for women. As a consequence, many development organisations are undertaking gender mainstreaming. The most interesting fact about the vast number of analyses about gender mainstreaming is the consistency with which they tell of GAD influenced policies failing to implement GAD approaches in practice. This should raise suspicion rather than simple condemnation. It is time to ask: 'How are, often very progressive, gender policies and strategies consistently silenced across the range of organisational contexts?'

This thesis focuses upon the contemporary process of gender mainstreaming in development organisations – a term that specifically refers to a 'process of organisational change' that aims to explicitly develop the 'use of GAD approaches within all projects and programmes' of development institutions in order to achieve 'a vision of development that creates gender equitable social change' in society. Moreover, it takes an approach that specifically details the 'organisational process' element of change inferred in the term. As such, this thesis uses the literature of organisational culture as a lens to make previously unnoticed and submerged sites of conflict and acts of resistance visible, allowing an understanding to be gained of how gender mainstreaming has so consistently faced a policy-practice impasse. It develops this analysis using an in-depth case study of Oxfam GB and demonstrates that the process of gender mainstreaming in the organisation has resulted in the removal of 'responsibility for' implementing GAD approaches among staff in the organisation. It goes on to highlight that the unwillingness of development organisations and practitioners to recognise gender mainstreaming as an explicitly feminist and political process of change directly couched at the level of the organisation and not just at the level of the actual development project (or society more widely) has resulted in the 'process of organisational change' becoming rationalised and technical rather than personal and politically charged. In reaching this understanding of gender mainstreaming, the thesis develops an awareness of organisational change processes and highlights that 'norms' and 'values' in organisations are often confused. This confusion has led to an ineffective process of change in institutions as well as a poor conceptualisation and practice of gender mainstreaming in international development.

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Introduction

Gender, Development and Organisations: A Kafkaesque Nightmare

Who was it? A friend? A good man? Someone who cared? Someone who wanted to help? Was it only one person? Was it the whole of mankind? Was help still possible? Were there objections which had been overlooked? Surely there were. Logic may indeed be unshakeable but it cannot withstand a man who is determined to live. Where was the judge he had never seen? Where was the High Court he had never reached? He raised his hands and spread out all his fingers.

But the hands of one of the men closed round his throat, just as the other drove the knife deep into his heart and turned it twice. As his eyes grew dim, K. could still see the two men right in front of his face, their cheeks touching as they watched the decisive moments.

'Like a dog!' he said.

It was as if the shame of it should outlive him.(Kafka, 1924: 254)

The Trial by Franz Kafka is a classic twentieth century literary work. The novel charts the experiences of Josef K. within the bureaucratic world of the 'Justice' system from his arrest early one morning to his eventual execution. The 'Justice' system or rather its institutions are depicted as both ubiquitous and omnipotent, and at the same time, chaotic and without any controlling force. K.'s innocence dissolves into irrelevance within such a world. The charges against him remain hidden throughout, accentuating the peculiarities of the justice process over and above the actual deliverance of justice. The bureaucratic nightmare in which K. finds himself leads to his demise and, ultimately, to his untimely death. Readers are left to consider an unsavoury question: to what extent is 'Justice' and the 'Law' at the mercy of the of the justice and legal organisations supposedly created to uphold them.

The issues raised by Kafka have become no less insightful since the day he first penned this book. Organisations and institutions exist everywhere in modern society. They control and influence many aspects of our lives. The world of 'development' is no exception and contains a myriad of organisations working to reduce poverty, direct social change and/or promote economic growth. However, given Kafka's sketch of bureaucratic workings, when examining these organisations we must ask ourselves: to what extent are the duties, goals and desires of these organisations, no matter how noble, fundamentally at the mercy of the (internal operation of the) organisations themselves? It is with this thought in mind that I examine the

institutionalisation of 'Gender and Development' thinking and approaches in international development.

For many feminist academics and practitioners, gender mainstreaming has become a Kafkaesque nightmare for those attempting to promote a vision of gender equality within development practice. Good intentions, hard work and important advances have created a development agenda and, in turn, organisations that are not only willing to 'deal with' gender but in many cases place it as a central concern in organisational policy making and planning. However, this new policy focus frequently bears little resemblance to the lived reality of actual development projects and programmes. As 'Justice' became a notional, abstract and irrelevant idea in the workings of the justice system (as Kafka depicts it), so too has 'Gender and Development' become an equally notional, abstract and irrelevant approach in the delivery of development. By all accounts, the 'goal' of gender mainstreaming seems to be at the mercy of the bureaucracy in development organisations entrusted to deliver it. It is within this context that I enter the debate on the future of gender mainstreaming.

Gender Mainstreaming: Understanding Institutional Change

'Gender and Development' (GAD) is currently seen as the most significant model within international development for promoting social justice and equality between men and women. As a consequence, many development organisations are attempting a strategy of 'gender mainstreaming' in order to realign the way they operate to accommodate this radical approach. In a development context, gender mainstreaming is seen at its most basic as a process of organisational change in development institutions that aims to develop the use of GAD approaches in all the projects and programmes of those institutions in order to achieve a vision of 'development' that creates gender equitable social change. However, emerging feminist academic and organisational literature is suggesting that gender mainstreaming has consistently failed to bring about any significant change in development practice and currently faces an insurmountable policy impasse. In fact, some academics and practitioners have gone

as far as to say that gender mainstreaming has even undermined the feminist policy agenda of achieving justice and equality for women. There is a growing sentiment that the concept and practice of gender mainstreaming should be abandoned. Many commentators have therefore posed the question 'is this the end of gender mainstreaming?'

I feel that before gender mainstreaming is consigned to such a fate it deserves a more systemic, focused and comprehensive analysis than those that currently exist. Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir have noted that few empirical analyses of gender mainstreaming have been conducted and this fact is a significant problem for those trying to truly understand what is happening with feminist politics and policy in development (Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir, 2005). Furthermore, the most interesting fact about the vast number of stories and analyses about gender mainstreaming is the consistency with which they speak of the problems of policy evaporation around gender and, more recently, the systematic inability of gender policies to shift development practice in any meaningful way. This emerging policy impasse should raise more than just condemnation, it should raise suspicion. More appropriate questions need to be developed to respond to these facts unless gender mainstreaming is going to be abandoned entirely. The question that becomes perhaps most pertinent to pose is not 'is this or should this be the end of gender mainstreaming?', but instead 'how are often very progressive GAD policies for development practice consistently silenced across a range of organisational and institutional contexts?'

Given this question, my research focuses in a systematic manner on the process element to mainstreaming – institutional change, rather than mainstreaming's goal or outputs – in order to understand how the policy-practice impasse that has come to blight gender mainstreaming has been so consistently maintained across the range of institutional contexts that exist in the development world. To achieve this, I take an approach that recognises and details the socio-political, and not just the technical, nature of organisational change in development institutions. Ignoring the politics of 'process' ignores the reality of institutions and the way bureaucracies impact upon the uptake and delivery of radical policies. As a result, I use aspects of organisational culture as a lens to make previously unnoticed and submerged sites

of conflict over and resistance to policy change visible. I develop this analysis using a detailed case study of Oxfam GB and demonstrate that the process of organisational change implemented under a gender mainstreaming remit in the organisation, contrary to stated intentions, has resulted in a removal of 'responsibility for' implementing GAD approaches in projects and programmes among staff.¹ I go on to highlight that the unwillingness of development organisations to recognise the process element of gender mainstreaming as an explicitly feminist and political process of change specifically couched at the level of the organisation and not at level of the actual development project has resulted in organisational change becoming rationalised and technical rather than personal and politically charged. The importance of addressing value change among development organisation staff remains generally unaccounted for in approaches to mainstream gender. In reaching this understanding of gender mainstreaming, my research develops an awareness of institutional change processes more generally and highlights that 'norms' and 'values' in organisations are often misunderstood and confused. This confusion has led to an ineffective process of change in institutions, particularly when radical and challenging changes are demanded. In my conclusion, I suggest a way forward around the current policy impasse that blights gender mainstreaming in international development organisations.

In developing this analysis of gender mainstreaming, I make particular use of an extended case study. The usefulness of a case study was borne out of the nature of the research which required a detailed investigation into organisational policies, practices, structures and discourses to uncover sites of 'non-conflict' over and submerged resistance to gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, Oxfam GB was chosen as the research subject specifically because of the need to examine sites of 'non-conflict' over gender mainstreaming. Unlike some organisations and institutions where gender mainstreaming meets open hostility, this does not seem to be the case for Oxfam GB. The organisation in many ways epitomises the type of progressive institution where radical policies and strategies, such as those developed out of

¹ This DPhil has been developed out of my MPhil research undertaken at the Department of International Development, University of Oxford. The two pieces of research relate to each other specifically through the inclusion of this case study of Oxfam GB. However, since the MPhil, this case study has benefited from two further periods of fieldwork. As such, the case study has been significantly altered and developed.

GAD theory and praxis, can be nurtured and where gender mainstreaming should have created successful institutional transformation at both levels of policy and practice. I believed that the experiences of Oxfam GB therefore offer the greatest chances of learning about how gender mainstreaming has been repeatedly silenced across the range of institutional contexts that exist.

Critical Themes and Concepts

In this thesis, in an attempt to bring some clarity to the current state of gender mainstreaming in development, I have adopted, developed and/or utilised a number of concepts and ideas. By their very nature these concepts and ideas overlap and interact in a complex number of ways in my analysis, and where they do I have made the links between them as explicit as possible. Furthermore, I have introduced and developed full definitions, dissections and uses of these concepts and ideas at relevant points throughout this thesis. However, this section is provided to introduce the reader to the main ideas I have used within my work and, in so doing, provide a condensed record of how they fit together into a coherent whole. In order to do this in a coherent manner I have broken down my research and its respective use of key ideas and concepts into three distinct themes. The first theme is concerned with the central issue of my research – gender mainstreaming and its impasse. As such, under this theme I will summarise how I have defined and understood gender mainstreaming in development, the understanding I have developed around policy impasses within development organisations and their relevance to gender mainstreaming, as well as the importance and meaning I have attached to the ‘process’ element of the gender mainstreaming definition. The second theme is concerned with the foundations and application of gender mainstreaming in development organisations. This theme will examine my interpretation of feminism and the evolution of equality policies within society, as well as my understanding of how such feminist activity and thinking has been translated into development contexts more specifically. The third and final theme is concerned with the ‘organisation’ as a research object and the ideas I have adopted and used to develop my analysis of gender

mainstreaming from a political process perspective. As a consequence, this theme will examine a range of ideas that are frequently associated with Organisational/Management Studies and Anthropology (particularly of organisations). These concepts include power relations and 'non-conflict', organisational culture, organisational structures and discourses, institutional norms and values, and resistance.

Theme One: Gender Mainstreaming, Policy Impasses and the Political Process Perspective

It has been highlighted that 'despite the widespread acceptance of [gender mainstreaming], there is considerable debate about what exactly gender mainstreaming means and how it should be implemented' (Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006: 53). However, what is clear from Development Studies literature is that gender mainstreaming is generally recognised as an organisational strategy concerned with the institutionalisation of a 'Gender and Development' vision of social change within development organisations' policy and practice (Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2004; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007b; Goetz and Sandler, 2007; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Kusakabe, 2005a; Mama, 2007; Molyneux, 2004; Moser, 2005; Moser and Moser, 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Pialek, 2007; Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Standing, 2004; Subrahmanian, 2007; Teigeler, Unknown; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004). Moreover, Prugl and Lustgarten (2006: 56) have noted that nearly all interpretations of gender mainstreaming include three critical elements:

First, [they describe] mainstreaming as infusing gender considerations into *organizational processes*. Second, [they call] for integrating concerns of women and men into policies and programs, that is, in the *output* of organizations. Third, [they specify] that the *goal* of mainstreaming is equality between men and women.

Therefore, in this thesis I promote an understanding of gender mainstreaming that explicitly highlights these three elements of a gender mainstreaming definition, that of 'process, output and goal', and specifically locate them within the debates and context of development. As such I suggest that a common understanding of gender mainstreaming in development organisations can be seen 'as a process of organisational change that aims to explicitly develop the use of GAD approaches within all projects and programmes of development

institutions in order to achieve a vision of 'development' that creates gender equitable social change in society'.

Such a broad and simple interpretation of gender mainstreaming – one that clearly notes process, output and goal elements – also offers a number of advantages. It allows an understanding to be developed about how the current literature on gender mainstreaming in development fits together in a coherent and complementary manner, without the conflation and confusion of ideas surrounding the concept. It also makes the gaze of the researcher more explicit and focused by identifying exactly what the different elements of any gender mainstreaming definition focuses attention on. And finally, such a definition also sets the groundwork for a more informed debate to occur around the political and technical nature of the concept. In reviewing such issues I use the understandings that evolve to argue for a more focused and appropriate analysis of the gender mainstreaming impasse.

The term (policy) 'impasse' in this thesis is adopted to express an all encompassing and long term inability of a broad policy ambition to be transformed into sustained and consistent practice. I differentiate a policy impasse from the more common problem of 'policy evaporation', a term used mainly by development practitioners to describe the gradual diminution of policy intentions and insight as programmes move from policy statement to policy implementation (see Longwe discussion in Chapter 1). I argue that a policy impasse is a term used to describe a widespread, general and consistent inability of a policy to be turned into corresponding practice rather than a term used to describe the failure of a particular project or programme to match the particular goals of a policy (policy evaporation). A policy impasse certainly includes the problem of policy evaporation but the term is not a mere extension of it writ large. I suggest that a policy impasse is associated with a number of outcomes. Firstly, a general air of pessimism exists by those implementing a policy about their ability to actually achieve practice that reflects the policy ambitions. Secondly, researchers examining practice increasingly question if projects or programmes have ever truly reflected a certain policy. And thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, both those implementing and researching policy and practice ask themselves if continued attempts to

transform a certain policy into practice have given rise to a situation or reality that seemingly works to prevent or neutralise practice stemming from that policy.

I shall go on to demonstrate that though the issue of 'policy evaporation' on gender in organisations was widely noted as a problem by many working in development in the 1990's (Goetz, 1997b; Hadjipateras, 1997; Longwe, 1997; Macdonald, 1994a; Porter, Smyth *et al.*, 1999; Porter and Judd, 1999; Rosario, 1995), more recent literature on gender and development alludes to the more terminal problem of a policy impasse and the 'failure' of gender mainstreaming to consistently deliver on policy ambitions in development organisations (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007b; Mama, 2007; Moser, 2005; Moser and Moser, 2005; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Standing, 2004; Woodford-Berger, 2004). Many academics and practitioners have analysed why this policy impasse exists and how it can be overcome (though, most admit, with limited success).² I do not intend to add to these often very comprehensive analyses. Instead, in reviewing these current gender mainstreaming analyses in development and by examining where the gaze of such research is focused – process, output or goal – I propose an avenue for research that aims to develop an inconsistent and little explored area of understanding around the gender mainstreaming impasse. I demonstrate that there is a need to more comprehensively examine the 'process' element of gender mainstreaming and, in particular, focus upon the political nature of change in organisations. I highlight that such research would concentrate on examining what happens in development organisations (and among their staff) around putting GAD approaches into practice, rather than on the extent to which gender mainstreaming has achieved gendered social change in an organisation's participant communities or what form of gendered social change an organisation can be seen to be promoting.

² This is discussed in Chapter 2 but examples from the literature of such research include: Carson, 1999; Cummings, Dam *et al.*, 1998; Derbyshire, 2002; DFID, 2002; International Labour Organisation, 2002; Khan, 2003; Kusakabe, 2005b; Macdonald, 2003; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Neimanis, 2002; Rao and Stuart, 1997; Razavi and Miller, 1995b; Rosario, 1995; Special Advisor on Gender, 2002; UNDP, 2003; United Nations, 2004; Walker, 1999; Kabeer, 2003; March, Mukhopadhyay *et al.*, 1999; Sigamany, 2004; USAID, 2002; Williams, Seed *et al.*, 1994; Young, 1993; Chant, 2000; Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2004; IDS, 2000; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Miller and Razavi, 1998; Molyneux, 2004; Razavi and Miller, 1995a; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005.

As a consequence, in this thesis I refer to the 'politics of process' and the 'political nature of institutional change' to highlight the specificity of my approach. When I refer to the 'politics of process' (or equivalent) I am referring to a research approach that attempts to incorporate an understanding of institutional change that goes beyond seeing the process element of mainstreaming as a technical aspect of achieving a larger political agenda in development. Rather, I demonstrate that the process element to gender mainstreaming is itself also fundamentally political in nature. Standing has suggested that 'many feminists have remained naïve about the nature of policy processes and institutional change' (Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a: 10). Gender mainstreaming should not just be seen as political because it promotes a counter approach to the mainstream way 'development' incorporates and impacts on development participants but because its means to achieve such ends also challenges the everyday beliefs, thinking, routines and activities of organisations and their staff. In developing an approach that appreciates the political nature of institutional change it becomes necessary to understand the levels at which power operates and the multiple ways conflict and acts of resistance can be articulated in organisations. I suggest that there may be any number of reasons why mainstream development thinking and approaches cause the subversion of radical development policies, such as GAD, but understanding how such subversion happens, by developing an analysis of power dynamics in organisations that locates and examines critical sites of conflict, is much more significant to understanding the impasse faced by those promoting gender mainstreaming.

Theme Two: Feminism, Equality Policies and Gender in Development

It has not been my intention in this thesis to provide a new insight into historic and contemporary debates about the meaning or purpose of feminism, what visions of equality are the most appropriate or constructive, or in what way development should respond to the competing/differing visions of feminism and equality. However, engaging with this material has been essential for understanding gender mainstreaming in development, constructing my research approach into the mainstreaming impasse and for deciphering my results. As a consequence, when I refer to 'feminism' in this thesis I have chosen to take a broad and simple interpretation (unless otherwise stated) that focuses primarily upon what binds

together even the most divergent feminist thinkers – social justice for women. To this end, without entering into the many unresolved debates, I have conceptualised feminism in the same way as Porter (1999: 4), ‘essentially activism against gendered inequality and injustice’ – and by ‘activism’ the term here is used in the broadest possible sense. This simple conceptualisation of feminism is widely reflected within the current feminist literature on gender in Development Studies (Chigudu, 1997; Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Eschle and Manguasha, 2007; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Mama, 2007).

Beyond this though, the terms of the debate around ‘equality’ and ‘equality policies’ need a little more attention. ‘Equality’ is often perceived as the unitary and unifying rallying cry of feminist academics and activists. However, despite this, ‘equality’ is a highly contested and debated concept within feminism. As such, the debates in feminism around equality and social change continue to shift back and forth between ‘what is equality and how do we achieve it?’ to a more specific ‘what/where are sites of relational inequality and how can they best be removed?’.³ In outlining these debates it is my intention to demonstrate the impact these theoretical discussions have had upon concrete actions undertaken to achieve ‘equality’ and where mainstreaming, as an approach, fits in with such theory and practice. As a consequence, I highlight the way in which ‘equality policies’ have been responsive to the changing nature of the theoretical debates on equality through a discussion of First, Second and Third Wave Feminist activism in society. I go on to make clear the ways in which gender mainstreaming has been associated with such visions of equality and the implementation of differing equality policies. I reveal that while some firmly link mainstreaming to Third Wave equality policy making (for instance, Rees (1998, 2005) draws this link in her ‘tinkering, tailoring and transforming’ model) others challenge this singular link and instead connect

³ For instance, the most fundamental debate around equality has centred on what is frequently referred to as ‘Wollstonecraft’s dilemma’ (Pateman, 1989). This dilemma asks to what extent should equality be defined in terms of parity or difference – should equality be achieved through the de-gendering of contributions by men and women or the re-valuation of contributions of men and women. However, some feminists now argue that the parity-difference debate is not necessarily a helpful one as neither conceptualisation ‘entail[s] a transformation of the norms of equivalence’ (Squires, 2005). As a consequence, what needs to be recognised as important is not the privileging of a particular vision of *equality* but instead the understanding and tackling of structures and discourses that perpetuate *inequality*.

mainstreaming approaches to all three feminist approaches to equality policy making (Booth and Bennett (2002) make a very clear argument for this).⁴

I leave this debate unresolved but instead advocate two clear points about the nature of mainstreaming. Firstly, gender mainstreaming is not generally seen as a new conceptual development in feminist thinking on equality theory and social change in itself but rather is seen as a particular strategy or approach associated with one or more visions of equality theory and policies. And secondly, what is unique about mainstreaming is that it is an approach that attempts to *institutionalise* equality theory and practice in *policy processes*. As Daly has pointed out, the 'distinctiveness of the gender mainstreaming approach is that it seeks to institutionalise equality by embedding gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes, and environment of public policy' (Daly, 2005: 4355).

These points are both important, however, this thesis specifically intends to examine gender mainstreaming within a development context and so a discussion of feminism's influences on development policy and practice (as well as the discipline of Development Studies) is also crucial to understand the specific interpretation of both 'equality' and 'mainstreaming' within the world of development. In a discussion of feminist approaches to development theory and practice (ranging from 'Women in Development' (WID), 'Women and Development' (WAD) and 'Gender and Development'), I advocate that, unlike the more general debates around mainstreaming and feminist social change where the association of mainstreaming with a particular vision of equality is still debated, gender mainstreaming in development has been clearly seen among practitioners and academics alike as an institutional strategy explicitly associated with the promotion of a GAD vision of equitable social change, rather than a WID/WAD vision, in development (Baden and Reeves, 2000; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Moser, 2005; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004).

⁴ The literature can be seen to range between these two clear points of view (Behning and Serrano Pascual, 2001; Beveridge, Nott *et al.*, 2000; Beveridge and Shaw, 2002; Booth and Bennett, 2002; Daly, 2005; Jahan, 1995; Mazey, 2000; Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir, 2005; Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000; Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006; Shaw, 2002; Squires, 2005; True, 2003).

'Gender and Development' or 'GAD', both in terms of a theory and an approach to development, is consequently an important concept in this thesis. When I use the concept I conform to an understanding that suggests that GAD, unlike WID and WAD, does not concentrate its analytical attention in development policy and practice on women *per se*, but rather it examines 'the social construction of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations to women and to men' (Rathgeber, 1990: 494). A GAD approach therefore aims to understand the power dynamics between men and women in different social contexts – only by understanding these different relationships of power can development both empower women and create more sustainable and just interventions. Like the changes in debate around 'equality', that shifted thinking away from the integration and promotion of women in a pre-existing 'masculine' model of society towards the actual redefinition of that model, GAD is less about the 'integration' of women into 'development' and more about the redefinition of development itself, both in terms of its aims and the methods it employs. It is about creating a development model that attempts to recognise relational sites of inequality between men and women (as well as between women and women, and men and men, and so on) and transform them, recasting the value of identities and roles in society. For instance, 'planning for change in women's lives clearly entails changes for men, with structural shifts in male-female power relations', and consequently, an 'undifferentiated and unilateral focus on women is not only conceptually inappropriate, but deprives gender interventions of their transformative potential' (Chant, 2000: 8).

I have therefore represented gender mainstreaming in development as an explicit and specific form of feminist activism closely bound up with the rise of GAD thinking and practice in development. However, like the more general debates in feminism about mainstreaming, equality and social change, what is also clear from development literature is that: firstly, gender mainstreaming in development is not generally seen as a new conceptual understanding in feminist thinking around the issue of international development and equitable social change, though the terms 'gender mainstreaming' and 'GAD' are mistakenly used interchangeably at times. Rather, gender mainstreaming in feminist development literature is seen as an explicit strategy for achieving a GAD vision of development. Secondly, as a strategy of GAD, gender mainstreaming is recognised as being directly concerned with the *institutionalisation* of a GAD

vision of equitable social change within *policy processes* of development organisations (Baden and Reeves, 2000; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Goetz, 1997a; Goetz, 1998; Goetz, 2004; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Kusakabe, 2005a; Moser, 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Rao and Stuart, 1997; Subrahmanian, 2004; UNDP, 2003; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004).

Theme Three: Power Relations, Organisational Change and Staff Resistance

Given that my research aimed to undertake a political 'process' analysis of gender mainstreaming in development organisations to better understand the current impasse faced by feminist activists and gender advocates a number of key questions arose: What type of approach should I take to understand (the lack of appropriate) change? What concepts do I need to adopt to understand the conflict of ideas and approaches within development organisations? What specific instances or sites of conflict around gender mainstreaming are the most pervasive and damaging to achieving a feminist policy agenda? What lens could I use to locate and interpret these sites of conflict? And what concepts would I need to adopt to understand the results of my research? In developing responses to these research questions, I have incorporated a number of ideas into this thesis from a range of disciplines, most notably Organisational/Management Studies and Anthropology.

Primary amongst these ideas and concepts is that of 'power'. To understand *why* certain policies or approaches dominate and why others are marginalised or impeded is an important and complex issue, though I suggest that more importantly than this is to know *how* some policies or approaches dominate. Accordingly, to investigate this issue within the context of development organisations the focus of this research turns to the concept and processes of power. Within this thesis I adopt a simplistic definition of power (with the full acknowledgement that such a definition does not adequately capture the complexity of ideas and problems behind the concept) in order to explore some of the differing forms and methods through which power operates. The following definition is therefore used: Power is the notion that A can in some way affect B, and that this effect is 'non-trivial or significant' (Lukes, 2005: 30). With the understanding that, firstly, A and B represent anything from a

person to an idea. And secondly, A's affecting B is qualified by the statement that the affect must be significant.

With this definition in mind I begin to examine the levels at which power can operate within society, and more specifically within organisations. In discussing Lukes' three conceptualisations of power – overt, covert and latent – I became drawn to the idea of latent power as a useful concept for understanding the often seemingly inexplicable and consistent failure of gender policies in progressive development organisations. I have interpreted latent power here as the situation in which the interests of A and the interests of B over an issue are conflictual, yet B (and even A) may be unaware of the fact that this conflict of interest exists. In this instance, the notion of power exists when B conforms to A's interests, because A's interests are perceived by B to be the only or most appropriate course of action to take – A imposes its interests upon B and B adopts these interests as its own. In this thesis I have labelled the sites at which latent power operates in development organisations as sites of 'non-conflict' due to the acquiescence of radical policies in the seeming absence of any form of open or masked conflict.

By their very nature latent power and sites of 'non-conflict' are not readily visible to those investigating instances of conflict over ideas and approaches in organisations. To overcome this problem I have developed an approach that investigates 'organisational culture' which in turn provides a lens for uncovering and understanding such sites of 'non-conflict'. Culture in studies of organisations is an umbrella concept spanning a variety of research approaches and disciplines involved in institutional analysis (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992: 160). However, for the needs of my research I adopt an interpretation of 'organisational culture' that stems more from anthropological approaches than from those based within management studies. Within such an interpretation, differences between what people should do and what they actually do becomes a starting point for research. In this way organisational culture can be seen to '[grow or emerge] within the organisation and [...] emphasises the creativity of organisational members as culture makers' (Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992). However, using such an interpretation of organisational culture is troublesome as it difficult to define.

Smircich highlights that in anthropology 'culture is the foundational term through which the orderliness and patterning of much of our life experience is explained', and in much the same way this applies to the study of organisations – culture is a form of inquiry into and explanation for social order in organisations (Smircich, 1983: 341). When examining social order, researchers have frequently divided organisations into two separate entities for the sake of analysis. Some refer to this division in organisations as structure and agency (Lewis, Bebbington *et al.*, 2002: 18) while others refer to it as formal and informal systems (Wright, 1994: 17). Whatever terms may be used, the intention drawn is the same, it is useful to visualise and analyse two parallel systems within organisations. For example, the '[f]ormal system is a map of the organisational structure, job descriptions, the hierarchy of decision making, the goals, rules and policies. The informal system is the way individuals and groups in the organisation relate to each other' (Wright, 1994: 17). These systems are often examined separately however I argue that to understand organisational culture fully the formal and informal systems should not be examined in isolation from one another as there is a constant process of interaction between the two. They both produce and reproduce meaning in the other, and through this process social order is created. To investigate and understand this process is to come closer to an understanding of an organisation's culture and how it affects the overall outputs of the organisation.

I go on to advocate that to explore this continual process of negotiation between the formal and informal systems within organisations by their members it is important to develop an investigation that focuses upon the 'everyday' of organisations rather than specific and/or unique 'instances' and 'events'. In this thesis the 'everyday' will be seen as the daily routines and activities (that are negotiated products of formal and informal systems) that both govern and are created by employees within an organisation. More specifically though, this thesis will investigate two lenses that I feel provide particularly good entry points for exploring the 'everyday' of organisations. I have termed these lenses: 'organisational structures' and 'organisational discourse'. Through using these lenses to focus my investigation I draw

attention to and discuss instances of 'non-conflict' over attempts to mainstream gender in Oxfam GB.

In looking at 'organisational structures' in this thesis I am not only referring to a narrow and positivist definition that examines systems of hierarchy and management in institutions but instead I am going to include a broader conceptualisation of structures that refers to the 'collection of taken-for-granted [...] ways of thinking and working that underlie decision making and action' in organisations and among its staff (Rao and Kelleher, 2005). In adopting this broader idea of organisational structures there is no definitive model to turn to in order to identify them. Though many forms of organisational structures are readily identifiable and common among institutions, others are frequently undefined and specific to individual organisations. They are merely the accepted norms of practice which can range from the common, formal and visible to the uncommon, informal and invisible. For instance, organisational structures could be an explicit model of business in an organisation, such as 'not-for-profit', but they can equally be implicit work practices that are called upon by staff when they say 'this is how we always do it' but where the origins to such practices are unclear and/or undocumented in policy. In addition to this, in looking at 'organisational discourse' in this thesis I am referring to an idea that examines normalised forms of presentation and representation, the 'ways in which the language and concepts used in [organisational] texts close out certain ways of thinking and viewing the world, while privileging others' (Lewis, Bebbington *et al.*, 2002: 7). It is a view that explicitly suggests that organisational discourse highlights and informs both what an organisation and its staff considers important and the way in which it considers it to be important. Such discourse can be located in oral forms, such as presentations, meetings and staff discussions, or in written communication, such as policy papers, memos, e-mails, toolkits, strategic frameworks and project proposals.

In examining and reflecting upon these aspects of organisational culture and in identifying the sites of 'non-conflict' over mainstreaming gender that become apparent I have adopted and used a number of ideas to hone my analysis within the later stages of this thesis. Three

ideas stand out as particularly significant: 'resistance', 'organisational norms' and 'organisational values'. Firstly, in trying to understand the links between latent power in organisations and the participation of staff members in sites of 'non-conflict' I have adapted two interpretations of 'resistance' to the context of my research. I highlight that the concept of 'resistance' is not directly applicable to studies of organisational change such as mine. Resistance is a concept generally used to highlight the multiple and diverse ways in which those who are subordinate to hegemonic ideas and institutions challenge the dominant power relations and the existing status quo (Faith, 1994; Martin, 1988; Risseuw, 1991; Scott, 1985; Scott, 1990; Staudt and Jaquette, 1988). Such a concept has a starting point directly opposite to my own.

However, I go on to highlight that some argue there is no easy division between dominant and oppositional discourses, and that resistance does not necessarily or intrinsically arise from any singular point (Faith, 1994: 7). Resistance is merely an act of opposition frequently associated with but not necessarily exclusive to repressed interests. And therefore, in the context of my research I demonstrate that it is no longer necessary to neatly label relations and acts of power as dominant or subversive to appreciate or use the understandings developed within more traditional literature on 'resistance'. With this in mind I build upon two models of 'resistance' to understand the actions of staff within organisations around sites of 'non-conflict' over implementing GAD approaches. I identify these two models as 'passive resistance' and 'subconscious resistance'. Unlike models that explore more active and open resistance – an act that either directly or indirectly, though always explicitly, challenges and intends to subvert a particular reality – passive and unconscious resistance are not acts that intentionally set out to challenge a particular set of circumstances. Instead such acts of resistance work in the long run to subvert a particular reality but do so without any direct intent to subvert. Passive and subconscious resistance can in turn be differentiated by the actor's level of understanding of their own act of resisting.

I have identified 'passive resistance' as acts that occur when an actor does not try to challenge or deny the importance of a particular reality or system, but instead disassociates

him or herself from it to fulfil other aspects of their life they consider more of a priority or of greater importance. Such acts are 'largely concerned with immediate, de facto gains' and not 'formal, overt, [...] systematic, de jure change' (Scott, 1985). However, the long term consequence of such individual private acts of passive resistance will result in the appearance of systematic subversion and a picture of intentionality after the fact. As an extension of such thinking, I have identified 'subconscious resistance' as acts that subvert change but that also transcend any understanding of intentionality by the actor, either in terms of immediate gain or long term change. Such acts of resistance stem from analyses that use Bourdieu's concept of 'learned ignorance' whereby actors 'are not fully aware of their own conduct and operate from [...] a mode of practical knowledge which does not include knowledge of its own principles' (Risseuw, 1991: 164). This practical knowledge can be seen as knowledge which comes from the cultural system that surrounds the actor. Actions based on this practical knowledge may lead to unknown acts of resistance. Such acts are not only unintentional by the actor but also beyond the actors grasp of understanding.

Secondly, in my analysis of how gender mainstreaming approaches suffer from 'non-conflict' and acts of resistance (as highlighted above) I have incorporated within my thesis a discussion on the meaning of 'values' and value change in an organisational context. The concept of 'values' within studies of organisations is not a simple one and raises a number of significant questions. What are 'values' in the context of organisations? What or who holds them? How are 'values' changed? In responding to these issues, I highlight that mainstream thinking on 'values' in organisations (particularly prevalent within development organisations) visualises organisations as anthropomorphised wholes in which the parts of an organisation are intrinsically and organically interrelated to the whole. The organisation, within such a model, becomes an entity that can explicitly hold certain values, and these values will inevitably and automatically be shared amongst its constituent parts – it becomes the individual's duty to embody the values of the organisation (Pasteur and Scott-Villiers, 2004).⁵

⁵ Systems theory approaches to organisational theory and practice are mainly responsible for such thinking and they continue to have an important influence on organisation studies and praxis today. Wiener (1948) provides one of the first examples of systems theory, or cybernetics, in organisational studies literature. More recent examples include: Argyris (1982), Jackson (2000), Senge (1990) and Schön (1991).

Chambers (2005) provides a clear example of such thinking in development in his discussion of ActionAid's core 'organisational values' and the concept of 'non-negotiables'. For Chambers, inspirational and uncompromising 'values' are enough to change organisational practice. Staff beliefs will either change automatically and come into line with 'organisational values' or staff will leave and simply work elsewhere.

However, I argue that such an approach to understanding 'values' in organisations is unhelpful and misleading. I instead advocate an approach that sees organisations and individuals (in organisations) as separate and independent. Such an approach identifies that 'values' held by organisations and by individuals in organisations are neither the same thing nor are they intrinsically connected. Talk of 'values' in studies of organisations needs to be more differentiated. I go on to highlight how 'organisational values' can more accurately be split into two different concepts in organisations: 'norms' and 'values'. 'Norms' are the 'obligatory and constraining [framework that] provides moral criteria for assessing what ought to be done' in organisations whereas 'values' are the 'compelling (in a voluntary sense) and [...] freely chosen' beliefs and convictions held by individual staff member in organisations (Mowles, Forthcoming).⁶ In any study of organisations it must therefore follow that a distinction should be made between its 'norms' (ideas or rules promoted by an organisation) and its 'values' (the beliefs and motivations held individuals in an organisation). From such an approach, individuals cannot be seen as components of organisations – miniature expressions of the whole – but instead must be perceived as autonomous agents within that whole. Their free choice distinguishes them from the framework they are embedded in. Their 'values' cannot be set by the organisation, they are the very thing that distinguishes the individual from that organisation (Joas, 2000). I demonstrate that by distinguishing between 'norms' and 'values' as well as by, in turn, recognising the more complex relationship between organisations and individuals that is implied by making such a distinction, it

⁶ Within the context of my research the concept of a (organisational) 'norm' is being interpreted in a more traditional philosophical sense rather than from a social science perspective. For instance, a 'norm' here is being interpreted as meaning something that suggests how things *should* or *ought* to be. For instance, the Oxfam Gender Policy is an example of a organisational norm as it an authoritative organisational document that expresses that all development interventions orchestrated by the organisation *should* include a GAD approach in their planning, delivery and evaluation. It is instructive rather than descriptive. A 'norm' here is not being interpreted as meaning something that highlights a widely accepted form of social etiquette, behaviour or belief among a group.

becomes possible to more fully appreciate why the 'process' element of gender mainstreaming – organisational change – has become riddled with sites of 'non-conflict' and ultimately results in a (seemingly unexplainable) policy impasse.

Oxfam GB and Gender Mainstreaming: A Sketch

Oxfam GB (hereafter referred to as Oxfam) formally adopted its Gender Policy on the 16th May, 1993. This Gender Policy expressed a clear organisational commitment to putting GAD approaches to development and the goal of achieving gender equality in society into the organisation's projects and programmes. However, this commitment to both a new approach to doing development and a vision of gender equality did not come entirely out of the blue. Prior to this formal recognition of GAD approaches and thinking as a core aspect of development intervention in the organisation, Oxfam had created a Gender And Development Unit (GADU) in 1984 to raise awareness of gender issues amongst staff and in the organisation's activities. In one form or another, Oxfam has over two decades of commitment to GAD, with gender mainstreaming being its key strategy for achieving a GAD vision of development for over a decade. Through gender mainstreaming, Oxfam has developed the idea that GAD approaches to development are the responsibility of the whole organisation. As a consequence, levels of understanding about gender equality as well as the technical capacity to implement GAD approaches in development projects and programmes is good throughout the organisation (Dawson, 2005: 82).

Yet, by Oxfam's own admission, gender mainstreaming has failed to achieve what it should have in promoting GAD approaches within the organisation's work. The problem of policy evaporation is serious. Translating their progressive gender policy into solid practice has proven difficult and is the subject of much internal research and debate. The difficulties seem all the more perplexing for Oxfam given that there is now little notable sign of resistance to the ideas of GAD and gender equality among the organisation's staff. Most staff openly recognise the centrality of gender transformative goals, not just for their instrumental value in

creating broader and more sustainable solutions to poverty, but for their intrinsic value in tackling an age old form of injustice. For those responsible for mainstreaming in the organisation trying to turn the Gender Policy into tangible practice is an all too real, but frustratingly little understood, problem. An impasse has clearly been reached. Thus, Oxfam provides an interesting case study for developing a political analysis of the gender mainstreaming 'process'.

To gain a new insight into the process of organisational change requires uncovering sites of previously unnoticed conflict – or 'non-conflict' as I will discuss in Chapter 1 – and submerged acts of resistance among staff. To achieve this requires a less than traditional approach to researching gender mainstreaming. A full outline of my methodology and methods can be found in the Annex ('Methodology: Researching Power in Organisations'), however, below is a brief outline of my research in Oxfam.

In my research, I aimed to examine several aspects of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam – the construction of gender policy, the interpretation of gender policy and practice by staff, and the routines of gender and development work. It was thus unlikely that one method would have been able to uncover the evidence needed for all aspects of my research. As a consequence, I adopted three differing research methods – participant observation, semi-structured interviewing, and discourse analysis (each is discussed in detail in the appendix) – as different methods reveal different aspects of reality. Though these methods revealed different types of information, and therefore allow me to analyse the relationships between policy and practice in the organisation, they also overlapped in the evidence that they provided. Triangulating the overlapping evidence provided by these different methods allowed me to cross-check information. I believe these methods worked well in uncovering and developing an understanding of the organisation sites of 'non-conflict' over gender mainstreaming and provided a comprehensive range of evidence to support such an analysis.

As for the actual research, I conducted a multi-sited ethnography in which I was as much a participant as I was an observer during the research period – a condition for being able to conduct my research in the organisation was that I would also have to work for the organisation as a volunteer researcher. The first phase of the research was conducted in the summer of 2003 and I was based in Oxfam's South American (SAM) Regional Office in Lima, Peru. During this time, in co-operation with a Regional Gender Advisor, I was asked to provide a gender analysis for the SAM Regional Programme on their *Livelihoods* strategy and later on their *Right to be Heard* strategy. This experience was invaluable for understanding how gender was constructed, understood, analysed and incorporated into the work of the organisation by staff. Furthermore, just prior to my arrival in Lima, the gender advisor had finalised a review of gender mainstreaming in the Oxfam country offices of that region. This provided an invaluable source of information on how Oxfam staff (particularly those charged with delivering it) viewed the process of gender mainstreaming.

The second phase of research was conducted from May to December in 2005 and I was based in the Oxfam head office in Oxford, UK. During this time, I worked in supporting the Lead Gender Advisor based in the Programme Team. This second phase of research served a number of purposes. Firstly, it allowed me to explore and test some of the ideas and issues that arose during the first phase of research. Secondly, being located at the symbolic and managerial centre of Oxfam, it provided me with the opportunity to place my regional experiences in context and uncover, perhaps, further sites of 'non-conflict'. Thirdly, through my work for the Lead Gender Advisor, I was able to survey the array of approaches Oxfam is using (and hopes to use) to deliver an effective process of institutional change under gender mainstreaming to overcome the current gender policy impasse. And finally, conducting the second phase of research two years later allowed me to take a more longitudinal perspective of gender mainstreaming in the organisation.

The third phase of the research was conducted from January to December 2007. It was an unplanned phase of the research that grew out of the relationships I developed with staff during the second phase. It was not a phase whereby I examined everyday work around

gender mainstreaming in Oxfam and as such it did not involve day to day involvement in the organisation as in the previous two phases. Instead, it was a phase whereby I was kept abreast of changes concerning the organisation and gender mainstreaming by my involvement in a number of key meetings, planning sessions and workshops of Oxfam staff from across the organisation on gender related policy and programme delivery issues. Though unplanned and less intensive than phase one and two, this phase of the research turned out to be extremely productive. Firstly, the meetings, planning sessions and workshops brought staff together from across the regions and allowed me to assess the similarity of experiences shared by those engaging with gender mainstreaming and the process of organisational change it demands. Secondly, the information gained at these key events complemented the information developed about 'the everyday' during phase one and two. Such events can be seen as rituals – in the anthropological sense – that punctuate the everyday life of individuals in the organisations. Examining them provides another perspective into both the organisation and its staff. And finally, I attended these events intermittently throughout the writing up process. As a consequence, they maintained my focus in the development of the chapters and allowed me to continually test my analysis as it took form.

Out of these three phases of research I gathered enough material to construct a comprehensive case study of the organisation and the actual 'process of organisational change' directed by those attempting to mainstream gender. This case study sits at the very centre of this thesis.

Thesis Overview: Structure and Content

This thesis has been structured into three distinct parts. Part I (Chapters 1 and 2) sets out the theoretical framework needed and background literature necessary to tackle the question of 'how gender mainstreaming has been consistently silenced over a range of organisational and institutional contexts'. It discusses the levels at which power can be seen to operate in

organisations – in so doing, it examines how sites of ‘non-conflict’ can be made visible – and details current definitions, research and debate on gender mainstreaming. Part II of this thesis pulls together and discusses my extended case study of gender mainstreaming in a development organisation. It highlights the historical and contextual information around gender mainstreaming in Oxfam necessary for any form of comprehensive analysis to take place (Chapter 3). It goes on to use this information to draw attention to sites of ‘non-conflict’ over gendered institutional change within Oxfam’s organisational structures (Chapter 4) and discourse (Chapter 5). Part III presents the most significant details of the Oxfam case study and relates them back to the issues discussed in Part I. It establishes both ‘how’ and ‘why’ gender mainstreaming faces an policy impasse in development organisations (Chapter 6) as well as the implications of my research for tackling this impasse (Conclusion).

More specifically, in Chapter 1 I construct a framework for understanding and analysing the impasse currently faced by gender mainstreaming in development organisations. To do this I look at the concept of a policy impasse without becoming drawn, at this stage, into the concepts and debates surrounding gender mainstreaming in international development. It is in Chapter 2 that I will develop a comprehensive review of gender mainstreaming in a development context. And so, in the first section of this chapter, I examine the relationship between policy and practice. Understanding the way in which a policy is understood to be at an impasse, and how this differs from instances of policy evaporation, must be achieved before examining both ‘why’ and ‘how’ such an impasse can happen. The example of indigenous knowledge policies in development is used to develop this understanding – this specific example is used both to avoid a premature examination of gender mainstreaming as well as to highlight this more general policy problem in development and the wider applicability of this framework. In the second section, I lead on from these discussions and explore the operation of power within organisations. In discussing the multiple dimensions of power (overt, covert and latent) as delineated by Lukes in *Power: A Radical View* (first published in 1974), the ‘third dimension of power’ is noted as particularly relevant. Examining ‘why’ some policies fail and others succeed despite an often equal attempt to achieve all policy goals is central in framing ‘how’ policy evaporation/subversion occurs in organisations.

In the final section, to uncover the 'faceless operation of power' in organisations, 'organisational culture' is examined as a lens to make visible previously invisible sites of 'non-conflict'.

In Chapter 2 I develop the need to explore the central question of this thesis – understanding the policy impasse in development organisations – as well as lay the groundwork for exploring it within Part II of the thesis. The chapter sections explore issues that are necessary if gender mainstreaming is to be more constructively analysed – an analysis that does not just locate and point out the specific problems of gender mainstreaming but goes some way towards locating and analysing the roots of these problems. The first section draws the connections between feminism, equality, development and gender mainstreaming. It highlights that mainstreaming is a particular strategy of feminism's equality project in society as well as within development more specifically. The focus of this particular strategy for equality is noted as primarily 'institutional' in focus. The second section picks up on these ideas and explores them in more detail in the development context. This section initially examines exactly how gender mainstreaming has been defined within international development as well as the explicit and implicit meaning that such a definition has for those adopting and/or studying the strategy. The section then goes on to highlight how the current literature on gender mainstreaming in Development Studies assesses the strategy's capability of achieving equitable social transformation in development interventions. It highlights that the literature has recognised a policy impasse around the mainstreaming strategy and further notes this as an irreconcilable problem. Furthermore, the literature also points to new alternatives that attempt to go beyond gender mainstreaming. However, the section will call into question these alternatives and raises the need for the gender mainstreaming impasse to be better understood – not just why it exists but how it is maintained.

The third and final section develops an approach for examining the policy impasse in gender mainstreaming. It suggests that any analysis that attempts to understand the impasse should be located within the 'process' element of gender mainstreaming interpretations, as well as

attempt to understand the political, and not just technical, nature of that institutional change 'process'. The section will then emphasise how the approach to understanding power relations in organisations developed in Chapter 1 is crucial for developing this more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the gender mainstreaming impasse.

In Chapter 3 I highlight that before any discussion of conflict over and resistance to organisational change processes in Oxfam can begin a review of the state of gender mainstreaming in the organisation is needed. And so, in the first section, I provide an overview of Oxfam's relationship with GAD thinking and praxis by noting the movement of the organisation from being described as sexist to, as some may call it, a now more progressive feminist organisation. In the second section, I examine the current gender policy in Oxfam and discuss how it relates to the differing aspects of the gender mainstreaming definition discussed in Chapter 2.

In the third section and developing on from this, I explore Oxfam's own assessment of the outcomes of its gender mainstreaming strategies and highlight its own recognition of a policy impasse. In the fourth section, I detail Oxfam's attempts to overcome this deadlock as well as its own conclusion that the policy impasse they face is, in the main, unsolvable. In doing this I will delineate where Oxfam ultimately perceives the problems to mainstreaming gender lie and put these assumptions to the test. In the fifth section, I demonstrate that Oxfam, in facing this impasse, has decided to disengage with the process of organisational change suggested by mainstreaming and instead develop a sectoral approach that explicitly focuses on women/gender issues. This has been done in the hope not that it will overcome the impasse faced by gender mainstreaming strategies, but that it will find a new path for promoting equality in development. The final section suggests that, before gender mainstreaming is quietly case aside in Oxfam, the impasse it faces needs to be more explicitly investigated from a new perspective, a perspective that has hitherto been downplayed or ignored in the organisation's mainstreaming strategies and institutional reviews.

In Chapter 4 I focus upon examining Oxfam's organisational structures. Using organisational structures as a lens I bring to the fore and analyse the ways in which gender mainstreaming in Oxfam faces instances of 'non-conflict' and resistance to change. I identify three types of organisational structure where it is possible to locate sites of 'non-conflict' and acts of resistance (albeit subconscious and passive) to the ambitions of gender mainstreaming: the Strategic Change Objective (SCO) framework, the planning approach, and ways of working. In the three subsequent sections, I examine these structures and their relationship to gender mainstreaming strategies and the organisation's staff. I highlight how the process of organisational change envisaged by gender mainstreaming has been impeded. Each example demonstrates how a sense of low personal responsibility among staff for putting GAD into practice has been allowed to fester and act as a point of conflict over change in Oxfam within these structures.

In Chapter 5 I focus upon examining Oxfam's organisational discourse. As with structures, I use organisational discourses as a lens to bring to the fore and analyse the ways in which gender mainstreaming in Oxfam faces instances of 'non-conflict' and resistance to change. In the first section, I highlight how it is not just the type of language and concepts used in organisations that are necessarily the most important issue when examining organisational discourse. Equally important is the way aspects of organisational discourse, such as the use of GAD ideas and thinking, are positioned next to other ideas, language and concepts in the organisations. The framing of gendered organisational discourse has profound implications upon the uptake and understanding imbued in staff on what this means for their work. In the subsequent sections, I identify three ways in which gendered organisational discourse has been framed in Oxfam and the ways in which this framing has provided a fertile ground upon which conflict over (albeit unseen) and resistance to (albeit subconscious and passive) the ambitions of gender mainstreaming has grown. I have called these aspects of discourse framing: the creation of a technical enclave, the acceptable mystification of gender and the dilution of meaning. In examining these instances of discourse framing and their relationship to gender mainstreaming strategies and staff I further highlight how the process of organisational change envisaged by gender mainstreaming has been impeded. As in the

previous chapter, each example demonstrates how a sense of low personal responsibility among staff for putting GAD approaches into practice been allowed to exist, and act as a point of 'non-conflict' over change in Oxfam, despite an organisational discourse that seems to actively promote the uptake of GAD thinking and practice.

In Chapter 6 I draw this thesis together into a meaningful whole. In the first section, I review the case study material and the theoretical framework. I show that there is a clear recognition of a policy impasse on gender mainstreaming in Oxfam and that an analysis of 'process' has proved useful to both make this explicit as well as to better understand the impasse that has arisen. The gender mainstreaming process of organisational change in Oxfam has resulted in the removal, rather than the development, of staff responsibility for implementing GAD approaches. This has in turn facilitated acts of resistance to such change by staff to become less obvious and less easy to tackle. In the second section, I take up what has been learned through the analysis of gender mainstreaming, organisational culture and 'non-conflict', and develop a deeper understanding of the process of institutional change. This section distinguishes between norms and values in organisations and demonstrates the need to appreciate both elements when tackling institutional change. In the third section, I examine how the distancing of gender mainstreaming from feminism and feminist ideas has led to the loss of political content within the process element of gender mainstreaming, resulting in the changes demanded by organisational change activities to become technical and managerial in nature. This loss of political content has resulted in 'value' change among staff becoming overlooked or submerged within a narrower, less challenging, process of 'norm' change.

In the Conclusion to this thesis, I take up the issues discussed in Chapter 6 and examine what this means for the gender mainstreaming project in development more generally. I draw upon insights about both the political nature of gender mainstreaming and the process of institutional change in an attempt to answer the question 'what are we mainstreaming when we mainstream gender?' as well as to provide a clear perspective on the means needed for overcoming the impasse currently faced by gender mainstreaming in development. Confusion

over concepts of 'gender mainstreaming' and 'GAD' in organisations is shown to be a problem to creating change. But more importantly, I point to the need for a serious redefinition of gender mainstreaming, a redefinition that takes adequate account of its intrinsically political implications for organisations and thus the importance of personal value change among development managers and practitioners.

PART I
Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Chapter 1

Power and Culture in Organisations

Policy and Power: A Question of Culture?

The Trial may have seemed a odd place to start a thesis focused on examining the gender mainstreaming impasse in development organisations, but in many ways it provides a useful entry point. Firstly, the book stresses throughout that there is always a fundamental disjuncture between policy and practice – it cannot be taken for granted that practice of the Law accurately resembles written Law. Acknowledging and understanding this reality is an important step towards creating a framework for constructively analysing policy-practice relationships and policy impasses. Secondly, throughout the book the point is made that no individual character is personally responsible for the failure in delivery of ‘Justice’. The novel is most disturbing for this very fact – there is no malign character or conscious effort by any one in particular to persecute K. Though there seems to be a consistent and systematic effort to subvert Justice and destroy K. it remains faceless and out of grasp. It is this faceless subversion that seems to resonate most closely with the consistent inability of gender mainstreaming in development organisations to affect practice and, as a result, must be explored more fully. And finally, the novel repeatedly suggests that individuals within the ‘justice system’ are frequently bound by the system in which they work but that this controlling system represents something more potent than a mere ‘code of practice’ or ‘organisational vision’ used in the everyday functioning of bureaucracies. There is an implication that organisations are much more like communities of individuals than forms of ‘rational scientific administration’. An ‘organisational culture’ exists and it is not only produced and reproduced by individuals within the institution but also binds individuals’ thoughts and actions within that institution. As a consequence, recognising and examining this ‘culture’ as well as understanding its relationship with individuals within an organisation may provide the key to understanding the relations of power in organisations and, as a result, the consistent and widespread failure of certain policies.

Given these points, in this chapter I will construct a framework for analysing the impasse currently faced by gender mainstreaming in development organisations. To do this I will look at policy impasses without, at this stage, being drawn into the specifics of gender mainstreaming concepts and debates in development. It is in Chapter 2 that I will develop a comprehensive review of gender mainstreaming in a development context. And so, in the first section of this chapter, I will examine policy and practice and pull their relationship into sharp perspective. Understanding in what ways policies can be seen to fail to meet their aspirations in development organisations must be achieved before examining both 'why' and 'how' this can happen. The example of Indigenous Knowledge policies in development is used to develop this understanding – this specific example is used both to avoid a premature examination of gender mainstreaming as well as to highlight this more general policy problem in development and the wider applicability of this framework. In the second section, I will lead on from these discussions and explore the operation of power within organisations. In discussing the multiple dimensions of power (overt, covert and latent) as delineated by Lukes in *Power: A Radical View* (first published in 1974), the 'third dimension of power' is noted as particularly relevant. Examining 'why' some policies are seen to fail and others succeed despite an often equal attempt to achieve all policy goals is central in framing 'how' a policy impasse occurs in organisations. As a consequence, in the final section, to uncover the 'faceless operation of power' in organisations, 'organisational culture' is examined as a lens to make visible previously invisible sites of 'non-conflict'.

From Evaporation to Impasse: The Failure of Policy

Many of those who work in development organisations, particularly those who work on gender and other non-mainstream development issues, often refer to the problem of 'policy evaporation'. It is a term that is little discussed or defined within serious academic Development Studies literature but it is frequently used by practitioners and summarises the feelings of many working on mainstreaming gender. The gender and development consultant Sara Longwe (1997) has attempted to describe what is meant by the term 'policy evaporation'

in her article for *Development in Practice*. In her article she highlights the term with the use of an imaginary example, but an example that is nonetheless based on her own repeated experiences of consulting on gender for development organisations (see **Box 1.1**).

Box 1.1: Longwe's Example of Policy Evaporation

Snowdia is a very isolated (and imaginary) nation in the North. It has its own government development agency, SNOWDIDA, which is an administrative extension of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Snowdia. We shall look at SNOWDIDA's development activities in the People's Republic of Sundia, one of the least developed countries in Southern Africa.

Imagine a gender consultant is called in to look at how gender issues are addressed in a SNOWDIDA programme in Sundia. The consultant is instructed to look at the SNOWDIDA Country Programme. This document provides a summary of the overall policy and goals, and of the objectives and activities of all the projects in the SNOWDIDA-supported programme. *Table A* summaries the consultant's assessment of the level of attention to gender issues in the SNOWDIDA Country Programme in Sundia.

TABLE A: SNOWDIDA Country Programme for Sundia – Gender Assessment

Aspect of Programme	Assessment
Programme Policy	Policy rationale is mainly concerned with supporting government policy and endeavours. There is a brief mention of SNOWDIDA interest in supporting the process of women's empowerment, which is defined as women's increased participation in the development process and increased control over resources.
Situation Analysis	There is some identification of gender gaps, mainly in access to resources and skills training. There is a no mention of gender discrimination, or lack of women's representation in decision making positions.
Programme Goals	Here there are several goals which are concerned with women's increased access to resources, and increased participation in the development process.
Project Goals	There are no specific gender-orientated objectives. When a target group is mentioned, this is sometimes followed by the phrase 'especially women'.
Project Activities	There are no activities which are gender-specific, nor which are concerned with closing gender gaps, overcoming discrimination, or increasing women's participation in the process of project planning and implementation.
Project Implementation	Despite the Country Director's claim that the projects are implemented in a 'gender sensitive' way, the consultant's visits to various project sites reveal that there is no attempt to identify and address gender issues during the implementation process.

Source: (Longwe, 1997: 149-150)

Longwe highlights that such assessments by gender consultants show a 'gradual diminution as programme[s] move from policy statement to policy implementation'. She further notes that such a process of diminution is referred to by development practitioners as 'policy evaporation'. The issue of 'policy evaporation', as highlighted by Longwe, on gender was widely noted as a problem by many working in development in the 1990s (Goetz, 1997b; Hadjipateras, 1997; Longwe, 1997; Macdonald, 1994a; Porter, Smyth *et al.*, 1999; Porter and Judd, 1999; Rosario, 1995). However, more recent literature on gender and development alludes to a more terminal problem, that of a policy impasse and the ultimate failure of gender mainstreaming (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*,

2007b; Mama, 2007; Moser, 2005; Moser and Moser, 2005; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Standing, 2004; Woodford-Berger, 2004). As described by many in development organisations, policy evaporation is noted as a key symptom of a policy impasse but the occurrence of 'evaporation' does not quite encompass the problem in its totality.

Policy evaporation is a term that tends to be associated with or applied to individual contextualised instances of policy failure. For instance, in programme X policy intentions Y and Z have evaporated at the project level. However, talk of a policy impasse is used by practitioners to suggest a more widespread and fundamental failure of a policy to deliver in practice. A policy impasse seems to refer to an all encompassing and long term inability of a broad policy ambition to be transformed into sustained and consistent practice. Referring to a policy impasse is therefore not used to describe the failure of an individual project or programme to match the goals of a policy. A policy impasse is used describe a *general* and *consistent* inability or failure of a policy to be turned into corresponding practice (but not necessarily its total inability). Therefore, the recognition of a policy impasse can co-exist along side instances of successfully transformed projects and programmes as well as the existence of more general shifts in policy-practice discourse.

At what point is a policy recognised as to be generally and consistently failing to be turned into practice? The answer to this is not a simple one as there is certainly no definitive point to be identified. However, there are a number of factors, in this case from the literature on gender mainstreaming (by both academics and practitioners alike), that seem to provide a good indication of a situation far more serious than that of a policy suffering from multiple accounts of policy evaporation.⁷ Firstly, a general air of pessimism exists by those implementing a policy about their ability to actually achieve practice that reflects the policy's ambitions. Secondly, researchers examining practice increasingly question if projects or programmes have ever truly reflected a certain policy. And thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, both those implementing and researching policy and practice ask themselves if

⁷ The following factors have been compiled from a review of the following recent literature on gender mainstreaming in development organisations: Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison et al., 2007a; Cornwall, Harrison et al., 2007b; Mama, 2007; Molyneux, 2004; Moser, 2005; Moser and Moser, 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Standing, 2004; Woodford-Berger, 2004.

continued attempts to transform a certain policy into practice have given rise to a situation or reality that seemingly works to prevent or neutralise practice stemming from that policy. For instance, not only does practice consistently fail to meet the goals and ambitions of the policy, but the general policy environment has evolved into something that actually serves (either directly or indirectly) to undermine or erode the fundamental ability of the policy to achieve its goals in practice. These indicators will be explored and fleshed out in Chapter 2 in my detailed discussion of the current policy impasse facing gender mainstreaming in development. However, illustrating the idea of a policy impasse at this point with a further example from development literature will be useful. As the bulk of the thesis will be specifically discussing gender mainstreaming in development, I have chosen to use a different, but no less relevant, example from development policy-practice research in an attempt to make my interpretation of a policy impasse as well as the relevance for understanding it as clear as possible, in addition to demonstrating that these ideas go beyond the specifics of this thesis.

The Case of Indigenous Knowledge in Development

Indigenous knowledge research increasingly critiqued mainstream development throughout the 1970s, 1980s and to some extent the 1990s. The research essentially highlighted that within mainstream development there was a privileging of 'Western scientific understanding' and a commensurate lack of understanding of local knowledge and the possibilities for change contained within the local. Consequently, in recent years there has been a significant shift in the policies of development organisations in an attempt to rebalance the relations between those implementing development and those on the receiving end. There has been an 'explicit aim of reducing divisions between variously termed 'superior' ideologies of development and 'inferior' systems of local knowledge' (Croll, 1993: 161). This shift in policy has arisen out of an increasingly subtle understanding of the role of development in developing countries. It is no longer a question of creating and applying 'technological fixes' to developing countries, but rather a question of learning and understanding other peoples' own responses and 'technologies' in tackling the problems they face (Sillitoe, 1998: 223).

However, as the concept of indigenous knowledge has been slowly incorporated within mainstream development policy, the same criticism outlined above – lack of understanding and appreciation of the local – has been increasingly directed at the supposedly new development practices grappling with indigenous knowledge. Furthermore, these criticisms go beyond stating that indigenous knowledge policies have been unsuccessfully transformed into appropriate development practice. Rather they point out that the new policy environment designed to increase the uptake and use of indigenous knowledge in development practice has actually resulted in its continued marginalisation within development activities. The literature has noted that there are three general instances or ways in which this has occurred in development practice.

Firstly, development practice has now shifted its methods from, for example, a focus on 'farming systems' to a focus on 'farming knowledge systems'. This change in direction forces the practitioner to systematise knowledge (Fairhead, 1993: 193). It creates a belief that knowledge within a community is a sort of Durkheimian social fact that can be accessed with reference to individuals in a community. Yet as anthropologists have come to realise, 'there is no single, authentic, indigenous voice or reality that the researcher can discover and present to the world' (Pottier, 1997: 207). There is also no single, authentic, indigenous knowledge system that can be represented. For instance, agricultural knowledge is neither static nor agreed upon. To represent it as such, is to distort reality. Beck has highlighted that agricultural knowledge among the Dogon (a cliff dwelling people in South Eastern Mali and Burkina Faso) is individual to each farmer. Each has specific knowledge of his own fields and crops and rarely shares such knowledge with other farmers (Beck, 1993: 56). The construction of a local knowledge system by the practitioner ultimately serves to hide the conflictual and dynamic nature of knowledge within these societies. This process only serves to dislocate the target community from the development process rather than incorporate it. Constructing this static model of local knowledge tends to promote the (false) 'need' of these communities to be exposed to a dynamic and 'progressive' Western science.

Secondly, given the policy commitment of extracting, highlighting and using local knowledge, practitioners tend to over-interpret the data provided (Fairhead, 1993: 198). For instance, Fairhead tells of his own temptation to ascribe specific technical knowledge to Bwisha farmers in Zaire on pathogen reduction methods that were in reality just a fortuitous side consequence of a fertilisation practice (Fairhead, 1993: 198). Richards emphasises the problem of this abstraction and over-interpretation. He suggests that 'over-interpretation tends to obscure [...] cases of genuine 'local knowledge' arising from real but place or epoch specific differences in the way the world works' (Richards, 1993: 62). Over-ascribing knowledge to communities leads to inaccurate cultural translation which may have severe implications for the appropriateness of development projects and programmes.

And finally, the adoption of local knowledge in development policy creates a situation whereby the practitioner becomes prone to examining the specificities of knowledge to the exclusion of broader socio-political processes (Fairhead, 1993: 194). Technical knowledge is constructed and abstracted from more fundamental processes within society. This can lead to a misinterpretation or an inappropriate reading of the problems facing communities. For instance, Pottier highlights that development projects searching for relevant local knowledge on farming among rural Ugandans will more than likely come to the conclusion that poor millet production among these farmers is a result of ignorance over how best to grow millet given the climatic conditions (Pottier, 1997: 209-210). Programmes based on such assumptions will undoubtedly focus on teaching farmers how to grow millet. Yet, as one small scale female farmer pointed out during a workshop unrelated to local knowledge research, farmers know how best to grow millet but it is their lack of ability to gain access to sufficient labour that forces them to grow it in a less productive way (Pottier, 1997: 209). It is this problem of decontextualisation that is perhaps the most serious issue in the discussion of mainstreaming indigenous knowledge policies into development practice. It provides a clear example of how the creation of a general policy-practice environment stemming from indigenous knowledge policies has made the ability to achieve the goals of indigenous knowledge policy increasingly unlikely.

Such literature critical of contemporary attempts to adopt an indigenous knowledge policy highlight a number of important issues. Firstly, indigenous knowledge as a concept shows mainstream development to be both wholly inappropriate and ineffective at creating appropriate and tangible social and material improvement for the participants of development programmes. It goes on to highlight how a reconceptualised form of development thinking and practice is needed to create such change. As a consequence, indigenous knowledge can be seen as a radical⁸ concept within Development Studies. Secondly, the ideas and beliefs of indigenous knowledge have been driven forward and incorporated into mainstream development policy making. However, since this point of incorporation, research has consistently shown that development practice has more often than not failed to promote a 'genuine' uptake and use indigenous knowledge in actual observable interventions despite a policy to do so. Furthermore, attempts to do so, highlighted by the experiences of those such as Fairhead and Pottier, have recognised that the rhetoric of indigenous knowledge in development practice not only does not reflect the reality of that practice but also serves to increase the likelihood of practice producing results counter to the policy's intentions (Burghart, 1993; Fairhead, 1993; Pottier, 1997).⁹ Many researchers and practitioners now stress that despite positive changes to development thinking and discourse around indigenous knowledge concepts in mainstream development, there has been little impact on the actual use of indigenous knowledge in actual development projects and programmes, and furthermore, attempts to do so may have further undermined such a possibility in the future (Beck, 1993; Croll, 1993; Curtis, 1994; Ellen, 2002; Fairhead, 1993; Marsden, 1994). A policy impasse, according to the commentators of indigenous knowledge policy and practice, has clearly been reached. A situation exists whereby the ideas and goals of the policy no longer seem just difficult, but impossible (and even counterproductive) to achieve in practice. For instance, Ellen (2002) has noted that,

Though it might not have seemed like it at the time, we can now agree that the revitalised interest in indigenous knowledge emerged out of a 'postmodern' discourse on development, one looking for ways which allowed other voices to speak for themselves,

⁸ Within the context of this thesis 'radical' will be defined in terms of a fundamental challenge to dominant discourses, theories or concepts. Gender, ethnicity and a multitude of other concepts also challenge the fundamental basis of mainstream development, and thus these concepts will also be perceived by this definition as radical.

⁹ As will be pointed out in Chapter 2, this experience differs little from attempts to mainstream GAD ideas and approaches in development.

and was critical of established institutional, scientific, and economic models. [...However, there has been] a deconstruction of the category of indigenous knowledge itself. Thus, 'indigenous knowledge' acquires its ironic punctuation marks, [as it is] no longer a methodology or a subject, but a 'discourse' riddled with contradictions. (Ellen, 2002: 237-238)

The situation that now exists – a 'discourse' riddled with contradictions – needs to be understood. Why and how have these contradictions occurred. Why and how has the incorporation into mainstream development led to the subversion of radical policies such as indigenous knowledge? Are they the result of lazy, malign or incompetent development practitioners and researchers who have no intention of adopting new and challenging ways of doing development despite changes in policy? Is there an active resistance to policy change – a conscious desire to maintain the status quo within the bureaucratic development world? Are radical policies dutifully taken up but actively sidelined and co-opted by development organisations and their staff? These are all reasonable questions. However, there are more subtle questions that can also be posed.

The need for more delicate probing of situations surrounding instances of a policy impasse, such as that which surrounds gender mainstreaming, is underscored by the third point to be drawn out from the brief discussion of indigenous knowledge and development. Research into indigenous knowledge policy has also shown that most working on implementing such a policy frequently have a clear desire to make development projects and programmes work better for local communities. Most development practitioners are individuals who have a genuine interest and motivation in applying development policy within their particular area of interest in the belief that it will improve the lives of those they work among. Thus, analysis of a policy impasse along the lines of 'lazy, malign or incompetent practitioner' or 'active subversion by institutions and their staff', may only describe the exception rather than the rule (this is also something that rings true with many who have tried to mainstream gender in more recent years). There is thus a need to more clearly understand what happens in the 'space' between policy and practice. It is too easy and too simplistic to level the blame for a policy impasse directly at the feet of the practitioner. For example, development organisations, especially the more progressive ones, often manifestly adopt radical development policies. Individuals within these organisations frequently support these

policies. The questions that need more exploration become: What happens between the creation of a radical policy and the implementation of practice? Why does practice sometimes counteract policy despite the best intentions of staff?

Development organisations have come to represent a 'black box' – some policies succeed, other policies fail, yet it is not always visible why and how this is so. The discussion of indigenous knowledge policy and practice has pointed out that it is often policies that challenge mainstream orthodoxy, and are thus deemed 'radical' in nature, that come to face such an impasse. However, the example of indigenous knowledge policy-practice has also noted that such subversion is not always a readily visible and identifiable process. To understand such occurrences it will be crucial to understand how subversion can occur in organisations. To do this involves examining the ways in which power operates and the differing manifestations in which radical policies can 'conflict' with the mainstream.

Power: Beyond 'Conflict'

Let us not, therefore, ask why certain people want to dominate, what they seek, what is their overall strategy. Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours etc. In other words, rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects. (Foucault, 1980d: 97)

To understand why certain policies dominate and why others are continually marginalised is are complex questions. Development Studies has produced many answers. However, Foucault in his general discussions on the nature of power and domination eloquently draws attention to the fact that, though this question is interesting, at a certain point understanding why people, groups, nations, states, or ideas dominate is irrelevant. Understanding the sequence of historical factors leading up to domination by someone or something and the subsequent material effects of this domination, doesn't necessarily tell us about how the processes of domination operate on a day to day basis to maintain control. Knowledge of how someone or something dominates is what is significant. Accordingly, to investigate how

domination and subjugation exist, the focus must turn to the concept and processes of power. What is power? How does it operate? What forms of conflict occur? Examining these questions are vital if the problems that blight more radical development policies are to be understood, not merely described and condemned. There may be any number of reasons why mainstream development subverts radical development policies, such as GAD or those promoting indigenous knowledge, but understanding how it does is much more significant.

Academic literature on power and its operation repeatedly suggest that power is an essentially contested concept – there can be no authoritative definition. However, for the purposes of this thesis, a simple definition will be used with the full acknowledgement that such a definition does not adequately capture the complexity of ideas and problems behind the concept. Doing this will allow an exploration of the differing forms that power can take. Such a definition would go something like as follows: Power is the notion that A can in some way affect B, and that this effect is ‘non-trivial or significant’ (Lukes, 2005: 30). Two important aspects must be recognised in this definition. Firstly, A and B represent anything from a person to an idea. And secondly, A’s affecting B is qualified by the statement that the affect must be significant. A may affect B all the time and vice-a-versa, that is the nature of interaction. However, the notion of power is only relevant when A’s effect on B is significant – for instance, when A’s interests are served by affecting B or if B’s interests are constricted due to A’s influence. The point at which an effect becomes significant will not be examined here, but noted as another contestable issue. Nonetheless, given this basic definition it is possible to outline some of the forms power can take – the ways in which A can affect B in a significant manner.

Foucault and Lukes both draw attention to the idea that power has multiple forms and multiple levels of operation (Foucault, 1980b; Gordon, 1980; Lukes, 2005). Lukes’ book (originally published in 1974), *Power: A Radical View*, skilfully delineates three ‘dimensions’ of power. These three dimensions highlight the progressively invisible forms (for A as well as for B) power can take. The first dimension of power is illustrated with the work of Dahl on the distribution of political power in New Haven (Dahl, 1961). Dahl argues that power is

exercised in direct (actual and observable) conflict (Lukes, 2005: 18). In this instance, there is an observable conflict over an 'issue' and A coerces B to conform to A's interests over that issue (either through incentive or disincentive). This is 'significant' as B would otherwise not have conformed to A's interests. Dahl's analysis of power is important and describes the most explicit form power can take. Yet it fails to take its analysis further than instances of direct conflict. The second dimension of power questions the limits of this analysis.

Lukes uses Bachrach and Baratz' analysis of power (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Bachrach and Baratz, 1970) to highlight his second dimension of power (Lukes, 2005: 20-24). Bachrach and Baratz argue that though the 'first dimension' is a useful analysis of power, it is far from comprehensive as it does not look beyond direct conflict and its immediate outcomes. Bachrach and Baratz bring into focus an indirect and, as they see it, a more pervasive form of power:

Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. Power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences. (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970: 7)

If the first dimension of power can be summarised as the ability to influence decision making in a situation of conflict, then the second dimension of power can be summarised as the ability to influence non-decision making in a situation of conflict (Lukes, 2005: 22-23). It is the ability to set the agenda so that contested or difficult issues can be suppressed or ignored completely. Thus Bachrach and Baratz redefine the scope and the arena of power, shifting analysis from overt forms of conflict to covert forms of conflict.

The third dimension of power is derived from Lukes' own analysis. He believes that Bachrach and Baratz' work still does not account for or acknowledge all forms of power. Lukes suggests that the first and second dimensions of power rest on a false proposition. They both assume that power can only be enacted in situations of actual, observable conflict (whether that conflict is overt or covert) (Lukes, 2005: 23). However, Lukes' analysis raises the question: can A be seen to have power over B on an issue even if A and B's interests

seem to be the same and there is no apparent conflict (overt or covert) over that issue? For instance, A can have power over B

in the absence of actual, observable conflict, which may have been successfully averted – though there remains here an implicit reference to potential conflict. This potential, however, may never in fact be actualised. What one may have here is a latent conflict, which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the *real interests* of those they exclude. These latter may not express or even be conscious of their interests. (Lukes, 2005: 28-29)

Thus Lukes raises the issue of potential conflict – the situation in which the interests of A and the interests of B over an issue are conflictual, yet B (and even A) may be unaware of the fact that this conflict of interest exists. In this instance, the notion of power exists when B conforms to A's interests, because A's interests are perceived by B to be the only or most appropriate course of action to take. There exists an elementary exercise of power, whereby A imposes its interests upon B and B adopts these interests as its own. Such an analysis of power is interesting as it moves away from analysing power at an individualistic level. Foucault draws attention to this aspect of power when he highlights that

power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it [...]; it becomes a machinery that no one owns. [...]It's a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised (Foucault, 1980a: 156).

Thus, power also needs to be analysed at this elementary level – how are A's interests served even when A and B have no or little knowledge of these interests?

It is this third dimension of power that is perhaps the most interesting for studying the realities of a policy impasse highlighted in the previous section. In getting Indigenous Knowledge recognised in Development as a serious issue and thus an accepted policy in development organisations, the interests of B seem to have been met – A has failed to exert its power over B through either direct or indirect forms of conflict. A radical development policy seems to have challenged mainstream development and made it conform to its interests. However, as discussed, changes to development practice (to any significant degree) have failed to be brought in line with the goals of that policy. It is within this context that the third dimension of power becomes most poignant. In realising the limitations of analyses that examine direct and indirect sites of conflict in organisational policy-practice relationships, there is a need to

move beyond them and examine sites of latent conflict or, what I will term 'non-conflict'. The issue then becomes: How can these sites of 'non-conflict' in policy-practice relationships be made visible and better understood?

Ferguson's classic analysis of Lesotho's state development programme is a serious attempt to grapple with the relationship between power and policy-practice relationships in development institutions (Ferguson, 1994). He argues that despite the promotion of explicit development policies by development institutions, these policies are often unrecognisably transformed in practice as a result of multiple interests involved in these institutions. In his example of Lesotho state development, he shows how development practice is high jacked for the purpose of state expansion at the expense of poverty reduction. He claims this by stating that if the actual consequences of development projects are analysed rather than the success or failure of intended impacts, the real intentions can be found (Ferguson, 1994: 20). His analysis is both comprehensive and compelling. He recognises the struggle for power by differing interests in state development and, as a result, comes to a powerful and thought provoking, if somewhat depressing, conclusion. However, Ferguson really only tackles half of the question that must be answered with respect to policy impasses. He asks: why do certain policies consistently fail to achieve corresponding practice? His answer points towards conflicts of interest within state development institutions, the struggle for power and the domination of established interests. Yet he does not take this further and ask: how are these policies consistently subverted? Through what avenues do staff and organisations act in ways contrary to their own stated ambitions? Despite recognising the operation of power in state development institutions, he neglects to fully examine exactly how such power operates in development institutions.

This said, Ferguson does not completely ignore this issue. In his own words, he notes that

[w]hatever interests may be at work, and whatever they may think they are doing, they can only operate through a complex set of social and cultural structures so deeply embedded and so ill-perceived that the outcome may be only a baroque and unrecognizable transformation of the original intention. The approach adopted here treats such a outcome as neither an inexplicable mistake, nor the trace of a yet-undiscovered intention, but as a riddle, a problem to be solved, an anthropological problem. (Ferguson, 1994: 17)

Dominant interests do not necessarily conflict with radical agendas in institutions at an observable level. The struggle for power can be negotiated at a much more fundamental level. For instance, in the previous quote he highlights that power 'operate[s] through a complex set of social and cultural structures' that are deeply embedded in institutions and society at large. Later he goes on to suggest, in a similar vein as Foucault (Foucault, 1980b: 147), that 'one must entertain the possibility that the 'development' apparatus in Lesotho may do what it does, not at the bidding of some knowing and powerful subject who is making it all happen, but behind the backs of or against the wills of even the most powerful actors' (Ferguson, 1994: 18). Thus it is possible to see Ferguson as suggesting that any investigation of how power operates within development institutions cannot be achieved through a simple analysis of overt and covert conflict within these institutions alone. Accounts of policy impasses can only be understood if the ever present background noise within institutions is brought to the fore and thoroughly examined. To understand it will be to understand not only 'why' radical agendas are subverted, but to see exactly 'how' the often unexplainable occurrence of a policy impasse occurs.

The Lens of Organisational Culture

To locate sites of 'non-conflict' and to truly grasp 'how' a policy impasse occurs, it is important to move away from analysing the direct relationship between policy and practice – stated aims and actual consequences are only the beginning of an understanding. Focus must shift toward understanding the medium in which policy is defined, interpreted, negotiated and acted on - the organisation. Only by understanding the socio-political reality in organisations can it be possible to begin to understand the relationship between policy and practice. With such a focus of analysis, there needs to be an accordingly appropriate approach to researching it. Multidisciplinary avenues will not only be necessary but essential for locating and understanding sites of 'non-conflict' in development institutions. As a result, a number of issues become evident: What approach will be best for this type of analysis? What concepts or types of thinking will it involve? What terms must be adopted? To answer these

questions, attention must shift to the object of my research, namely the latent operation of power in organisations.

How is it possible to make the latent operation of power in organisations visible and coherent? Hassard draws attention to the role of ethnography for such a situation (Hassard, 1990). He highlights that life and power relations within organisations are much like those of society in general. Individuals take 'recourse to a range of assumptions, practices and conventions in order to define, sustain and reproduce everyday situations', and they do this in order to make sense of the social world (Hassard, 1990: 98). Following this logic, examining people's everyday situations and how they negotiate them is key to unlocking the assumptions and relations of power by and within which people operate. However, in talking about ethnography as a research method, the concept of culture is undoubtedly key. Consequently, in order to begin to appreciate instances of 'non-conflict' in a serious manner, accepting, understanding and accessing culture within organisations is an important step towards that goal. Such an approach is well founded – anthropology, organisational studies and feminist studies have all seen the concept of 'culture' as a useful way of understanding organisations (Alvesson, 2002); (Cullen, 1994); (Lewis, Bebbington *et al.*, 2002);(Mills, 2002). In fact, these disciplines have historically intersected via their use of the culture concept, albeit for different purposes. However, it is first imperative to clarify what it is to talk about culture in organisations.

Like the concept of culture in society more generally, the concept of culture in organisations is illusive (Smircich, 1983: 339). As highlighted above, the concept and its use in research has been adopted by a range of disciplines. Each discipline, and often each researcher, have interpreted the idea of organisational culture differently. However, disciplines and ideas have united and overlapped on research into organisations since the early 1900s. The first conceptualisation of culture in organisations was the result of such a collusion. It is from this point that the concept of culture in organisations must be examined. If a suitable understanding of organisational culture is to be agreed upon for the purpose of this research it is important to recognise the evolution of its use from its first conceptualisation to its

multiple forms and meanings it takes today. Examining this development is a crucial process for identifying core aspects of the concept as well as for uncovering the advantages and dangers of its use in research. Accordingly, I will briefly examine the historical development and application of the idea of culture in studies of organisations.¹⁰ With this in mind, I shall attempt to draw these ideas together to create a coherent, structured and useful (given the purposes of this research) definition of culture in the context of organisations.

The History and Evolution of 'Culture' in Studies of Organisations

Weber conceptualised bureaucracies as having certain characteristics: Impersonality, functional specialisation, a hierarchy of authority and the impartial application of the rules (Gerth and Wright, 2001: 196). Leading on from this, the idea of bureaucratic authority was based on 'formally established rules which were exercised in an objective manner, without emotion and 'without regard to persons"' (Roper, 1994: 88). Such a model has proved popular, particularly among scientific approaches to analysing organisations. Taylor's 1911 paper (Taylor, 1947) formalised the study of organisations with Weber's theory in mind and created the scientific management approach or, as later referred to, 'Taylorism'. Such an approach took

a manager-centred or top-down view of how to get right the production system within an organisation. Production processes were divided into strictly demarcated tasks. The details of each task were investigated, and if physical conditions for the work were correct, the appropriate human behaviour and performance were meant to follow automatically. (Wright, 1994: 5)

Organisations were perceived as rationally organised, efficient and in some ways completely indifferent to their human element. These assumptions were popular and remain popular. However they were sharply brought into question after the 1927-1932 Hawthorne experiment (ironically, designed to demonstrate the principles of Taylorism).

¹⁰ It is perhaps critical to note that research into the culture of organisations has occurred in disciplines and activities external to that of Development Studies. In the main, Development Studies and international development as an arena of practice has shown little interest in the internal functioning and realities of the organisations involved in development (however, notable exceptions, such as Hilhorst (2003), do exist). As a consequence, though much of the material and literature discussed is applicable to development organisations little of it is drawn from any direct experience of organisations which work in the development industry, and therefore a degree of latitude is sometimes needed to see how such ideas fit in the context international organisations.

The Hawthorne plant was based in Chicago and was a major supplier of parts for the Western Electric Company. The experiments were designed to test the importance of light intensity on worker productivity. However, the results of the experiments caused great confusion. Productivity did increase as expected. However, when light intensity was reduced productivity remained high and in some instances increased further (Wright, 1994: 6-7). Such results did not conform to the scientific principles of Taylorism. At this point, research shifted direction and incorporated ideas and techniques from anthropology. Roethlisberger and Dickenson, the organisers of the research, were heavily influenced by the anthropologist Warner and decided to apply anthropological knowledge to the industrial context (Wright, 1994: 9). Observation along anthropological lines was carried out at Hawthorne, chiefly during the Bank Wiring Observation Room experiments. These experiments for the first time demonstrated the inadequacy of the scientific approach. Human interaction and the informal organisation of individuals at work were shown to be a deciding factor in productivity, not physical/material variables (Wright, 1994: 11). As a consequence of these conclusions at Hawthorne and other experiments, a Human Relations school of management developed stressing the importance of the human aspect of organisations.

Anthropology, at this point, had little interest in social systems outside of 'primitive' societies and it was the Human Relations school (with its own terminology and proclivities) which first introduced the idea of 'culture' into organisational studies 'emphasis[ing] the value of studying interactional patterns and routines in the work context' (Wright, 1994: 26). A case in point would be the Strauss *et al* study of the hospital in modern society (Strauss, Schatzman *et al.*, 1963). *The Hospital and its Negotiated Order* clearly highlights the importance of what it terms 'informal systems' – institutional objectives of the hospital are only achieved through unwritten and often unspoken agreements and compromises between staff rather than from adherence to formal institutional rules and structure. In fact, it implied that the hospital would fail to function if strict adherence to formal rules were adopted. Thus the 'culture' of the hospital was seen as not only important, but crucial for achieving the institution's goals.

By the 1960s, anthropologists started to direct their attention to the Western world. Wright suggests that the Manchester shop floor studies are a defining point in the turning of the anthropological gaze away from 'primitive' or 'traditional' social organisation towards industrial social organisation (Wright, 1994: 10). However, it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that anthropology really started to take an interest in formal organisations in the West and the workplace as a site of social organisation (Schwartzman, 1993: 27). Indeed, Nader's 1969 article, *Up the Anthropologist*, brought heavy criticism upon anthropology for having neglected social organisation in the developed world.

How has it come to be...that anthropologists are more interested in why peasants don't change than why the auto industry doesn't innovate, or why the Pentagon or universities cannot be more organisationally creative? The conservatism of such major institutions and bureaucratic organisation probably has wider implications for the species and for theories of change than does the conservatism of peasantry. (Østergaard, 1992b)

Anthropological research and literature increasingly began to focus on institutions, how they operate, how staff organise (formally and informally), and the structure and impact of hierarchy. In essence, anthropologists began to ask the same questions about social organisation in business/government institutions as they did about social organisation in peasant or indigenous societies – in as much as anthropologists create a picture of culture in indigenous groups they also began to create a picture of culture in modern forms of social organisation. Yet despite this focus on organisations, anthropology remained separate from management and organisational studies literature. Furthermore, the concept of culture was rarely explicitly used by anthropologists studying organisations.

It was perhaps feminist research into the workplace that brought anthropological and organisational research closer together. By the end of the 1960s, liberal feminist visions of integrating women into the workplace and its associated Women in Management (WIM) perspective was increasingly being called into question. Over the following decades, feminists started questioning the level at which discrimination operated within organisations and institutions, and drew on post-structuralist analyses of organisations from anthropology and applied it to organisational studies (Calas and Smircich, 1992: 224). These studies point to the idea that discrimination against women continues to operate at a subconscious level in organisations, even if surface displays of discrimination have disappeared (Cockburn, 1994;

Cullen, 1994; Grant and Tancred, 1992; Mills, 1988; Pringle, 1994). For instance, Mills highlights that women may not be directly discriminated against but the social construction of 'women' in organisations continues to be disadvantageous, and this has significant implications for female employees (Mills, 2002: 291-299). This feminist research into organisational discrimination against women is also, in part, responsible for integrating a more anthropological understanding of 'culture' into organisational studies research. For example, Cockburn's work demonstrates how the culture of an organisation, embodied in norms, ideas and beliefs of staff, maintains discrimination against women despite technical equality of institutional procedures (Cockburn, 1994: 99-101).

However, these conceptualisations of an organisational culture, introduced by feminists, run at odds with conservative conceptualisations developed more fully in the 1980s from a behavioural background in management literature. Despite the growing body of criticism against Taylorism as an approach to organisational research, the application of scientific methodology as a general approach remained strong. Given this approach to institutional analysis, one 'of the most important requirements was the departure from holism and the adoption of reductionism. [O]rganisational phenomena were to be explained by analysing their constituent parts' (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992: 77). Such approaches perceive organisational culture as a sort of Durkheimian fact that could be distilled out from the organisation as a whole and examined independently to explain certain phenomena. Many examples of this type of approach can be found in current management literature. They technicalise or sanitise the concept of culture to something simple and bounded. This often means that culture is constructed as formal ideology, such as mission statements, organisational 'stories', corporate myths or meeting styles (Deal and Kennedy, 2000); (Hofstede, 1994); (Morgan, 1997); (Schein, 1991). Constructing an idea of culture in this way adds a level of superficiality to the concept and suggests that culture within an organisation can be manipulated by and for the purposes of management – it is a variable that can be controlled.

Culture in studies of organisations can thus be seen as an umbrella concept spanning a variety of research approaches and disciplines involved in institutional analysis (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992: 160). It is possible, however, to separate research of culture in organisations into two 'ideal types': 'corporate culture' versus 'organisational culture'. On the one hand, 'corporate culture' research frequently adopts a positivist approach and aims to construct culture in organisations as a management tool. Culture becomes a variable that can be identified, isolated, manipulated and controlled, much the same as light, wages, or air-conditioning, in order to increase efficiency or productivity. It focuses on outward formal expressions, such as mission statements, 'coffee break myths' and formal rules and regulations (Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992: 333). Moreover, divergence between this formal vision – culture as defined by these researchers – and what people actually do is believed to represent a fragmentation of culture that needs to be attended to and 'fixed' (Morgan, 1997), not just something interesting that needs to be investigated. On the other hand, 'organisational culture' adopts a more anthropological approach. It aims to uncover 'culture' rather than represent a formal internal institutional vision. Differences between what people should do and what they actually do becomes a starting point for this type of research not a problem to be overcome. Organisational culture 'grows or emerges within the organisation and [...] emphasises the creativity of organisational members as culture makers' (Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992). This conceptualisation of culture cannot be separated out from the wider organisation and it cannot be readily manipulated or controlled by those in power. It expresses deeper subconscious shared values and beliefs.

Both formulations of culture within the context of organisations are useful. However, given the needs of my research into the gender mainstreaming policy impasse, it is the second conceptualisation of culture that encapsulates most appropriately what it is that needs to be investigated. Though 'corporate culture' research is useful for the purposes of management and control in organisations, it would produce little of interest in understanding how members of organisations create, adapt and conform to the environment in which they work. Given this choice of conceptualisation, defining 'organisational culture' more accurately becomes the

next step in clarifying this means of approaching research into policy-practice relationships in organisations.

Defining 'Organisational Culture'

A cultural analysis moves us in the direction of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions, raising issues of context and meaning, and bringing to the surface underlying values. [...]Although organisation scholars have already conducted much research on the values of individual managers, they have devoted much less energy to questioning the values embedded within modern corporate society and to examining the context in which corporate society is meaningful. (Smircich, 1983: 355)

How can such a conceptualisation of culture be defined within modern corporate society?

This is a significant question, if research of organisations is going to be directed towards the concept. Schein provides a six-point definition in his analysis of organisational culture and suggests that 'we cannot build a useful concept if we cannot agree how to define it, 'measure' it, study it and apply it in the real world of organisations' (Schein, 1991: 243-247). However, such an approach to defining organisational culture seems troublesome. Anthropology has been debating how best to conceptualise culture since the discipline first came into existence. Attempting to produce a specific, concise and unambiguous definition for culture in organisations may in fact be counterproductive. Keeping the definition broad and in some sense undefined, as anthropologists frequently do, may be the most useful approach as it is less likely to ignore important yet often overlooked aspects. Smircich highlights that in anthropology 'culture is the foundational term through which the orderliness and patterning of much of our life experience is explained', and in much the same way this applies to the study of organisations – culture is a form of inquiry into and explanation for social order (Smircich, 1983: 341). The question thus becomes, 'how can the process by which social order is created (culture) best be located and analysed?', rather than, 'how do we define culture?' From here it is possible to begin to understand how social order is produced and reproduced when analysing organisations.

When examining social order, organisations have frequently been divided into two separate entities for the sake of analysis. Some refer to this division in organisations as structure and agency (Lewis, Bebbington *et al.*, 2002: 18), while others refer to it as formal and informal systems (Wright, 1994: 17). Whatever terms may be used the intention drawn is the same –

there exists parallel systems within an organisation. For example, the '[f]ormal system is a map of the organisational structure, job descriptions, the hierarchy of decision making, the goals, rules and policies. The informal system is the way individuals and groups in the organisation relate to each other' (Wright, 1994: 17). If the idea of 'corporate culture' is reflected upon, it is possible to see that such research focuses solely upon either the formal or the informal systems as a mechanism of understanding social order. Some studies focus on the formal system, examining how organisational policies and goals define employee attitudes and behaviours. Other studies focus on the informal system, suggesting that culture is purely symbolic, contained within 'organisational myths, stories and legends; jokes, rituals and ceremonies; and symbols and specialised language' (Schwartzman, 1993: 34-35). As a consequence, it is easy to understand how such approaches perceive 'culture' in organisations as a variable that can be isolated and manipulated. However, this division between formal and informal systems, though extremely useful, is an analytical division and not a real one – it is a conceptual tool used to better understand, not a reality being defined. This point needs to be remembered well when studying organisations, both 'systems' and the relationship between them needs to be considered. Lewis *et al* makes this point succinctly:

[D]o agents or structures produce meanings within and associated with organisations? Of course the answer must be that both do, particularly when we consider that contexts are created by actors at various 'moments' in time and space, the effects of which might continue as structure. (Lewis, Bebbington *et al.*, 2002: 18)

The formal and informal systems should not be examined in isolation from one another. There is a constant process of interaction between the two. They both produce and reproduce meaning in the other, and through this process social order is created. To investigate and understand this process is to come closer to an understanding of 'organisational culture', the construction of structures and discourse which an organisation's members rely on as fundamental 'facts' about the world.

Given the necessity of examining both the formal and informal systems within organisations as well as the relationship between them, where then should research into organisational culture be located? Young offers an insight into this question:

My point, however, is that it is precisely at the level of the everyday, at the level of the detailed social processes informing relationships between organisational interests, that the content of organisational culture is continuously formed and reaffirmed. What appears as prosaic detail is actually the development of norms and values whereby events and relationships in the organisation are given meaning. The mundanity of the everyday is an illusion, for it is within these details that the dynamics of organisational culture come into being and use. (Young, 1989: 201)

Young's answer is an interesting one, as it focuses attention away from examining 'instances' and 'events', and redirects attention toward examining the everyday construction and reconstruction of social order, the continual process of negotiation between the formal and informal systems within organisations by their members. Sites of analysis must therefore become the daily routines and activities of employees within an organisation and the resulting tension between the formal and informal systems in which they operate in. Schwartzman further stresses this point when she highlights Karl Weick's approach to organisational analysis, demonstrating a need for researchers to focus on 'the *organizing* processes out of which a sense of organisation unfolds and is enacted, instead of continuing to examine organisations as objective, concrete, material, and unproblematic entities' (Schwartzman, 1993: 36).

However, focusing on the concept of organisational culture does not come without its problems or limitations. Perhaps the most significant criticism levelled at such a concept of organisational analysis is that it constructs a monolithic image of the organisation (Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992: 336); (Young, 1989: 202). This criticism is most applicable to research on 'corporate culture' yet it is not completely misplaced in analyses of 'organisational culture'. Organisations are composed of staff from often a great variety of backgrounds: academic, professional, cultural (domestic and international), sexual, religious, ethnic and class. Pictures of homogenous staff with the same beliefs, desires, ideas and practices can be found in studies of 'organisational culture', and the validity of such analyses must be brought into question. With this in mind some researchers have brought to light the existence of multiple cultures or subcultures in organisations. These studies raise a number of important questions for the study of organisational culture.

The identification of subcultures has proved problematic for organisational culture theorists and practitioners alike. At a theoretical level, this is one consequence of the analytic practices of modernism – where wholes can be analysed into parts and parts

combined into wholes. [...]At the pragmatic level, this gives rise to strategic questions: does the existence of subcultures or subcultural forms destroy the value of an overall culture? (Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992: 336)

Is it therefore at all possible to identify an organisational culture? Can any attempt to create a picture of such a culture be justified? I believe it is possible. To study organisational culture, like studying culture more generally, is not to deny the existence of subcultures, multiple interests, diversity or any other way in which difference may be expressed, but to identify fundamental common elements between or within groups. Plurality is something to be acknowledged and appreciated in organisations, but it is not an impediment to defining and analysing organisational culture. It is something that adds to our understanding of culture, rather than detracts from it. Though difference is a vital axis of understanding in studies of organisations and should always be appreciated, it is important to move beyond difference and look toward basic similarities. Studying organisational culture is an attempt to bring to the fore these fundamental similarities, not an attempt to create an image of a monolithic, unchanging institution.

Moving Beyond the Theory

To understand the occurrence of a policy impasse (as highlighted at the beginning of the chapter with the example of Indigenous Knowledge policy and practice) in development organisations it is important to move away from directly analysing policy and its implementation. Focus must shift towards understanding the medium in which policy and practice is interpreted and negotiated, the organisation. Only by understanding the socio-political reality in organisations will it be possible to begin to understand the relationship between policy and practice. Power operates to suppress radical ideas and maintain the status quo, and it does this most successfully when conflicts of interest are no longer visibly notable. This remains true for development organisations. Studying organisational culture (as discussed above) and its impact on staff thinking and actions is a way of bringing into resolution the frequently undetectable and latent operation of power within organisations – exposing sites of ‘non-conflict’. Developing an analysis of organisations that utilises an

approach that understands the importance of 'organisational culture' is key to solving the riddle behind the policy-practice impasse faced by progressive and radical ideas in development organisations.

Having therefore laid the groundwork necessary to more comprehensively understand policy evaporation in development organisations around radical and challenging development policies, the following chapter will turn its attention more directly to the subject matter of this thesis – gender mainstreaming in development. In doing this it will demonstrate the need to use an approach that utilises organisational culture as a lens for interpreting and analysing the impasse faced by those promoting GAD thinking and approaches in development organisations.

Chapter 2

Gender Mainstreaming in Development Organisations

The Death of Gender Mainstreaming

What are we mainstreaming when we mainstream gender?
(Eveline and Bacchi, 2005)

Has gender mainstreaming failed?
(Moser, 2005)

Mainstreaming gender or 'streaming' gender away: Feminists marooned in the development business
(Mukhopadhyay, 2004)

Beyond gender mainstreaming: Understanding mechanisms for improved impact on gender equality and women's empowerment
(Oxfam GB, 2005d)

Is there life after gender mainstreaming?
(Rao and Kelleher, 2005)

Gender, myth and fable: the perils of mainstreaming in sector bureaucracies
(Standing, 2004)

Gender mainstreaming: what is it (about) and should we continue doing it?
(Woodford-Berger, 2004)

If the titles of an increasing number of articles and reports in recent years is anything to go by, we are currently witnessing the death of gender mainstreaming in development. Little more than ten years after the crystallisation of gender mainstreaming at the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (PfA), it is being spurned not only by those it was supposed to change but by many who sweated and toiled to breathe life into the process. Like K. in the *Trial* who died 'like a dog' at the hands of the legal and justice system designed to protect him, has gender mainstreaming been consigned to a similar fate? Those implementing gender mainstreaming have met with an impasse: there has been a consistent inability of policy intentions to create corresponding and appropriate change at the level of development practice. Despite changing global development rhetoric on justice for women, in failing to create substantial change in the practice of organisations and institutions both locally and globally, gender mainstreaming has at best been labelled as ineffective and at worst as another barrier to achieving gender equality, the very antithesis of its original conception. There are many

questions that could be and are now being asked: Where did gender mainstreaming go wrong? Is this truly the end of an institutional process for delivering equality for women in development situations? Is gender mainstreaming an unfortunate blemish on the face of feminist political action in development? Where should feminists look now for creating development practice that transforms gender relations and promotes equality for women in development?

I believe, however, that these questions and doubts raised by an increasing number of academics and practitioners are too hasty. Perhaps the most interesting and important piece of information coming out of the vast number of stories and analyses concerning gender mainstreaming that are now surfacing from organisations and institutions, is the consistency with which they tell of policies failing to achieve change in actual development practice. These stories, analyses and dissections of projects and programmes may vary in their reasons as to why this occurs, but failure to create GAD appropriate practice is more often than not the conclusion they reach. This fact should raise more than just simple condemnation, and a desire to dump gender mainstreaming as a fruitless diversion (or as a damaging journey), it should raise suspicion. The question that becomes most pertinent to ask is not, 'is this the end of gender mainstreaming?' and 'where now?', but instead, 'how has the institutional strategy of gender mainstreaming been consistently silenced across the range of organisational contexts that exist in development?'

Through this chapter, I hope to develop the need to explore such a question as well as lay the groundwork for exploring it within Part II of the thesis. The following sections will explore a number of issues that are necessary to understand if gender mainstreaming is to be more constructively analysed – an analysis that does not just locate and point out the specific problems of gender mainstreaming but goes some way towards locating and analysing the roots of these problems. The first section will draw the connections between feminism, equality, development and gender mainstreaming. It will highlight that mainstreaming is a particular strategy of feminism's equality project in society as well as within development more specifically. The focus of this particular strategy for equality is noted as 'institutional'.

The second section will pick up on these ideas and explore them in more detail in the development context. The section will initially examine exactly how gender mainstreaming has been defined within international development as well as the explicit and implicit meaning that such a definition has for those adopting and/or studying the strategy. The section will then go on to highlight how the current development literature on gender mainstreaming assesses the strategy's capability of achieving equitable social transformation in development interventions. It further highlights how the literature notes an insurmountable policy impasse with gender mainstreaming and in doing so points to new alternatives that attempt to go beyond a mainstreaming approach. However, this section will call into question these alternatives and raise the need for the gender mainstreaming impasse to be better understood – not just why it exists but how it is maintained.

The third and final section will develop a suitable approach for examining how the policy-practice impasse in gender mainstreaming is so consistently a problem across the range of institutional contexts that exist in development. It will suggest that any analysis that attempts to understand this should be located within the 'process' aspect of the gender mainstreaming concept as well as understand the political, and not just technical, nature of the aforementioned institutional change 'process'. The section will then explore how the approach to understanding power in organisations developed in Chapter 1 is crucial for developing a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the gender mainstreaming impasse from a process perspective. Throughout these sections I hope to make explicit the intentions of my research and this thesis. Though gender equality theory is an important starting point for understanding the strategy of gender mainstreaming in development organisations it is not the focus of this thesis. This chapter will lay the groundwork for understanding how gender mainstreaming, as a political process of institutional change, within the context of international development has played out within the bounds of development organisations and the work lives of their staff, as well as how this relates to the consistent inability of organisations to achieve GAD appropriate practice in their projects and programmes.

Feminism, Equality, Development and Mainstreaming: Some Connections

Defining gender mainstreaming is not an easy task. It may not even be entirely possible. Prugl and Lustgarten have highlighted that 'despite the widespread acceptance of the strategy, there is considerable debate about what exactly gender mainstreaming means and how it should be implemented' (Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006: 53). However, for a critical discussion of gender mainstreaming in development organisations to take place it will be necessary to, at the very minimum, put forward some kind of shared understanding or common interpretation specific to Development Studies, if not a universal definition. In section two of this chapter I will put forward a definition of gender mainstreaming as follows: in a development context, gender mainstreaming at its most basic could be summarised as a process of organisational change in development institutions that aims to develop the use of GAD approaches in the projects and programmes of those institutions in order to achieve a vision of 'development' that creates gender equitable social change. However, to put forward such a definition, it will be important to understand a number of feminist debates and experiences concerning change in society at large. The evolution of feminist thinking and influence in development has not occurred in an academic or policy vacuum and so understanding the debates and discussions around 'what is feminist social change and how can it be achieved?' will be a key step to informing 'what is feminist social change in development and how can it be achieved?'. From these discussions, it will become clearer where gender mainstreaming fits into these debates and what a common or agreed interpretation of it might look like.

Feminism and Equality

'Equality' is often perceived as the unitary and unifying rallying cry of feminist academics and activists. However, despite this, 'equality' is a highly contested and debated concept within feminism. This is not to say that feminists do not all strive for social change in accordance with principles of equality (particularly among men and women but also among other categories of social distinction such as, age, class, sexuality, race, disability and ethnicity), rather, it is to say that agreement about what those principles of equality are have been

debated endlessly and, to some extent, remain a divisive issue. For instance, most fundamentally, the debate around equality has centred on what is frequently referred to as 'Wollstonecraft's dilemma' (Pateman, 1989: 196-197). This dilemma asks to what extent should equality be defined in terms of parity or difference – should equality be achieved through the de-gendering of contributions by men and women or the re-valuation of contributions of men and women. This debate among feminists 'has consumed a great deal of energy without a satisfactory outcome being reached' (Beveridge and Shaw, 2002: 288).

However, in recent years the debate about conceptualising equality, though not fully resolved, has moved on. Some feminists now argue that the parity-difference debate is not necessarily a helpful one as neither conceptualisation 'entail[s] a transformation of the norms of equivalence' (Squires, 2005). As a consequence, what has become recognised as important is not the privileging of a particular vision of equality but instead the understanding and tackling of structures and discourses that perpetuate inequality. In a similar vein, others have argued that whatever form equality takes it is, to some extent, arbitrary to the achievement of a feminist goal. Both parity and difference render gender irrelevant, 'strict parity by the interchangeability of women and men, and strict [difference] by making no category of people more valuable than any other' (Lorber, 2000: 81). What therefore becomes critical is the taking of approaches and actions that consistently attempt to 'degender' society (read: tackle norms that entrench gender inequality), not what form those approaches take. To sum up, the debates in feminism around social change have shifted significantly from an initial 'what is equality and how do we achieve it?' to a more specific 'what/where are sites of relational inequality and how can they best be removed?'

This evolving theoretical debate on equality and feminist visions of societal change has informed, but has also been informed by the range of feminist experience of and action for societal change. For instance, the historical development of feminism (in Northern Europe) is frequently divided into three waves (Booth and Bennett, 2002: 434; Rees, 1998). First Wave Feminism emerged in the early 1900s and demanded the equal treatment of women. It mainly focused upon securing equal rights and opportunities in law and as such can be

clearly associated with 'parity' interpretations of equality. By the 1960s Second Wave Feminism emerged and focused attention upon the limits of an 'equal rights and opportunities' approach. This wave highlighted the need to recognise the 'women's perspective' in society and demanded not just equality of opportunity but equality of outcome and as such required special provision and treatment for women to reduce their group disadvantage at attaining the (masculine) 'norm'. Such a perspective can be clearly associated with 'difference' interpretations of equality. And finally, Third Wave Feminism emerged in the 1990s and shifted attention away from 'equal treatment' and the 'women's perspective' models for achieving feminist social change and instead focused upon promoting a gender perspective that encouraged a recognition of the social construction of identities and roles, and the equal valuation and/or deconstruction of those identities and roles. This wave can be clearly associated with the debates in feminist theory that have attempted to move beyond 'Wollstonecraft's dilemma' and instead focus attention upon tackling sites that perpetuate inequality over and above striving for particular paths of equality.¹¹

Given this brief overview of the debates around feminism and social change, how is gender mainstreaming associated with such visions of equality? Rees has perhaps most clearly drawn the link as one of mainstreaming with Third Wave Feminism visions of equality. In her analysis of Equal Opportunities (EO) in the European Union Rees describes three distinct phases to tackling equality in the organisations: 'tinkering', 'tailoring', and 'transforming' (Rees, 1998; Rees, 2005). These three phases to EO approaches in organisations are clearly associated by Rees to the three differing waves of feminism. For instance,

'[t]inkering can be roughly equated to liberal approaches to equal treatment (resting on the notion of 'sameness'), while tailoring seeks to integrate women into organisations and cultures structured around the needs of men, by making special provision for the ways in which they are 'different' from men. However, transforming acknowledges the differences among men as well as those of women, and, by recasting mainstream provision, seeks to accommodate both gender and other dimensions of discriminations' (Rees, 1998: 28)

With each phase (or conceptualisation of 'equality' work) Rees identifies an approach that is most commonly associated with it. For example, 'tinkering' is associated with an 'equal

¹¹ This brief sketch of feminist debates on equality and social change has been highly condensed with many of the important nuances within the debates skirted over. However, for the purposes of this discussion the main points have highlighted the key aspects of the debate and will provide the necessary basis for understanding where gender mainstreaming fits into the thinking and practice of equality work.

treatment' approach that focuses on individuals' rights and the legal protection of those rights; 'tailoring' is associated with a 'positive action' (or 'positive discrimination') approach that focuses upon group disadvantage (i.e. their difference) and special measures to reduce that disadvantage; and finally, transforming is associated with a 'mainstreaming' approach that focuses on changing systems and structures that give rise to disadvantage.

However, Booth and Bennett have challenged this singular association of mainstreaming with Third Wave Feminism. They suggest that the three waves of feminism are not independent but, rather, interdependent – each approach builds and adds to the other. Such a holistic understanding allows 'us to move away from a simplistic association of a mainstreaming strategy with the newest perspective, the gender perspective' (Booth and Bennett, 2002: 433). For them, mainstreaming is a strategy that develops all three approaches to equality in an attempt to achieve a feminist vision of social change. In the literature more generally, associations of mainstreaming with the different interpretations of equality can be seen to range between these two clear points of view (Behning and Serrano Pascual, 2001; Beveridge, Nott *et al.*, 2000; Beveridge and Shaw, 2002; Booth and Bennett, 2002; Daly, 2005; Jahan, 1995; Mazey, 2000; Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir, 2005; Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000; Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006; Shaw, 2002; Squires, 2005; True, 2003).

Nevertheless, despite a lack of clarity over what interpretation of equality mainstreaming is promoting, what is clear from this literature is two ideas about the relationship between mainstreaming and equality. Firstly, gender mainstreaming is not generally seen as a new conceptual development in feminist thinking on equality theory and social change in itself, though it is often closely associated with Third Wave Feminist conceptualisations, but rather as a particular strategy or approach associated with a particular (or multiple) vision(s) of feminist equality. And secondly, it is the very approach of *institutionalising equality in policy processes* that is distinctive to 'mainstreaming' not the exact formulation of equality *per se* it purports to institutionalise. As Daly has pointed out, the 'distinctiveness of the gender mainstreaming approach is that it seeks to institutionalise equality by embedding gender-

sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes, and environment of public policy' (Daly, 2005: 4355).

These two points as well as the debates about particular visions of equality and feminist social change will be important to keep in mind in the following discussion of how feminist visions of equality and social change have played out in an international development context.

Feminisms and Development

Dialogue between feminist movements and development is as complex and diverse as the evolution of the two main bodies of literature that have informed their debates: Feminism and Development Studies. Theory and practice in both have developed dramatically over the past 60 years, evolving and branching out in many directions. For instance, as highlighted above in the brief discussion of 'equality', not all feminists interpret female emancipation in the same way – Liberal feminists argue and side with Marxist or Radical feminists on different occasions and in different contexts – however, debate among these different strands of feminist thought, though divisive at some levels, has created significant areas of common ground and agreement about the nature of female (and male) oppression. Development Studies has also had its share of debates between conflicting standpoints in the discipline. The conflict between modernisation theorists and dependency theorists has created many areas of agreement about the nature of development in the developing (and developed) world. As a consequence, as these two disciplines have expanded and matured, the relationship between them has also changed to reflect this fact. Understanding how feminist thinking around social change in development has evolved within Feminist Development Studies literature will more specifically illuminate, within a development context, the contemporary process of gender mainstreaming in development organisations.

Despite First Wave Feminism emerging in the early 1990s, effective feminist engagement with development theory and practice did not occur until the 1970s. For example, if we assume that the importance of women's rights in development is reflected by the frequency of

gender, women and women's issues mentioned within the discourse produced by development institutions, we can state that prior to 1970 women were effectively disregarded as an aspect of development despite the fact that 'international development' (as a conceptual framework or goal) emerged as early as the late 1940s and that half of the world's population were, and still are, women. For instance,

since the start of the sixties, the UN has marked each official 'decade of development' with a declaration summarizing the lessons learnt from past experience and its priorities for the coming ten years. The declaration that announced the First Development Decade (1959-1970) was devoid of any specific reference to women. [Only a] brief reference in the International Development Strategy for the Second Decade to the importance of encouraging 'the full integration of women in the total development effort' hinted at the glimmerings of a new consciousness. (Kabeer, 1994b: 1)

Perhaps the turning point for the rise of women in development discourse was the publication of Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development* in 1970 (Boserup, 1970). The book highlighted what a growing body of empirical evidence was pointing at – women not only fulfil reproductive roles but also perform productive ones. Boserup for the first time in development research took economic data – in this case it was data on agricultural productivity – and disaggregated it along gender lines. She concluded that women can and often do work longer hours than men in producing both domestic and cash crops in addition to fulfilling their reproductive roles (Boserup, 1970: 22-35). She showed that women are an essential element of the agrarian economy and have long been ignored in the design of development interventions. As a result of this and other work, it was slowly acknowledged by development institutions (through the persistence of liberal feminists throughout the 1970s, such as Boserup) that women form an important aspect of international development and need to be included in the design of projects and programmes concerned with economic growth.

In order to promote the ideas extending from feminist research in development, American liberal feminists began articulating their concerns through the concept of 'Women in Development' (WID). This approach focused on ensuring legal and administrative changes that would better integrate women into economic systems and therefore encourage development projects and programmes to minimise the disadvantages faced by women in the productive sector (Rathgeber, 1990: 490). WID was very much situated between both liberal

feminist discourses that promoted equal rights for women vis-à-vis men and modernisation theory in Development Studies that strived for 'progress' in terms of industrial expansion along capitalist lines. Under WID, women were perceived as neglected economic resources that if incorporated into development would not only improve the ability of countries to achieve economic modernisation but would also lead to the empowerment of women. For instance, 'new development inputs such as credit or technology were made available to women for the purpose of improving their traditional roles', such as textile production or vending of consumables (Goetz, 1998: 19). Many micro-credit projects were conceived and implemented under a WID agenda by development institutions, such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (see Rahman (1999) for a brief overview of the organisation), as they were credited with increasing the productive roles of women.

As a feminist movement within development, WID was influenced by both theory and practice from First Wave Feminism but perhaps more influential was the emerging thinking on women, social change and equality developed by Second Wave Feminism that was gaining prominence in the 1960s and 1970s (Jaquette and Staudt, 2006: 18). WID succeeded in focusing 'the world's attention to the fact that women represent powerful human resources in development, that unnoticed they perform the major part of the world's labour and that they do so under very underprivileged conditions' (Østergaard, 1992b: 5). For this reason, the WID movement was seminal in bringing to light the relationship between women's rights, equality and development that would be debated in the subsequent 40 years. WID served as an important turning point and remains a dominant idea among many development institutions and within many academic debates. WID has been reincarnated under many forms since the 1970s, shifting from the welfare approach to the equity approach, to the anti-poverty approach, to the efficiency approach and finally (by the early 1990s) to the empowerment approach (Andersen, 1992: 173-174). However, WID style approaches to development, no matter what discourse or perspective they may take, have increasingly come under criticism from other feminists and development theorists.

As the 1970s progressed and the 1980s heralded the beginnings of the debt crisis, the dominant development model, modernisation theory, came under heavy criticism. Researchers and policy makers alike, influenced to different degrees by Marx's critique of capitalism, began to question the assumptions of modernisation and its conceptual basis in theories of linear growth¹². Frank's *The Underdevelopment of Development* (Frank, 1991) embodied and symbolised many of the criticisms of modernisation and led many institutions to rethink, or perhaps reinterpret, the way they conceptualised and practiced development. While these debates were occurring in Development Studies and the nature of development was being fundamentally challenged, Liberal feminist concepts of female empowerment and development were also increasingly coming under criticism by Marxist, Neo-Marxist, Socialist and Radical feminists alike. Researchers throughout the 1970s began to reveal that women's relative position had in fact improved very little despite attempts to integrate women into development (Rathgeber, 1990: 491). WID was firmly grounded in the tenets of modernisation theory and as a result accepted the existing unequal structures of the capitalist system. Rather 'than examine why women had fared less well from development strategies during the past decade, the WID approach focused only on how women could be better integrated into ongoing development initiatives' (Rathgeber, 1990: 491). WID failed to question the nature of the system in which development operated and in which women were also often the most exploited.

'Women and Development' (WAD) stemmed out of the specific criticisms of WID made by the Neo-Marxist feminists. WAD focused

on the relationship between women and development processes rather than purely on the strategies for the integration of women into development. Its point of departure is that women always have been important economic actors in their societies and that the work they do both inside and outside the household is central to the maintenance of those societies, but that this integration serves primarily to sustain existing international structures of inequality. (Rathgeber, 1990: 492-3)

Within the WAD perspective, women are seen as disadvantaged by oppressive global structures based primarily on class and capital. Following this line of argument, WAD assumes that if international economic structures become more equitable the position of

¹² *The Stages of Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* by Rostow (1960) is a good example of dominant thinking in the early years of development

women will, in turn, improve. Yet, until this reorientation of the international economy occurs, development programmes must tackle the under-representation of women in the economy and in politics through carefully designed interventions. Despite this macro-analysis of why women are disadvantaged, WAD lacks a more micro-level, and perhaps fundamental, understanding of why women are consistently more prone to poverty and why they are more often exposed to situations of exploitation. According to WAD, the situation of women is primarily a condition of international and class inequalities. From this perspective the ideology of patriarchy is given scant attention. As a consequence, the need for changing the power dynamics within gender relations is not considered as important as challenging the economic system.¹³

As a consequence, with the conceptual and theoretical change of direction in feminist thinking borne by Third Wave Feminism, WID and WAD style approaches both came under heavy criticism from post-structuralist arguments in recent feminist literature (Andersen, 1992; Chant, 2000; Cornwall, 2007; Eschle and Manguasha, 2007; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Kabeer, 1994b; Miller and Razavi, 1998; Østergaard, 1992a; Rathgeber, 1990; Razavi and Miller, 1995a; Young, 1993). It has been highlighted that WID/WAD interventions over-focused on the productive role of women and paid little attention to women's reproductive roles and their position in the household. The work of women in the home – the labour invested in family maintenance, including childbearing and rearing, housework, care of the ill and elderly – were considered to have no productive value and therefore outside of the scope of development interventions aimed at increasing the income generating potential of women in more formal 'productive' sectors (Rathgeber, 1990: 493). Furthermore, by ignoring the work women perform in the domestic sphere – as well as by labelling it as non-productive – WID and WAD ignored questioning the sexual division of labour. Understanding that 'the nature of traditional household relations might be a part of the problem of women's overwork and low social standing' fails to be recognised as a crucial issue by these approaches

¹³ WAD was an important conceptual development in the relationship between feminism and development. However, it is worth noting that despite WAD's conceptual importance for understanding the changing ideas and theories in the women and development debate, its direct impact upon actual development policy and practice was less marked. As a result, it is frequently subsumed within WID literature and discussions.

(Young, 1993: 21). Razavi and Miller express this concern directly when they suggest that 'although an analysis of women's subordination was at the heart of the WID/[WAD] approach, the essentially relational nature of their subordination had been left largely unexplored' (Razavi and Miller, 1995a: 13). As a result, development interventions often failed to make real differences to the lives of women. In many cases they only increased the burden of work and responsibility on women, as they failed to examine and challenge the root causes of the poor position of women in the household, the community and wider society.

Out of these criticisms of WID and WAD the concept of 'Gender and Development' (GAD) was assembled and offered up as an alternative approach for development practitioners to pursue. GAD, unlike WID and WAD, does not concentrate its analytical attention on women *per se*, but rather examines 'the social construction of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations to women and to men' (Rathgeber, 1990: 494). Such an approach aims to understand the power dynamics between men and women in different social contexts – only by understanding these different relationships of power can development both empower women and create more sustainable and just interventions. Like the changes in debate around 'equality' that shifted thinking away from the integration and promotion of women in a pre-existing 'masculine' model of society towards the actual redefinition of that model, GAD is less about the 'integration' of women into 'development' and more about the redefinition of development itself, both in terms of its aims and the methods it employs. It is about creating a development model (based on a Third Wave vision of equality) that attempts to recognise relational sites of inequality and transform them, recasting the value of masculine and feminine identities and roles in society. For instance, 'planning for change in women's lives clearly entails changes for men, with structural shifts in male-female power relations', and consequently, an 'undifferentiated and unilateral focus on women is not only conceptually inappropriate, but deprives gender interventions of their transformative potential' (Chant, 2000: 8).

WID and WAD were often accused of an 'add women and stir' mentality (Porter, 1999: 1), whereas a GAD approach to development requires a more in-depth understanding of social

relations between men and women as well as an appreciation of how these relations should shape any development intervention. Rathgeber suggests that GAD projects should

question traditional views of gender roles and responsibilities and point toward a more equitable definition of the very concept of 'development' and the contributions made by women and by men to the attainment of societal goals. [They should also]examine not only the sexual division of labour, but also the sexual division of responsibility, and recognise that the burden carried by many women is one not only of physical labour but of psychological stress. (Rathgeber, 1990: 499)

Each author, researcher or practitioner of GAD has variations on how it should occur, what it should focus on and how it should alter development interventions. However, fundamental to GAD thinking and approaches is that if development is to be sustainable within a whole community as well as empower the lives of women living in that community, then any intervention must analyse, understand and attempt to transform existing gender relations among men and women in social, economic and political arenas.¹⁴

The differences between WID/WAD and GAD can also be understood using Molyneux's 'interests model'. Molyneux distinguishes between two forms of gender interests: 'practical gender interests' and 'strategic gender interests' (Goetz, 1998: 16):

'practical' interests [are] those based on the satisfaction of needs arising from women's placement within the sexual division of labour; and 'strategic' interests [are] those involving claims to transform social relations in order to enhance women's position and to secure a more lasting repositioning of women within the gender order and within society at large. (Molyneux, 1998: 75)

This distinction provides a basis on which it is possible to see how feminist policy within development can be interpreted . On the one hand, practical gender interests refer to the day to day requirements of men and women given their specific gender roles. For instance, the responsibility of many women throughout the world is the provision of food for their family and

¹⁴ It is important to note that although this discussion has tried to show the evolution of thought in the relationship between feminism and development – how WAD developed out of the failures of WID, and GAD was a response to the limited scope of WID and WAD together – this is not to suggest that this process of theoretical development has been linear with each new concept making the previous redundant. Nor is it to suggest that WID, WAD or GAD are homogenous static models. All three theoretical approaches to understanding how development interventions should incorporate the needs of women into their projects and programmes are presently in use in both development institutions and academic debates, albeit in different forms. What is important to recognise is that there are significantly differing interpretations of how to 'empower' women and promote equality through development interventions both in contemporary academic debate and by default in development organisations and their policies. Adoption of the differing approaches by development organisations varies according to the organisation's commitment and determination to challenge the injustices women face.

the maintenance of the household. Therefore, any initiative that can aid women in providing food for their family and maintain the household serves their practical gender needs. These needs reflect the situation-specific demands of women (or men) given their position in society and the responsibilities that this position entails. They do not make reference to whether that position, its associated responsibilities and the value attached to that position and its responsibilities, are just or fair. On the other hand, strategic gender interests specifically examine the issue of justice in the context of male and female responsibilities and opportunities. These strategic interests refer to challenging prescribed gender roles (and/or the value attached to those roles) in order to pursue the goals of female emancipation, empowerment and equity.

Both practical and strategic interests are important for the lives of women and need to be addressed. Focusing on practical gender needs may create immediate improvement in the lives of women, but they will often not address underlying issues of female subordination. Without tackling these issues, much of the work directed at responding to women's practical needs can be in vain or may even make their situation worse. For instance, in a study carried out by Rahman on the micro-credit activities of the Grameen Bank in a rural Bangladeshi community he demonstrates that despite the theoretical benefits of directing credit at women, their general social status had not been changed by altering their economic circumstances (Rahman, 1999). On the contrary, economic empowerment may have actually led to greater social abuse of women. Women's economic enterprises and compulsory group meetings at the bank, which can often be delayed due to payment problems of a particular member, can produce disorder in the household and create tension as female chores are disrupted, 'such raising tension may turn to violence [both physical and verbal] in which women are victimised' (Rahman, 1999: 72).

However, at this point it is important to note that this analysis should not oversimplify the reality of women's empowerment and the complexity of development projects and programmes. Delineating the difference between practical and strategic interests was

designed by Molyneux as a heuristic device for revealing the complexity of reality, not for covering it up (Molyneux, 1998: 77). For instance, Wieringa:

opposes the distinction because it privileges one form of demand making over others as an appropriate basis for feminist strategy. She argues against distinctions of any kind as they contain 'hierarchical overtones', and she is against these in particular because she sees them as unhelpful 'binaries', which are an attempt to 'control and normalise reality'. (Molyneux, 1998: 77)

Standing has noted the problems Wieringa alludes to in her workshop on mainstreaming for health sector bureaucrats:

the sector programme clearly headlines the health of women and girls as a major strategic objective. But instead of being encouraged in this, they stood accused by donor representatives of what has become the cardinal sin in this version of mainstreaming – namely of 'only' meeting women's practical needs rather than their strategic interests. What began as a contextually grounded political analysis of different styles of advocacy and became an off-the-peg gender training tool, ended up as a stick to belabour the bureaucrats with. (Standing, 2004: 84)

These criticisms are important to acknowledge as they highlight the need to be careful when translating analytical devices into development policy and practice, but they should not negate the significance of the gender interests model. Molyneux's model provides development practitioners and academics alike with a way of assessing the existing and potential scope of projects' and programmes' abilities to achieve lasting equality. The model should not be mistaken as a yard stick, crudely measuring the quality of women's programmes with practical interests scoring less than strategic interests. The gender interests model should work to expose the complexity of achieving women's empowerment, not reduce that complexity. This said, the model does provide an interesting way of differentiating WID, WAD and GAD approaches to development.

WID and WAD projects and programmes are almost solely designed to address the practical gender interests of women. They often fail to recognise the importance of broaching the issue of strategic needs or believe that material gains among women will necessarily translate into socio-relational gains for women. Rathgeber has suggested that WID and WAD policies in development organisations were often as much to do with political expediency as they were to do with improving the status of women (Rathgeber, 1990: 495). GAD on the other hand attempts to resolve this problem. It does not discount the importance of practical

gender interests but it also acknowledges that more fundamental strategic gender needs must also be attended to if substantial gains for women (as well as men) in development are to be achieved. Much like the wider discussion occurring in Third Wave Feminism that challenged previous notions of equality as essentially gendered conceptualisations of equality, those who discussed and promoted ideas of feminist social change in development highlighted that GAD was important because it challenged the gendered nature of development which often served to reinforce women's subordination rather than dismantle it. Furthermore, focusing on gender as a relational site of inequality, and as such the more universal issue of female gender identity subordination and disadvantage, 'allow[ed] for the fact that differently positioned women will have different social, economic, and political interests' (Goetz, 1998: 16) – a concept which WID and WAD often struggled to cope with when blanketing these differences under the issue of 'women's interests'.

Development and Mainstreaming

Given this understanding of how feminist ideas of equality and social change have evolved within development, it is now possible to begin to understand how mainstreaming has commonly been understood within development literature and activity. In her discussion of WID policies (in 1970s and 1980s development institutions), Goetz highlights that by the 1990s many feminists had raised two critical issues with respect to the outcome of these policies (Goetz, 1997b: 2-3). The first issue brings to light that despite the success of WID/WAD policies in improving the material conditions of women, these policies have had very little success in improving women's social and economic power relative to men. The fundamental unequal power relations between men and women were left virtually unchanged. As a consequence of this criticism, GAD arose as a conceptual shift in feminist thought, promoting a reassessment in how equality in development, particularly for women, should be achieved. This conceptual shift moved research and practice away from focusing solely on women to a broader understanding of power dynamics between men and women – gender relations.¹⁵ GAD became a more accepted approach to take among development institutions

¹⁵ It is worth noting at this point that movement towards 'gender' and away from 'women' has not been unproblematic. Despite the gains 'gender' offers in the broadening and acceptance of feminist ideas and ambitions in mainstream development, it has been argued that 'women' as a category in

which have (or would like to be perceived as having) a serious commitment to improving the situation of women (and men) in society. The second issue raised by feminists is that there has been a consistent political marginalisation of women's views within the development process. This area of concern has shifted attention to the institutional politics of pursuing feminist policy ambitions.

It was with this growing interest in GAD, with its focus on tackling the more relational aspects of inequality in society over and above claims for particular versions of equality, as well as the focusing of attention on the institutional politics of pursuing feminist policy ambitions, that 'mainstreaming' took off within (feminist) development discourse and practice. It is now widely acknowledged throughout the literature on mainstreaming (including non-development specific literature) that gender mainstreaming as a concept has its origins closely bound up with the rise of GAD's critique of development (Beveridge, Nott *et al.*, 2000; Booth and Bennett, 2002; Jahan, 1995; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006; Rees, 2005; True, 2003). As a consequence, unlike the more general debates around mainstreaming and feminist social change, where the association of mainstreaming with a particular approach to equality is still debated (see Booth and Bennett (2002) and Rees (2005) for counter positions), gender mainstreaming in development has been clearly seen among development practitioners and academics alike as a strategy explicitly associated with the promotion of a GAD vision of equitable social change, rather than a WID/WAD vision, in development (Baden and Reeves, 2000; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Moser, 2005; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004).

However, as with the more general debates in feminism about equality and social change, what is also clear from development literature is two commonly held assumptions about the relationship between mainstreaming and GAD. Firstly, gender mainstreaming in development is not generally seen as a new conceptual understanding in feminist thinking around the issue of international development and equitable social change, though the terms 'gender mainstreaming' and 'GAD' are mistakenly used interchangeably at times. Rather

development has suffered. For instance, work with women's organisations is frequently no longer seen as a priority and often sidelined as the new focus should be on 'gender' and not 'women'.

gender mainstreaming in feminist development literature is seen as an explicit strategy for achieving a GAD vision of development. Secondly, as a strategy of GAD, gender mainstreaming is recognised as being concerned explicitly with the institutionalisation of a GAD vision of equitable social change within policy processes of development organisations (Baden and Reeves, 2000; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Goetz, 1997a; Goetz, 1998; Goetz, 2004; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Kusakabe, 2005a; Moser, 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Rao and Stuart, 1997; Subrahmanian, 2004; UNDP, 2003; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004). In the following section, these understandings of the linkages and connections between, feminism, equality, development and mainstreaming that have been briefly outlined above, as well as the initial insights they have produced, will be used to enter into a more nuanced discussion of what gender mainstreaming means in a development context and why it is important to understand.

What is Gender Mainstreaming in Development?

It is difficult to point a finger, with any certainty, to the very beginnings of gender mainstreaming as a term in development literature and policy making as it has evolved slowly and surely out of the needs of feminists to create action on women's inequality in their organisations. Some suggest that the *1985 UN Third World Conference of Women* in Nairobi was the key moment from whence gender mainstreaming as a term started to appear in international texts and documents on the role of women in development (Council of Europe, 1998: 12). However, most authors agree that it was not until the *1995 UN Fourth World Conference of Women* in Beijing that gender mainstreaming was, with an certainty, truly recognised as an important strategy for promoting a GAD vision of equitable social change and challenging the inequality faced by women across the world (Council of Europe, 1998: 12; Moser, 2005: 576; Subrahmanian, 2004: 89; Tiessen, 2004: 690; Woodford-Berger, 2004: 66; Woodward, 2001: 66). It was at this conference that gender mainstreaming was explicitly referred to in its *Platform for Action* (PfA):

In addressing the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision making at all levels, Governments and other actors should promote an active

and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively. (Paragraph 189) (United Nations, 1994)

Governments who adopted the PfA made a public commitment to a 'strategy of mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout policy processes' (Woodward, 2001: 65).

By the turn of the millennium, gender mainstreaming as a strategy in development had gained widespread acceptance at local, national and international levels, and achieved solid political backing across the globe. Woodford-Berger highlights that

Since the Beijing conference, gender mainstreaming has increasingly gained currency at the higher levels of national and international policy making. At the meetings and negotiations of the 47th Session of the UN subsidiary body, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2003, a resolution was adopted concerning the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the UN system. (Woodford-Berger, 2004: 66)

Perhaps most importantly for a strategy based on a feminist vision of social change, the political support garnered for gender mainstreaming was much wider than its usual base of women's movements and feminist organisations (Woodward, 2001: 65). Moser and Moser have noted that by 2005, at the international level, 'most development institutions have adopted the terminology of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and are relatively consistent in its use' (Moser and Moser, 2005: 12). Gender mainstreaming thus represents a substantial opportunity for gender advocates and feminist policy makers, as it has become both a legitimate and authoritative concept at a transnational level in development. Furthermore, the concept of gender mainstreaming is now in widespread use within much organisational and development literature, and is frequently a condition of donor funding. Gender mainstreaming, in this respect, is a key contemporary policy opportunity for feminists as it has the potential (due to its omnipresence in global development discourse) to make a significant contribution to achieving a feminist vision of equitable social change in development interventions.

However, focusing upon the rise of gender mainstreaming within development discourse should not mask the fact that gender mainstreaming suffers a serious problem: the inability to consistently turn GAD related policy into development practice that in any way reflects that line of thinking promoted by GAD. Accepting the importance of achieving social justice and equality on gender and seeing gender mainstreaming as the means to achieve this is a critical first step for

change in development, but a first step nonetheless. It does not mean that dominant development approaches have been fundamentally altered, nor does it mean that it has altered the current status quo in visions for and activities around creating social change. It is at this point of universal acceptance that the real struggles for the 'mainstream' occur. The rising acceptance and legitimacy of gender mainstreaming within development circles and beyond should not detract attention from the crucial struggles for the 'mainstream' that are now occurring. Gender mainstreaming currently hangs in the balance. The opportunities it could create are potentially enormous, yet the dangers of 'depoliticalisation' that gender mainstreaming poses to the GAD movement, and ultimately gender equality, are ever present.

As a consequence, the inherent potential and dangers offered by gender mainstreaming to those who support a feminist vision of social change in development is the reason why I feel it is important in this thesis to examine the contemporary process of gender mainstreaming in a more consistent manner. Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir have noted that there exist few empirical analyses of gender mainstreaming and this fact is a significant problem for those trying to truly understand what is happening with feminist politics and policy in development (Mosesdottir and Erlingsdottir, 2005). In this following chapters, I will attempt to provide such an empirical analysis and thus further understanding in this field. However before such an analysis can be outlined it will be important to do two things. Firstly, it will be crucial to develop some kind of shared understanding of what gender mainstreaming is, beyond how it is connected to a specific vision of development (GAD). Secondly, it will be important to examine Development Studies literature on mainstreaming to highlight the current problems faced by it, as well as what this is interpreted as meaning for achieving a feminist vision of development. In working through these two issues it will become possible to create a framework for effectively deconstructing and analysing this universally acknowledged and accepted (even if now somewhat ridiculed) feminist project in development.

Gender Mainstreaming: A Working Definition

Since the *Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women* a plethora of definitions have sprung up in academic literature and in organisational documents and publications. Each definition

varies to suit the needs of its author(s). By highlighting a few of these definitions a more detailed understanding of what constitutes gender mainstreaming can begin to be sought.

Gender mainstreaming has been interpreted as:

a strategy for achieving gender equality by assessing how any planned action might differentially affect women and men and by making their concerns and experience an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. (Lansky, 2000: 499)

the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (ECOSOC 1997/2) (Special Advisor on Gender, 2002: 1)

transformatory processes and practices that will concern, engage and benefit women and men equally by systematically integrating explicit attention to issues of sex and gender into all aspects of an organisation's work. (Woodford-Berger, 2004: 66)

the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making. (Council of Europe, 1998: 15; Verloo, 1999: 3; Walby, 2004: 7)

is a process that seeks to advance gender equality by revising all mainstream policy arenas. It is simultaneously intended as a way of improving the effectiveness of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes. (Walby, 2005: 454)

an organisational strategy to bring a gender perspective to all aspects of an institution's policy and activities, through building gender capacity and accountability. [...] With a mainstreaming strategy, gender concerns are seen as important to all aspects of development; for all sectors and areas of activity, and a fundamental part of the planning process. Responsibility for the implementation of a gender policy is diffused across the organisational structure, rather than concentrated in a small central unit. (Baden and Reeves, 2000: 9)

All these definitions refer to a common range of issues: institutions, policy process, policy actors, practice or action, gender equality, men and women's experience, and a gender perspective. Though they vary in detail and focus there is a very clear sense that they are talking about the same thing. Prugl and Lustgarten have noted that there exists three distinctive aspects to nearly all gender mainstreaming definitions: 'First, it describes mainstreaming as infusing gender considerations into *organizational processes*. Second, it calls for integrating concerns of women and men into policies and programs, that is, in the *output* of organizations. Third, it specifies that the *goal* of mainstreaming is equality between men and women' (Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006: 56). This three point deconstruction of gender mainstreaming definitions – in terms of process, output and goal – seems to capture the

essence of gender mainstreaming very well. Such a deconstruction of gender mainstreaming definitions also has a certain resonance with the discussions of the previous section that highlighted gender mainstreaming as an institutional strategy for achieving a particular feminist vision of social change in development. As a consequence, in a development context, gender mainstreaming at its most basic could be summarised as a process of organisational change in development institutions that aims to develop the use of GAD approaches in all the projects and programmes of those institutions in order to achieve a vision of 'development' that creates gender equitable social change (as interpreted by a GAD conceptualisation of equality).

However, what does such a definition offer? How do the differing aspects of the definition – process, output and goal – relate to each other? And how can they help with any understanding of gender mainstreaming in development? Such a definition, based on the interpretation of gender mainstreaming as process, output and goal, offers a number of advantages. It allows an understanding to be developed about how the current literature on gender mainstreaming in development fits together in a coherent and complementary manner, without the conflation and confusion of ideas surrounding the concept. It also makes the gaze of gender mainstreaming research more explicit and focused by identifying exactly what the different aspects of gender mainstreaming should examine. And finally, such a definition also sets the ground for a more informed debate to occur around the political and technical nature of the concept. Each of these advantages will now be discussed in detail.

Firstly, a definition such as this provides a template for understanding and linking the different discussions and debates in mainstreaming literature as well as for understanding the different layers to the concept. Those writing on mainstreaming often come from different perspectives and can frequently seem to be discussing different issues entirely. For instance, Kabeer's (2003) instruction-like manual on mainstreaming in the Millennium Development Goals that discusses how to incorporate 'gender' (read: the experiences and priorities of men and women) into issues, such as 'macro-economic analysis', seems difficult

to associate in any meaningful way with Rao and Stuart's (1997) analysis of how an organisation's 'deep structure' impacts on the uptake of new ideas and practices in it.

In seeing gender mainstreaming in terms of 'process, output and goal', however, makes it easier to understand how the range of literature discussing 'gender mainstreaming' relate to each other and why they can take such divergent approaches. For instance, literature on gender mainstreaming can be seen to gravitate around the differing aspects of the definition and in so doing the discussion often begins and ends in different places. The 'process' aspect of mainstreaming is concerned with 'organisational change' that promotes GAD-related outputs and goals in development practice. As a consequence, many researchers and academics write about the specifics of creating change in institutions around the issue of promoting gender equality in society through development interventions (Carson, 1999; Cummings, Dam *et al.*, 1998; Derbyshire, 2002; DFID, 2002; International Labour Organisation, 2002; Khan, 2003; Kusakabe, 2005b; Macdonald, 2003; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Neimanis, 2002; Rao and Stuart, 1997; Razavi and Miller, 1995b; Rosario, 1995; Special Advisor on Gender, 2002; UNDP, 2003; United Nations, 2004; Walker, 1999). This literature tends to discuss issues such as what policies and management structures are needed to promote gender equality policies, what skills will staff need and how will they learn them, who will drive the process of change in the organisation, and what factors prevent organisations from developing an agenda that challenges mainstream thinking about development practice. In contrast to this, the output aspect of mainstreaming is concerned not with what needs to happen to get organisations and their staff to adopt a GAD approach or perspective in their work, but rather how the concerns/needs of men and women (development participants) – both practical and strategic – can actually be developed in a specific development project or programme. As a consequence, literature influenced by this aspect of mainstreaming focuses on the issues of making a particular development act or intervention gender sensitive and transformative (Kabeer, 2003; March, Mukhopadhyay *et al.*, 1999; Sigamany, 2004; Tiessen, 2007; USAID, 2002; Williams, Seed *et al.*, 1994; Young, 1993). This literature generally provides a forum for discussion around issues regarding techniques for gender

analysis and evaluation, participatory methods for involving both men and women in projects, as well as tools and frameworks for creating gender equitable social transformation.

The final aspect of gender mainstreaming – its goal – is concerned with the achievement of gender equitable social change among the participants of development projects. Literature that discusses this aspect is less concerned with how an organisation might need to change itself in order to create gender equitable development practice or what is technically needed to create such practice, but, instead is concerned with what actually constitutes gender equitable social change (this is therefore closely linked with debates in feminism more generally around equality theory) and in what ways it can be assessed or understood in a development context (Chant, 2000; Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2004; IDS, 2000; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Miller and Razavi, 1998; Molyneux, 2004; Razavi and Miller, 1995a; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005).

Overall, all the literature on gender mainstreaming can be seen to be influenced, to different degrees, by the particular aspect of gender mainstreaming definitions that they have attached most value to – either process, output or goal. Gender mainstreaming as a concept has multiple layers and, in recognising this, it is not surprising that researchers choose to focus upon the aspect they perceive as most interesting or pertinent. Understanding that these divergent debates and discussions are not based on different formulations of gender mainstreaming but are merely focusing upon different aspects of it allows for a more nuanced and targeted analysis of gender mainstreaming to be developed. By placing these debates in their rightful context, by understanding their relationships to each other, and by not conflating debates of one aspect with another is a critical step forward in the process of better understanding the concept and reality of gender mainstreaming in development.

Secondly, such a definition also helps us define more clearly where the gaze of research on gender mainstreaming in development is focused (as it is clearly not the same for all research). Gender mainstreaming in development involves two key actors or communities: the development organisation/practitioner and the people it works with (individuals,

households, communities and nations). The focus of research on each actor or community is frequently dependent upon what aspect of gender mainstreaming is being examined. For example, on the one hand, research literature on the 'process' aspect of gender mainstreaming (as outlined above) can be seen to be almost exclusively concerned with the development agent (the practitioner or institution) – the instigator of social change. The 'process' aspect of gender mainstreaming is about the internal dynamics of institutions, as such, this type of research looks inward at the development organisation.

On the other hand, research on gender mainstreaming that focuses on either 'output' or 'goal' aspects can be seen to be mainly concerned with the development participant (the beneficiary, community or nation) – the object of social change. For instance, such literature focuses on how men's and women's experiences (within a participant community) can be more effectively incorporated into a development project or examine what type of change in this community is important and meaningful. The 'output' and 'goal' aspects of gender mainstreaming are about the external product of development institutions, as such this type of research is not interested in the organisation per se but in what way it impacts or can impact on society through its projects and programmes. Understanding this differing gaze of current research into gender mainstreaming provides an insight into the fundamental nature of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming has two faces: the internal face of institutional change and the external face of project operation and social change. They are all fundamentally linked and neither one is conceptually more important than the other, but the extent to which 'output' and 'goal' are primarily dependent upon 'process' remains a key issue to question.

Thirdly and finally, such a definition also helps us understand in what way gender mainstreaming is considered a political concept – a concept that challenges the established balance of power and inherently causes conflict between those aligned to dominant modes of thinking and its own particular vision of reality. Nearly all commentators of gender mainstreaming identify it as a radical and politically challenging concept. For instance, Walby (2005: 463) notes that gender mainstreaming is an explicit form of feminist politics and policy.

Such claims are well grounded and critical to the concept. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy that promotes an explicit feminist vision of development theory and practice – GAD – based around ideas of social equality and justice (as discussed in the previous sections). This vision of development theory and practice expressly challenges dominant modes of development (as well as the status quo of gender relations in society). Gender mainstreaming is therefore inherently political as it challenges mainstream thinking about the aims of development and offers up an alternative approach to achieving such social change.

However, a large number of commentators and practitioners of gender mainstreaming also see gender mainstreaming as a simultaneously technical concept, one that is not just about grand visions of social change but about the everyday realities and needs of such changes in the context of a development organisation and in its projects and programmes. As Tiessen (2004: 689) has noted, gender mainstreaming is both a political and technical project of change. Gender mainstreaming is as much about reshaping the ‘development landscape’ and, in turn, the project of social change as much as it is about the more mundane and ‘technical’ issues such as changing management strategies and organisational structures, developing gender analytical frameworks, introducing gender sensitive participatory methodologies, promoting staff equal opportunity recruitment and retention policies, and the revising of discourse in development organisations.

Though gender mainstreaming is recognised as a political project it is also seen as a technical one. Gender mainstreaming is political on account of its ‘goal’, its vision of achieving gender equality in development interventions. The ‘goal’ of gender mainstreaming makes the concept political – it challenges mainstream development theory and practice. However, the ‘goal’ of gender mainstreaming is not the totality of the concept. Achieving such a ‘goal’ is dependent upon the ‘process’ of institutionalising GAD ideas and beliefs in development organisations as well as the adoption of GAD approaches/tools in the ‘output’ of development projects and programmes. These ‘process’ and ‘output’ aspects of gender mainstreaming are clearly and frequently construed as technical aspects of the concept as

they 'impose tangibility and procedurability on what is ultimately a political project' (Woodford-Berger, 2004: 66). This political-technical split in characterisations of gender mainstreaming is frequently invoked by commentators and practitioners to explain the impasse associated with achieving change in mainstream development around gender – some argue that the technicalisation of a political project has ultimately served to reduce its political potency and its potential for change (this will be explored in more detail in the following sections) (Cornwall, 2007; Goetz, 2004: 137). Nevertheless, in using the definition outlined above it becomes easier to understand more fully the extent to which gender mainstreaming is seen as political and, by default, the extent to which it is seen as technical. In creating this understanding it becomes possible to question the extent to which this political-technical characterisation of gender mainstreaming is either accurate or helpful in analysing its problems.

What Future does Gender Mainstreaming have in Development?

Beyond asking what does gender mainstreaming mean to development researchers and practitioners there is a further question to be thought through: What future does gender mainstreaming have in development? To locate a suitable entry point for an empirical analysis of gender mainstreaming, it becomes important to go beyond just outlining the terms by which gender mainstreaming is understood by development academics and practitioners to a more detailed understanding of the contemporary debates and discussions around how feminists perceive gender mainstreaming to now fit into the project of achieving social justice for women in development. Understanding the current discussion on gender mainstreaming in development is key to understanding what type of analysis would be most useful and where the focus of such an analysis would be most appropriate.

By all accounts, gender mainstreaming in development has not lived up to the hopes and dreams of those who fought hard for it. Disappointment is frequently palpable in development organisations and academic institutions, but to what extent is this disappointment fully justified? Hopes and dreams are just that and should not negate the positive impact gender mainstreaming may have had. For instance,

it is inevitable that gender mainstreaming has produced outcomes different to that which feminists might have hoped for – sometimes disappointing, sometimes surprising. The

translation of a radical idea about social change into bureaucratic targets and procedures unavoidably results in something less world-shattering than the original revolutionary intention. Bureaucracies, whether of a bilateral development agency, a multilateral economic institution, a developing state or a non-governmental organisation (NGO), impose a discipline of classification, ordering and, above all, containment that has tended to strip the gender and development project of its ambition to eliminate gendered power disparities, and instead to focus upon achievable practical projects. (Goetz, 2004: 137)

Goetz is right to note that ideas and beliefs unavoidably become less radical the more they become incorporated into the mainstream. This is not necessarily a good or a bad thing, but an inevitable consequence of the process of mainstreaming – as two ways of thinking collide and conflict they are both transformed during this process into something new. As a consequence, in recognising this reality it becomes important to ask not ‘have GAD concepts become de-radicalised through the process of gender mainstreaming?’ – because the answer is always going to be ‘yes’ – but ‘has the dilution of GAD ideas and beliefs through gender mainstreaming been an acceptable price to pay for the gains achieved in the way organisations and institutions do development?’. The answer to this question is not completely clear, though there is a strong indication among many feminist academics and practitioners that the price has been too high – the ideas and concepts of GAD have been adopted but without a corresponding fundamental change in development practice (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Goetz and Sandler, 2007; Mama, 2007; Molyneux, 2004; Moser, 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Porter and Sweetman, 2005; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Subrahmanian, 2007; WEDO, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004). Compromise has come at too high a price for many and as a consequence gender mainstreaming has reached a crisis point. Those researching and implementing gender mainstreaming note an insurmountable impasse to this particular feminist strategy in development.

Moser perhaps most assuredly brings credence to the feelings of many involved in trying to create change in her article ‘Has gender mainstreaming failed?’ (Moser, 2005). She reviews the experiences of 14 international development organisations – DFID, CIDA, Sida, IDB, Asian DB, WB, UNIFEM, Habitat, UNICEF, UNDP, ActionAid, Oxfam GB, Hivos, ACORD. She identifies that at a policy level all have quite clearly mainstreamed gender, but when the specifics of practice are examined, such as using a gender sensitive budget analysis or having specific gender-sensitive indicators in monitoring and evaluation, few have achieved

even rudimentary steps to ensuring projects and programmes develop a GAD approach (Moser, 2005: 578-579). It is now over 10 years since gender mainstreaming was enshrined in the Beijing PfA and, despite encouraging changes in rhetoric, little seems to have changed in the practice of development (by the admissions of those very actors) (Molyneux, 2004: 112). What makes this more worrying is that failure to transform rhetoric into reality has continued to occur despite the continual analysis and re-analysis of gender mainstreaming and its impasse in development organisations. Mukhopadhyay highlights that

Gender and development advocates cannot be faulted for their technical proficiency. Making a case for gender and development, developing and implementing training programmes, frameworks, planning tools and even checklists, unpacking organisational change from a gender perspective, have all contributed to building technical capacity and pushed forward technical processes for integration of gender equality concerns in development. The literature also acknowledges that gender equality is as much a political as a technical project and efforts have been directed toward creating 'voice' and influence, lobbying and advocacy. (Mukhopadhyay, 2004: 95)

Review after review of gender mainstreaming, of its failures and of its successes, has moved international development little further towards putting GAD inspired development policy into actual programme practice. As a consequence of reaching this point, feminists are taking stock and are trying to move on. Unable to resolve the impasse that they face despite frequent attempts to do so, academics and practitioners alike have started to wander away from gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving social change for women in development interventions. On the one hand, there are those who wish to put gender mainstreaming behind them as, at best, an unhelpful diversion or, at worst, a fundamentally damaging occurrence in the feminist project in development. On the other hand, there are those who wish to pare down gender mainstreaming and salvage something useful from it. Both wish to move on from this episode and their arguments will be explored in the following paragraphs. However, after examining these arguments it is important to ask if this movement away from the gender mainstreaming project is truly warranted or productive? Global rhetoric may be all gender mainstreaming has achieved at the moment, but should advocates of GAD be so quick to squander such an opportunity?

Those included in the first camp of 'post-gender mainstreaming' thinkers suggest that mainstreaming has (inadvertently or not) resulted in the neutralisation of GAD ideas and the

depoliticisation of the feminist project (Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Porter and Sweetman, 2005; Standing, 2004; Subrahmanian, 2004). Gender mainstreaming has reduced a GAD vision of gender transformative social change to a technocratic approach devoid of any political content, making it something 'diluted, denatured, depoliticised, included everywhere as an afterthought' (Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2004: 1). Some take this line of thought further and suggest that gender mainstreaming has been more than just a blind alley. Gender mainstreaming has in fact been counterproductive to the entire feminist project. It has led to the overuse of 'gender' resulting in 'the widespread tendency in academic, policy and activist contexts to ignore women and their needs while naming, and purportedly mainstreaming, gender' (Eveline and Bacchi, 2005: 496). Gender mainstreaming has become a process that draws attention away from tackling women's subordination rather than highlighting it.¹⁶ Such analyses have led to the suggestion that we should move beyond gender mainstreaming – advocates of GAD should not be diverted by the myth of institutionalising GAD approaches and thinking but instead should focus on supporting grassroots feminists and go back to empowerment projects focused on women (Goetz and Sandler, 2007; Porter and Sweetman, 2005: 5). Gender mainstreaming is ultimately a diversion to achieving real change around equality among and for women in development projects and programmes.

The second camp of 'post-gender mainstreaming' thinkers suggest that we need to reassess what works in gender mainstreaming and make the most of these opportunities by laying to rest other areas of the gender mainstreaming project. It is about going beyond gender mainstreaming (a somewhat doomed monolithic project as they see it) and utilising the spaces for change that it has created. For example, Rao and Kelleher suggest that transformative agendas exist uneasily within large development organisations and as a result 'we need to disaggregate the range of activities that are dumped in the gender mainstreaming bag (such as policy reform, advocacy, capacity building, analytical frameworks, programme development, monitoring systems) and analyse their gains and their

¹⁶ A situation now exists whereby not only is practice recognised to be consistently failing to meet the goals and ambitions of the policy, but the general policy environment has evolved into something that actually serves (either directly or indirectly) to undermine or erode the fundamental ability of the policy to achieve its goals in practice. Gender mainstreaming has depoliticised the feminist project in development and rendered it impotent.

failures' (Rao and Kelleher, 2005: 63). They go on to examine and promote the concept of 'institutional transformation', a more refined version of gender mainstreaming as they see it (Rao and Kelleher, 2005). Dawson on the other hand takes a slightly different approach. She sees going beyond gender mainstreaming as the need to focus on developing contextually appropriate, locally owned understandings of gender relations at every level of programme planning and implementation (Dawson, 2005). There are a variety of these approaches within the literature. Each one examines the successes and failures of gender mainstreaming approaches and develops strategies that build on successful examples.

The logic behind both paths in the literature is persuasive and has a certain appeal. At present, gender mainstreaming is seen as a neutralising monolith of a concept, and its consistent difficulties to achieve fundamental changes in development practice are well acknowledged (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Eschle and Maiguasha, 2007; Goetz and Sandler, 2007; Mama, 2007; Moser and Moser, 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Standing, 2004; Subrahmanian, 2007; WEDO, 2005; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004). However, beyond the specific arguments of these two paths away from gender mainstreaming they both prompt a very elementary question. In both implicitly and explicitly highlighting the depoliticising nature and/or ineffective activities of gender mainstreaming, it becomes necessary to ask why and how a concept designed to further the feminist project has in many ways come to achieve the opposite – a situation whereby feminists actually feel their concerns and hopes have become marginalised in development practice by the very strategy that was supposed to help them, gender mainstreaming. What has happened to this radical and transformative agenda of institutional change? As a consequence, simply drawing attention to the problems of gender mainstreaming and learning from them is not enough, the reality of gender mainstreaming, that is its seeming unfortunate ability to marginalise its own transformative agenda, needs to be understood properly: How has a policy impasse such as this occurred?

In asking this key question, the current debate on gender mainstreaming can and should be shifted from 'where now with gender mainstreaming' – the focus of much contemporary

gender mainstreaming literature in development – to ‘what has actually happened to gender mainstreaming’. The shift in emphasis is subtle but nonetheless it is important. New analysis and debate must now centre, not on examining the particular successes and disappointments of gender mainstreaming and what they mean to the project of social change and justice for women in development, but instead on understanding gender mainstreaming in its totality – what has happened to the strategy for institutional change around GAD thinking and approaches? Those analyses that have highlighted and judged the outcomes of gender mainstreaming in communities (the visible consequences, its outputs and goals) are important, but they have leapfrogged the debate straight to questioning the viability and sustainability of gender mainstreaming without fully understanding why the outcomes are what they are. It is therefore more appropriate at this point to take a step back and refocus the debate onto examining the actual experiences of working on and delivering the promises of gender mainstreaming in development organisations.

Subrahmanian understands this point well and perhaps most succinctly sets down the task that must now be put in hand:

There is a need, therefore, to not get caught up in debates about whether gender mainstreaming is good or bad, a success or failure, but instead to focus more on breaking down these processes of change, understanding them and the context in which they are being played out, and finding more appropriate labels to reflect what they really represent in terms of transformation. (Subrahmanian, 2004: 94)

Gender mainstreaming, as a feminist political project in development, needs to be better analysed and understood. This does not mean labelling gender mainstreaming as partial, subverted and co-opted by the mainstream, and then exploring what this may mean for taking forward a (more serious?) feminist agenda in development. Rather, it means, as Subrahmanian has alluded to, breaking down and analysing specifically why gender mainstreaming has become partial, subverted and co-opted by the mainstream. It is in the following chapters that I will attempt to form just such an analysis of gender mainstreaming.

Such an analysis is not so much interested in what gender mainstreaming is promoting, nor is it interested in what way its successes and failures in achieving gender equitable social change in development practice can be seen or have been assessed. Though they are both

obviously important issues they have been frequently discussed by development academics and a common agreement has generally been reached: Gender mainstreaming attempts to achieve transformational gender equality in development projects by institutionalising GAD approaches in development practice; yet, despite significant alterations to development policy and discourse, such development practice remains remarkably unchanged. The current impasse has become, for most, seemingly insurmountable. This analysis instead begins at this point and accepts gender mainstreaming for what it is, where it presently stands, and the impasse it currently faces. However, instead of going over common ground and examining new potential options (based on that information) for taking feminist policy ambitions beyond that impasse, it aims to more fully understand how such an impasse has come to exist in the first place. In doing this, in taking a regressive analytical step, I aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of how to promote a radical and politically challenging agenda, such as GAD, in development institutions. In the following section, based on the discussions about the operation of power in organisations developed in the previous chapter as well as on the discussions around the definition and future of gender mainstreaming in this chapter, I will outline in more detail what such an analysis will look like.

Understanding the Gender Mainstreaming Impasse: Locating an Entry Point

The impasse gender mainstreaming faces, the inability to move from sophisticated gender policies to gender transformative development practice, is frequently discussed but seemingly little understood. It is widely recognised that gender mainstreaming is a political concept, its problems in achieving progress in changing development practice are therefore attributed to its radical ideas becoming subverted by the more dominant 'mainstream' in development. Molyneux highlights that 'the transformative agenda has been captured by power [and reduced to] an appendix without influence' (Molyneux, 2004: 114). However, the actual process of subversion is not well examined, it remains, to all intents and purposes, a mystery. It is my intention to begin to unravel this mystery. However, to do this a suitable entry point is needed. Where would it be most appropriate to focus the gaze of such research?

As highlighted in my discussion of a gender mainstreaming definition there are considered to be three elements or perspectives to gender mainstreaming: process, output and goal. I noted that contemporary research has focused on all three aspects and, in doing so, has highlighted the different issues and debates that exist around the concept and the different focus such research takes to elucidate them. However, which aspect of gender mainstreaming is the most appropriate for investigating how the present impasse to achieving gender equality in development practice currently exists? Choosing which aspect of gender mainstreaming to examine is crucial as it has very real implications for the scope and focus any analysis.

A 'Process' Perspective: Investigating Organisational Change

Perhaps the easiest way to identify and highlight which aspect of gender mainstreaming is most appropriate for any investigation around the subversion of gender mainstreaming is to eliminate the most inappropriate first. For instance, this research could attempt to pin down exactly what vision of equality gender mainstreaming promotes in development and examine how this conceptualisation has led to the impasse that now exists. I hold, like many academics and practitioners involved in development, the belief that gender mainstreaming strives to achieve a GAD vision of equality that posits equitable social change in terms of transforming gendered roles and identities. Others may not agree with this. However, these debates around what form of feminist change gender mainstreaming is aiming to promote in society are perhaps, despite their importance, to some extent arbitrary in the context of this impasse. Gender mainstreaming is a radical and politically challenging concept whichever vision of equality it is attempting to institutionalise – gender mainstreaming's 'goal' follows an equality agenda whichever way you cut it. Subversion of gender mainstreaming by mainstream development therefore remains a constant. Discussions about which form of equality theory gender mainstreaming takes or what specific policy is being promoted, though interesting and important, are unlikely to provide any form of unique insight into the process of subversion that operates. Examining gender mainstreaming from a 'goal' perspective, in this instance, would seem to be a poor entry point for this research.

This research could also try to understand the subversion of gender mainstreaming by investigating the successes and failures of projects using GAD approaches (such as gender analysis frameworks or gender sensitive participation tools) to achieve some form of gender equality. Again, though such research is interesting and important for understanding gaps in thinking and practice around how to create gender equality in development, it seems somewhat arbitrary in the context of the impasse that currently exists. For example, from the reviews of the gender mainstreaming literature highlighted in the previous section it appears generally agreed upon that GAD approaches and methods of creating equality in development projects are well developed and well proven, with many suitable examples (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Eschle and Manguasha, 2007; Goetz and Sandler, 2007; Mama, 2007; Moser and Moser, 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Standing, 2004; Subrahmanian, 2007; Tiessen, 2007; WEDO, 2005; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004). What is also agreed upon, and highlighted well by Moser's review of GAD practice in development organisations, is that these approaches are not being used with any level of consistency within development organisations' projects and programmes. Research into the ability of GAD approaches to achieve some form of gendered social change is not, to any great degree, in doubt – gender mainstreaming's 'output' can and does create gendered social change among participants of development projects when it is taken forward. Research that examines instances of how GAD approaches create gendered change, however, will tell us little about why these GAD approaches have not been used consistently in projects despite organisations being supposedly geared up to deliver just that. Subversion of gender mainstreaming does not seem to be about a lack of understanding around creating gender equality in projects and programmes. Examining gender mainstreaming from an 'output' perspective would therefore also, in this instance, seem a poor entry point.

Examining the 'process' aspect of gender mainstreaming, on the other hand, seems a more useful entry point. Research that examines the process aspect of gender mainstreaming examines the dynamic of change in organisations. This type of research focuses on what is occurring in the organisation around promoting a GAD approach in its projects and programmes

and a vision of equality in society. It is about understanding what occurs between a policy being adopted and it being carried through into practice. For example, most international development organisations have GAD policies as well as detailed strategies and systems for getting GAD approaches operational in their work (Moser and Moser, 2005). Yet, when it comes to assessing an organisation's practice, even the most progressive organisations recognise that GAD approaches are usually poorly incorporated into projects and programmes, if at all (Khan, 2003: 5; Kusakabe, 2005b: 1). This paradoxical impasse would become the main focus of research using a 'process' perspective of gender mainstreaming. Research conducted from a 'process' perspective is at the very centre of understanding how gender mainstreaming has been subverted as it tries to make sense of what is occurring in the transition between discourse and practice.

In adopting a 'process' perspective to examine the gender mainstreaming impasse, this research will, by its own definition, centre upon the internal dynamic of gender mainstreaming, the development organisation and its staff. It will focus on how change occurs in development organisations, how organisational values are shifted from one set to another and what institutional barriers exist or are erected to prevent such a shift in values. In other words, the research will examine why GAD approaches, as well as a desire to achieve gender equality are not readily visible in development practice despite development organisations and their staff being 'firmly committed' to doing just that by focusing on exactly what happens in those organisations around putting GAD approaches into practice. It will not focus on the extent to which gender mainstreaming has achieved gendered social change in the communities in which the development organisations work or what form of gendered social change gender mainstreaming can be seen to be promoting. These issues will become more important to examine once the policy impasse surrounding gender mainstreaming has been properly understood and appropriately challenged, but before this point is reached such issues are to some extent largely irrelevant in the development context.

Organisational Change: Understanding the Politics of 'Process'

In deciding to examine the 'process' aspect of gender mainstreaming and in recognising that the focus of such research is on the internal dynamics of change in development

organisations it becomes necessary to understand how this can be investigated and analysed. In what ways can we interpret policy evaporation around GAD in development organisations? In returning to the discussion around defining gender mainstreaming, it was noted that mainstreaming was characterised as both political and technical. It was also noted that it was recognised as political on account of its 'goal', its vision of achieving gender equality in development interventions. The 'goal' of gender mainstreaming makes gender mainstreaming political – it is explicitly recognised as challenging mainstream development theory and practice. However, it was also noted that achieving such a 'goal' is dependent upon the 'process' of institutionalising GAD ideas and beliefs in development organisations. This 'process' aspect of gender mainstreaming is frequently construed as technical rather than political – it is about 'getting institutions right', it is about rewriting policy documents, about changing staff recruitment and review procedures, it is about allocating budgets more appropriately, it is about creating a pool of gender tools and developing staff skills. Thus, gender mainstreaming is recognised as both political and technical – political in what it aspires to do but technical in how it will achieve it. This political-technical characterisation of gender mainstreaming has heavily influenced the way in which research into 'process' has been envisaged and conducted.

The current policy impasse around gender mainstreaming has largely been seen as a technical issue surrounding the 'process' of change. The majority of analyses conducted on and in development organisations have therefore been from a more technical perspective. Such analyses take organisations at face value and examine readily identifiable institutional opportunities and barriers for promoting a policy. In seeking answers to the problem of policy evaporation, such analyses ask questions along the lines of 'what knowledge is lacking among staff?' or 'how much of a budget is allocated to gender work?'. Policy evaporation is broken down into a series of institutional barriers. From this perspective, such analyses develop strategies directly related to removing these barriers. For instance, Byrne *et al's* examination of National Women's Machinery in state bureaucracies is a case in point (Byrne, Laier *et al.*, 1996). In their detailed analysis they identify a number of problems that prevent GAD approaches being put into practice such as confusion around the roles and

responsibilities of gender units, weak mandates for those units, a lack of resources, a lack of control over resources, locational instability or inappropriateness of gender units, a lack of autonomy for gender units, and staff constraints. This approach to identifying the problems around the 'process' aspect of gender mainstreaming can be found in the majority of in-house institutional research and in a large proportion of academic literature. This approach to analysis sees organisations as rationally organised machines. Policy evaporation becomes seen as a symptom of poor organisation in institutions which can be 'fixed' once those poor aspects of organisation have been located and identified – all that needs to be done is to create 'better', more 'strategic', more 'focused', or more 'appropriate' gender policies and strategies, with stronger mandates and a greater command of resources for instance.

In general, these aspects of poor organisation, or institutional barriers, are frequently divided into two types: knowledge barriers and capacity barriers. Knowledge barriers and strategies focus on issues such as gender awareness of staff (Council of Europe, 1998: 18; Derbyshire, 2002: 42; Khan, 2003: 6), remit of gender policy (Derbyshire, 2002: 38; UNDP, 2003: 9; United Nations, 2004: 10), gender knowledge management and learning (Macdonald, 2003: 23, International Labour Organisation, 2002 #149 14-16; UNDP, 2003: 6), gender disaggregated project and programme data (Derbyshire, 2002: 10; Rosario, 1995: 106; United Nations, 2004: 10), supply and use of gender experts (Derbyshire, 2002: 12; Macdonald, 2003: 20; UNDP, 2003: 7), gender analysis tools and techniques (Council of Europe, 1998: 18) and gender definitions and terminology (Council of Europe, 1998: 17; International Labour Organisation, 2002: 14). Capacity barriers and strategies focus on issues such as financial resources and budgeting (Economic Commission for Europe, 2004: 7; UNDP, 2003: 7; United Nations, 2004: 10), time constraints (Kardam, 1995: 15), women in decision making positions (Derbyshire, 2002: 11; Economic Commission for Europe, 2004: 7), staff employment requirements (International Labour Organisation, 2002: 16; Khan, 2003: 6), accountability mechanisms (Macdonald, 2003: 23-24; United Nations, 2004: 17), political will within different levels of management (United Nations, 2004: 10) and project monitoring and evaluation procedures (Razavi and Miller, 1995b: 22; United Nations, 2004: 11).

This list is by no means exhaustive but it gives an idea of the issues that are considered important in understanding the impasse around gender mainstreaming strategies in development organisations and the diversity of research examining this issue. The level of detail in such analyses and proposed strategies for removing institutional barriers is far from homogeneous. For example, Byrne's *et al* analysis of budgets highlights that there is a lack of resources available to 'gender work and departments', and thus strategies to remove this barrier must make sure gender is budgeted for appropriately within state machineries (Byrne, Laier *et al.*, 1996). The solution becomes a question of updating financial rules and regulations to include gender as a point of allocation. Rosario's analysis of gender mainstreaming in the Philippino government, on the other hand, suggests that budget problems are more complex than simply a lack of financial resources (Rosario, 1995: 106-107). She highlights that 'political will' among middle management gate keepers is often the critical factor and that strategies focused on increasing financial resources to gender mainstreaming must reflect this problem.

However, despite the differing levels of detail in analyses of barriers and their proposed counter-strategies, these pieces of research all share a common approach to understanding the process element of gender mainstreaming. This approach ultimately aims to identify a set of practical reasons why mainstreaming is failing to occur in practice without questioning (or with little questioning of) the underlying context in which the gender policy operates. No doubt this approach has much to offer. Policy is rarely perfect and is often in a permanent state of modification to meet the changing contexts and demands of development institutions. However, the technical approach fails to examine broader questions. If gender mainstreaming is just a matter of getting policy right to induce change in how development organisations approach development, why does gender mainstreaming consistently meet with little success (beyond the level of rhetoric) despite the (often long term) recognition of these 'technical' problems? Why do these barriers to gender mainstreaming continue to exist? Such questions bring into doubt the assumption that the 'process' element of gender mainstreaming is a merely technical aspect of the gender mainstreaming dual political-technical characterisation.

Instead, it should be recognised that the 'process' of institutional change is not just a technical aspect of achieving a political feminist agenda in development – gender equality in development interventions. Rather, it is itself also fundamentally political. Standing has suggested that 'many feminists have remained naïve about the nature of policy processes and institutional change' (Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a: 10). Institutions are not, as scientific versions of management theory suggest (in the tradition of Taylorism), rationally organised, efficient and indifferent to their human element. Gender mainstreaming should not just be seen as political because it promotes a counter approach to the mainstream way 'development' incorporates and impacts on development participants, but because it also challenges the everyday thinking, routines and activities of development staff in their work. Most analyses of gender mainstreaming have failed to understand the 'bureaucratic logic' of development institutions and the way organisations and their staff subvert and resist changes to the way they do their work (Goetz and Sandler, 2007: 13). As Verloo has noted in her analysis of mainstreaming in the European Union, gender mainstreaming as a 'process' tends to be seen as consensual and oppositional politics is ignored (Verloo, 2005: 345). Taking a gendered approach to policy and practice is seen as an inevitable outcome so long as staff are provided with the necessary tools and knowledge to do so. From such a view point, why would resistance and opposition arise when mainstreaming merely becomes a matter of equipping staff with the right tools and knowledge. For instance, many of those implementing gender mainstreaming believe that staff in organisations will willingly and actively use GAD approaches in development practice once they have the necessary skills, resources, and an understanding of the importance of gender equality in development projects (often posited in terms of wider project benefits rather than to do with issues of social justice) – institutional change is seen as a process of staff enlightenment, enlightenment is challenging but essentially not oppositional. Ignoring the politics of 'process' ignores the reality of institutions and the way bureaucratic logic among staff impacts upon the uptake and delivery of radical policies. Analyses of gender mainstreaming need to move past their fascination with the technocratic image of organisational change.

Furthermore, as a note of caution, understanding the subtle political nature of institutional change (around the promotion of a radical policy) can often be misunderstood by conflating gender mainstreaming's politics of 'process' with its political 'goal'. For instance, in her reflections on the evaporation of GAD in development practice, Subrahmanian highlights that many

adjustments in bureaucratic practice and policy have necessarily relied on discursive strategies that are 'instrumental' – i.e. that suggest investment in women has high pay-offs. By providing a few 'jobs for the girls' in this enterprise, the project of emancipating women was seen to have been set in motion. Quite how this emancipatory project was expected to roll out is not clear. Yet, gender mainstreaming has legitimized this approach in its zeal to portray the achievement of gender equality as a matter of getting development co-operation, development policies and development institutions 'right' for women. Mostly this has resulted in the 'conflation of a particular institutional strategy with the processes of social change'. (Subrahmanian, 2007: 114)

This is not to say that part of gender mainstreaming's approach to institutional change cannot or should not be about getting women into decision making positions in development organisations. Rather, it is stating that creating a picture of gender equality in organisations cannot and does not guarantee that the organisation will promote and implement a vision of gender equality in its projects and programmes (Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006: 59). The politics of 'process', of recognising and tackling the bureaucratic logic that prevents the delivery of a GAD agenda in development practice, should have resonance with the 'goal' of gender mainstreaming – gender equality – but it should not be substituted directly into the organisational context as a fully formed strategy for change.

Policy evaporation around GAD approaches and ideologies in development organisations should also be seen from a political perspective rather than just a technical one. Some analyses have attempted to do this and do not take organisations at face value. Instead they see the institution as a complex site of interactions and conflict between organisational structures and discourses, social networks, and staff members' personal beliefs and attitudes. In seeking answers to the problem of policy evaporation such analyses attempt to go beyond recognising and locating institutional barriers to gender mainstreaming and instead try to understand why and how such barriers exist. If technical analyses can be seen to start with questions along the lines of 'what knowledge is lacking among staff?' or 'how much of a budget is allocated to gender work?' Political analyses start with questions such as 'in what ways are staff perceived to lack knowledge and why?' and 'why is gender work seen

as something separate to budget for?'. Analysis from a technical perspective can be seen to be somewhat shallow – such research works on the premise that problems exist because gender mainstreaming has failed to create organisational change. It therefore tries to identify barriers that are preventing change from occurring. However, analyses that take a political perspective highlight the fallacy of this assumption – organisations, like any social entity, are always responding to internal and external stimuli, perceiving no change creates a static model of institutions and distorts this reality.

As a consequence, analyses that take a political perspective on the 'process' aspect of gender mainstreaming work on the assumption that policy evaporation is not because gender mainstreaming has not created organisational change but because the organisation and its staff have reacted and adapted to attempts to change it to maintain a bureaucratic status quo. Attempts to create change in organisations predictably cause conflict, rather than ignoring this conflict and interpreting the outcomes within a static model of an 'institutional barriers' approach, understanding how such dynamics have played out is key to understanding how a policy impasse exists.

Despite the potential value that such insights would provide on the impasse in gender mainstreaming, there is currently only a sparse and eclectic selection of research literature, either in academia or from development institutions, that recognises and attempts to uncover the politics of 'process' in gender mainstreaming. These pieces of research recognise organisations as dynamic environments – constantly evolving and responding to change/conflict. They implicitly acknowledge that gender mainstreaming has created change in organisations and that the policy impasse is not a failure to change *per se* but a particular response to demands for change. For these analyses the starting point is not 'what are the barriers to change' but 'how have these barriers been erected' in organisations. The work of Rao, Kelleher, and Stuart are good examples of theoretical attempts to take a political approach to understanding such organisational change (Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Rao and Stuart, 1997). These authors have attempted to move the debate on gender mainstreaming to a more sophisticated level in their analysis of 'deep structures' in development

organisations. They suggest that 'these unseen dimensions may move an organisation in a direction you may not anticipate, if all you consider is what can be seen on the surface' (Rao and Stuart, 1997) such as budget constraints, lack of staff knowledge or limited gender tools. Other analyses examine the impact of wider cultural beliefs upon how staff members undertake their roles in organisations and their willingness to adopt new policies and practices. Tiessen's work is a case in point (Tiessen, 2004). Whereas, others still, focus upon how individuals respond to and negotiate changes in organisations. For instance, Kusakabe has noted the existence of a 'no objection, no interest' (NONI) type reaction to gender mainstreaming:

NONI happens among those who do not think gender is an issue, but want to be seen as politically correct. This is one level of achievement that at least NONI people feel that they should not object. However, it is difficult to make any change among NONI people, since they do not move. They do not dialogue, since they are not interested. For NONIs, gender training is useless, gender awareness raising is unnecessary. (Kusakabe, 2005b: 2)

Unlike the plethora of research that adopts a technical perspective to understanding the impasse in gender mainstreaming, this area of research is substantially underdeveloped. Analyses range from theoretical sketches of submerged organisational structures to the deciphering of individual motivations for doing development. They acknowledge that conflict in organisations occurs and is an inevitable result of gender mainstreaming, as such they endeavour to make this conflict both readily visible and understandable. However, none of these analyses have managed to undertake a comprehensive, consistent and detailed analysis of gender mainstreaming in a development organisation, accounting for and interrelating both organisational and individualistic elements of institutions, despite the need for such an analysis. In her examination of the internal dynamics of NGOs, Hilhorst has noted that anthropologists, and other such researchers who are well equipped for investigating conflict and change within dynamic social units, have shied away from NGOs and development organisations in recent years (Hilhorst, 2003: 2). Instead, the gaze of such detailed socio-political research has focused upon the activities of development organisations and the relationships between participants and practitioners. It is now time to refocus that gaze solely upon the development organisation in an effort to truly understand the gender mainstreaming process in development organisations. Taking an approach that recognises

and details the socio-political nature of organisational change in development institutions will be crucial for fully understanding how a policy impasse around GAD approaches and ideologies has occurred and why this impasse seemingly cannot be broken. It is within this thesis that I therefore hope to develop such an analysis and shed some light upon these issues.

The Gender Mainstreaming Impasse: A Political Analysis of Organisational Change

Given that my research aimed to undertake such a political analysis of 'process' in development organisations around the issue of gender mainstreaming to better understand the current impasse faced by feminist policy activists, in what way then should I carry out such an analysis and which organisation(s) should I consider to be the most appropriate to focus such an analysis on? In tackling these issues in my research a number of key questions arose: What type of approach should I take to understand change, or rather more accurately the conflict of ideas and approaches within development organisations attempting mainstreaming? What specific instances or sites of conflict around gender mainstreaming are most pervasive and damaging to efforts to achieve such a feminist policy agenda? What organisation(s) would be most useful to explore with such an approach? And, finally how would such research be conducted in an organisation?

In Chapter 1 I examined the multiple conceptualisations of power within the context of formal organisations as a means of understanding the reality of institutional engagement with radical ideas and concepts. I suggested that organisations could be seen to contain numerous sites of conflict where radical and mainstream ideas and approaches jostled for acceptance and perhaps dominance. In these sites of conflict radical theories of social change were often neutralised, co-opted and subverted, long before they could be 'applied' to the real world through the implementation of projects and programmes. Sometimes resistance to, and conflict over, ideas and actions is visible, at other times it is not. In recognising this, I also identified the ways in which relations of power could be seen to operate in organisations to maintain the status quo of the bureaucratic process and highlighted the differing forms, and thus levels of visibility, that power could take. In an attempt to develop a more consistent

political analysis of the 'process' aspect of gender mainstreaming in development organisations, I felt that these insights garnered in Chapter 1 are particularly important. For instance, I have noted above that attempts to create change in organisations predictably causes conflict and resistance, rather than interpreting this conflict within a static model of an 'institutional barriers' approach, understanding how such dynamics have played out will be key to understanding how the consistent inability of practice to match policy has occurred. Understanding the levels at which power can operate and the multiple ways conflict and acts of resistance can be articulated in organisations is critical for this analysis. There may be any number of reasons why mainstream development thinking and approaches cause the subversion of radical development policies, such as GAD, but understanding how such subversion happens, by developing an analysis of power dynamics in organisations that locates and examines critical sites of conflict, is much more significant to understanding the impasse faced by those promoting gender mainstreaming.

In developing such an institutional power analysis of how GAD approaches fail to consistently traverse the policy-practice interface, it was crucial to choose the level at which conflict is most damaging to radical ideas and approaches, i.e. the level at which the operation of power can be seen (or perhaps not) to have the most pervasive impact on achieving policy-practice synchronicity. Some authors rightly point out that there exists active conscious subversion of gender mainstreaming as a result of 'deep-seated resentment of and consequent resistance to the project of equality between men and women and the language of politics that assertions of equality bring forward' (Mukhopadhyay, 2004: 97). In these cases power struggles are visible and identifiable either through the actions or inactions of organisations or their staff. This is a valid starting point and would examine sites of both overt and covert conflict. However, its subsequent analyses are limited to those organisations and institutions that face noticeable resistance to gender mainstreaming, where conflict is generally visible. This is interesting but perhaps does not provide an understanding of why gender mainstreaming has so consistently suffered a policy impasse, independent of acceptance and support for GAD approaches to development by an organisation and its staffs. As a consequence, a far more wide reaching analysis of power and conflict within the gender

mainstreaming 'process' should start at the point where conflict is generally not visible in organisations but where a policy impasse still occurs. This would bring into resolution the most pervasive and persuasive form of power (and conflict) – latent power and its sites of 'non-conflict' – and hopefully provide a clearer understanding of how the 'process' of gender mainstreaming in development organisations has been so consistently and persistently subverted.

Examining latent power also has a certain resonance with the need to fill the gap among the few political analyses of 'process' that currently exist but fail to interrelate understandings of organisational structures and discourses with understandings of staff attitudes and motivations around GAD. Locating and exploring sites of 'non-conflict' directly interrelates these two issues as it examines how staff shape and respond to the particular nuances of an institution's changing organisational culture. However, this means examining an organisation or organisations that are recognised as having reached an impasse with their gender mainstreaming ambitions (and acknowledge the fact) but also ones that can no longer be labelled as having any significant visible resistance to GAD approaches (or the idea of gender equality) among its staff or within its policies. Such an analysis would also require an in-depth investigation over a significant period of time. As a result, I chose to examine only one organisation in my research (the full reasons for this can be found within my methodology contained in the Annex of this thesis). For this, I selected Oxfam GB as that organisation as it best suits the criteria outlined above.

In Part II of this thesis I will therefore detail the outcomes of my research into Oxfam GB. Chapter 3 will provide an overview of how Oxfam has itself approached understanding the process of institutional change and the gender mainstreaming impasse in the organisation, as well as where the organisation believes its problems (and solutions) can be found. This background information will provide the necessary details to contextualise the subsequent two chapters which go on to question the current 'process' of institutional change in Oxfam by highlighting previously unnoticed and invisible sites of conflict and resistance over gender mainstreaming. Chapters 4 and 5 will examine particular sites of 'non-conflict' that I have

made visible through examining the structures and discourse of the organisation. In doing so I highlight how they point towards the root of the problem that surrounds the issue of turning Oxfam's Gender Policy into consistent development practice.

Chapter 6

Institutional Change and the Politics of Mainstreaming

Beyond Oxfam: Gender Mainstreaming and Institutional Change

At the beginning of this thesis, I suggested that to understand a policy impasse, such as the one faced by gender mainstreaming, it is important to move away from directly analysing policy and its implementation. Focus must shift toward understanding the medium in which policy is interpreted and negotiated – the organisation. Only by understanding the social reality in organisations can it be possible to begin to understand the relationship between policy and practice. Thus, I highlighted that examining ‘organisational culture’ provides a possible entry point for understanding a policy impasse. Mainstream thinking and practices in development organisations are by definition hegemonic and as such they frequently suppress radical development policies to maintain the bureaucratic status quo. Suppression of radical ideas is perhaps most effective when conflict over change is no longer visible, such suppression is brought about by consensus or ‘non-conflict’. Studying aspects of organisational culture provides a way of bringing to light the very real politics of the gender mainstreaming process by making sites of ‘non-conflict’ within organisations visible and by highlighting how change is resisted at these sites.

In this thesis I have, therefore, brought together two elements: a case study of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam and an analysis of power relations in organisations. In so doing, I believe I have demonstrated both the relevance of an approach that utilises the concept of organisational culture as a key to understanding the consistent and insurmountable impasse faced by gender mainstreaming in Oxfam as well as the need to recognise the politics that surrounds the process of organisational change. In Part III of this thesis, it is my hope to make explicit the links between these two elements as well as to develop an understanding of a number of broader issues: What can this detailed analysis tell us about the nature of institutional change, particularly in relation to policies that spell out radical change? Does this

analysis, despite its ambitions, achieve anything other than putting another nail in the coffin of gender mainstreaming? Where now with mainstreaming, is this truly the end of this feminist project of institutional change in international development?

This chapter will draw this research together and in so doing will explore some of the issues raised above. In the first section, I will review the case study material and the theoretical framework. I will show that a policy impasse clearly exists in Oxfam around gender mainstreaming and that an analysis of organisational culture has provided a useful lens to both make this explicit as well as to better understand the impasse that has arisen. I will highlight that the process of organisational change guided by Oxfam's gender mainstreaming strategy has facilitated the removal, rather than the development, of staff responsibility for implementing GAD approaches, which has in turn resulted in acts of resistance to change by staff in the organisation becoming less obvious and less easy to tackle. In the second section, I will take up what has been learned through this analysis of gender mainstreaming, organisational culture and 'non-conflict', and develop a deeper understanding of the process of organisational change. It will distinguish between norms and values in organisations and demonstrate the need to appreciate both elements when tackling institutional change along the lines intended by gender mainstreaming. And finally, in the third section, I will examine how the distancing of gender mainstreaming from feminism and feminist ideas has led to the loss of political content within the process element of gender mainstreaming, resulting in the changes demanded by gender mainstreaming becoming technical and managerial in nature. This loss of political content has resulted in the need for value change among staff becoming overlooked or submerged within a narrower, less challenging and rationalised process of 'norm' change. In the conclusion following this chapter, I will take up the final issue and examine what this more sophisticated understanding of both institutional change and the politics of mainstreaming means for the gender mainstreaming project in development. Confusion over 'gender mainstreaming' and 'GAD' in organisations will be shown to be a problem. It will also point to the need for a redefinition of gender mainstreaming that takes adequate account of the political nature of its process of institutional change (and thus the importance of staff values in organisations).

Mainstreaming Gender: The Process of Marginalisation

Oxfam has introduced a GAD outlook into the core of the organisation's management system as well as established GAD terms and concepts within much of the organisation's literature, documentation, communication, analysis and policy. Yet paradoxically, such achievements have not come without a severe cost to actually promoting the use of a GAD approach within development projects and programmes. Although creating knowledge of GAD among staff is a necessary condition for creating change, it is not a sufficient condition. Understanding and appreciating the principles and goals of a GAD approach does not automatically result in individuals challenging gender inequality and attempting to transform gender relations in their work. Rather, the inclusion of a GAD outlook in the organisation has resulted in a situation where creating real change on gender equality in actual development practice has become increasingly difficult. GAD thinking and approaches in Oxfam have thus been both mainstreamed and marginalised. A problem, as noted by Moser and Moser, that is reflected across the international development community (Moser and Moser, 2005).

Gender Mainstreaming in Oxfam: A Policy Impasse

In Chapter 1, I suggested a policy impasse is the all encompassing and long term inability of a broad policy ambition to be transformed into sustained and consistent practice. In such a situation there is a consistent and seemingly irreconcilable gap between stated policy ambitions and the visible implementation and outcomes of the projects and programmes under that policy. I went on to suggest that a policy impasse is not the same as the failure of an individual project or programme to match the goals of a policy (an example of policy evaporation). A policy impasse is something that can only be assessed over the long term as it is the *consistent* inability of policy to be turned into corresponding practice, not necessarily its total inability. Therefore, recognition of a policy impasse can co-exist alongside instances of successful projects and programmes as well as the existence of more general positive changes in policy-practice discourse.

I also noted that the question which becomes most pertinent to ask is: at what point is a policy recognised as consistently failing to be turned into practice and to therefore have reached an impasse? I provided three indicators that would suggest a policy impasse exists, the most serious of which is when those implementing and researching policy and practice ask themselves if continued attempts to transform a certain policy into practice have given rise to a situation or reality that seemingly works to prevent or neutralise practice stemming from that policy. For instance, not only does practice consistently fail to meet the goals and ambitions of the policy, but the general policy environment has evolved into something that actually serves (either directly or indirectly) to undermine or erode the fundamental ability of the policy to achieve its goals in practice. I illustrated this definition with examples from literature on indigenous knowledge policy and practice in development policy (Beck, 1993; Burghart, 1993; Croll, 1993; Curtis, 1994; Ellen, 2002; Fairhead, 1993; Marsden, 1994; Pottier, 1997; Richards, 1993).

In addition to the recent and generally widespread view in feminist development literature that gender mainstreaming is facing an impasse rather than merely multiple instances of policy evaporation (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007b; Mama, 2007; Moser, 2005; Moser and Moser, 2005; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Standing, 2004; Woodford-Berger, 2004), in the case study developed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 I have also highlighted that gender mainstreaming in Oxfam has also been recognised by those promoting a GAD approach in the organisation as reaching a seemingly unsolvable impasse. For instance, Oxfam has failed to meet the goals set out by the organisation's Gender Policy, it has failed to turn rhetoric into practice, and it has failed to get staff to act upon their own knowledge of GAD thinking and approaches in their work. But more than this, in altering the organisation to be more receptive of GAD thinking and approaches in its projects and programmes (as was intended) a situation has also arisen whereby, though gender issues are considered paramount by 'ordinary' staff, they are frequently not recognised as their actual personal responsibility and therefore development practice that utilises a GAD approach has become the exception rather than a rule. Gender mainstreaming has 'failed' because the process of institutional change it initiated and directed

has produced a situation that makes its stated purpose – the implementation of GAD approaches in all development projects and programmes – increasingly unlikely. The way the process of institutional change has unfolded has served to undermine the ability of the policy to achieve its goals.

However, acknowledging that gender mainstreaming has reached a policy impasse is more than just arguing semantics. It provides a clear entry point from which to examine the contemporary process of gender mainstreaming. Such an investigation would accept gender mainstreaming for what it is, where it presently stands, and the impasse it currently faces. This is perhaps in contrast to more standard forms of investigation and analysis on gender mainstreaming that presently exist and which tend to examine what gender mainstreaming is promoting (Behning and Serrano Pascual, 2001; Booth and Bennett, 2002; Rees, 1998; Rees, 2005; Squires, 2005) or in what way its successes and failures should be (or have been) assessed (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Eschle and Maiguasha, 2007; Goetz and Sandler, 2007; Mama, 2007; Moser and Moser, 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Standing, 2004; Subrahmanian, 2007; WEDO, 2005; Wendoh and Wallace, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004). Instead of going over common ground and examining potential options (based on that information) for taking feminist policy ambitions beyond that impasse, such an investigation would try to understand more fully how such an impasse has come to exist within the process of organisational change that directly attempts to create practice based on GAD thinking and approaches. My research has attempted this investigation in a systematic way in order to add a significant contribution to the sparse, eclectic and partial array of such analyses that currently exist (Kusakabe, 2005a; Rao and Kelleher, 2005; Tiessen, 2004).

The Politics of Process: Conflict and Resistance to Change

In developing an analysis of gender mainstreaming that examines not just the technical issues of institutional change but its political process, it was crucial to identify a starting point. I noted that some authors rightly point out that active conscious subversion of gender mainstreaming exists as a result of 'deep-seated resentment of and consequent resistance to

the project of equality between men and women and the language of politics that assertions of equality bring forward' (Mukhopadhyay, 2004: 97). In these cases, conflict is visible and struggles are identifiable either through the actions or inactions of organisations and their members – resistance to change in this instance is an active performance that openly challenges that which intends to subvert the status quo. Though this is a valid starting point, its subsequent analyses are generalisable only to those organisations and institutions that face active and explicit resistance to GAD thinking and practice.

This is interesting but it does not provide an understanding of how gender mainstreaming has so consistently failed, independent of an organisation and its staffs' acceptance and support for GAD approaches to development. As a consequence, I suggested that a more wide reaching political analysis of organisational change should start at the point where conflict between mainstream development and GAD thinking and approaches is not visible but where policy evaporation still occurs. Only by delving deeper into these sites of 'non-conflict' would further relations of power become visible and the mechanisms by which attempts at gender mainstreaming have been consistently resisted become clear. Oxfam was chosen as a case study for the very reason that gender mainstreaming in the organisation produces few sites of visible conflict – few staff actively and explicitly resist the ideas and practices promoted by GAD thinking – and those that have existed have usually been overcome through the persistence of gender advocates in the organisation.

By identifying where to start my analysis of gender mainstreaming – at the point where conflict is no longer readily visible or identifiable – I developed an approach to make sites of 'non-conflict' visible. In Chapter 1, I argued that locating sites of 'non-conflict' requires any analysis to focus upon the 'third dimension' of power, the unconscious influence of power, the influence of an accepted and unquestioned culture (Lukes, 2005). Organisational culture was recognised to have many interpretations, but I argued that in essence it was the 'everyday' of organisations (Schwartzman, 1993; Young, 1989). Studying the interstices of the 'everyday' (through an examination of organisational structures and discourse) makes a picture of organisational culture more lucid. Through building and exploring a picture of organisational culture I suggested that I

would be able to identify and examine instances of 'non-conflict' and, as such, acts of resistance to change in an organisation. In Chapters 4 and 5, I used this approach to analyse Oxfam's experience with gender mainstreaming. In bringing to light instances of 'non-conflict' over GAD thinking and practice in the organisation it became possible to identify (and understand) more diffuse (though no less problematic) acts of resistance by staff (as will be examined in this chapter).

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, hostility to or active suppression of the ideas and aspirations of gender mainstreaming did not seem to be a problem in Oxfam. The idea of dominant interests actively challenging and subverting change did not seem to fit the reality that Oxfam offered up. In fact, many of Oxfam's most recent dilemmas around the process of gender mainstreaming focused on the issue of 'why is there no change when there is no noticeable opposition to GAD ideas and approaches' rather than 'who are the key resisters to change' and 'how can we challenge those who resist gender mainstreaming'. In this section, I hope to review the case study material and demonstrate that oppositional politics and resistance to change remains a continuing problem despite a bureaucratic portrait of consensual acquiescence.

The concept of resistance (in a classic sense) is not directly applicable to studies of organisational change such as mine. Resistance is a concept generally used to highlight the multiple and diverse ways in which those who are subordinate to hegemonic ideas and institutions challenge the dominant power relations and the existing status quo (Faith, 1994; Martin, 1988; Risseuw, 1991; Scott, 1985; Scott, 1990; Staudt and Jaquette, 1988). In Scott's (1985) classic analysis of peasant society in Malaysia he discusses the multiple modes of peasant resistance to powerful interests in the village. He goes on to highlight that such resistance is rarely active and overt (for example, violent protests) but occurs most frequently (and perhaps most effectively) in everyday acts, such as through the spreading of malicious rumours. In many respects, such research has a starting point counter to my own. In Oxfam, I am not examining how gender advocates are resisting and subverting the dominant approach to development. In fact, I am examining quite the opposite. I am looking into how the dominant approach to development is maintaining the current status quo in the organisation and preventing GAD thinking and approaches changing

mainstream development practice. Rather than examining resistance destined to create change I am examining forms of 'resistance' enacted to prevent it.

However, perhaps both the picture of 'mainstream' and 'radical' in Oxfam, as well as the concept of resistance (that is generally been associated with those wanting change as apposed to those preventing it), should not be so clear cut. With more latitude on interpretation and relevance³⁷, classic readings of resistance (such as Scott's) can provide useful insights into staff acts of opposition connected to specific sites of 'non-conflict' in Oxfam. Firstly, research on acts of resistance have shown that they can take a multiplicity of forms (Faith, 1994: 47) – for example, Scott has defined four models or types of resistance (Scott, 1990: 19). Research has also highlighted that though active and open forms of resistance can have significant impacts and create visible conflict, much more dangerous and fundamentally challenging forms of resistance are those that are no longer visible and no longer seem to actually cause any form of conflict of interest (Risseuw, 1991; Scott, 1985). Such closeted acts of opposition and the idea of 'non-conflict' have a notable resonance with my own research.

For instance, active and open forms of resistance to GAD ideas and approaches manifest themselves in organisations through staff who refuse to accept the importance of GAD and see it as 'subverting the natural order', or through actions that prevent GAD issues reaching the development agenda within an organisation's work. Staudt and Jaquette (1998) and Cockburn (1991) provide clear examples of open and active acts of resistance to such gendered change within organisations. However, such resistance in Oxfam is no longer acceptable or credible and

³⁷ For example, as I have noted throughout my case study, elements of gender mainstreaming have been successful: an 'accepted' gender policy exists in the organisation, sexism has been all but eradicated, staff recognise GAD issues as an important aspect of international development, understanding of GAD approaches is widespread, and discourse in the organisation has adopted many of the GAD related concepts and language. In these senses, GAD has been mainstreamed and reshaped the heart of the organisation – GAD is now part of the dominant development approach. However, patchy development practice has called this into question – thinking and ideas have been changed but practice still conforms to the previous bureaucratic status quo (providing the focus for this thesis). Part of the confusion over the possible future successes and challenges of gender mainstreaming lay in this current situation – can 'radical' ideas remain radical once they have become the 'mainstream'? Resolving this conundrum is beyond the scope of this research, however, it does provide a point of departure for reassessing the applicability of understandings developed by classical studies of resistance. Foucault highlights that there is no easy division between dominant and oppositional discourses, and that resistance does not arise from any singular point (Faith, 1994: 7). Resistance is merely an act of opposition frequently associated with, but not necessarily exclusive to, repressed interests. And therefore, in the context of Oxfam, it is no longer necessary to neatly label relations and acts of power as dominant or subversive to appreciate or use the understandings developed within traditional resistance literature.

instances of such acts are indeed the exception. Such a lack of noticeable resistance to the goal of gender mainstreaming forms part of the conundrum around the problem of the policy impasse – active resistance may be unwanted but at least it is a known that can be tackled and worked on. What has become more important to examine in Oxfam are those models or forms of resistance that are no longer active and open in their approach or intent.

Such models or forms of resistance to change are complex in their aspirations and intentions. They are hard to challenge because they no longer confront or out-rightly push aside an opposing idea or belief. For instance, all those working in Oxfam appreciate the need to tackle gender inequality and recognise that it should be an important aspect of Oxfam's work. GAD thinking and approaches are accepted by staff as a key aspect of the organisation. Instead, acts of resistance play out through instances of 'non-conflict'. General literature on resistance identifies two models of resistance that I think most appropriately describe the actions of staff within the sites of 'non-conflict' in Oxfam. I will identify these two models as 'passive resistance' and 'subconscious resistance'. Unlike active and open resistance – an act that either directly or indirectly, though always explicitly, challenges and intends to subvert a particular reality – passive and unconscious acts of resistance do not intentionally set out to challenge a particular set of circumstances. Instead such acts of resistance work in the long run to subvert a particular reality but do so without any direct intent to subvert. Passive and subconscious resistance can in turn be differentiated by the actor's level of understanding of their own act of resisting, as will now be explained.

Passive resistance occurs when actors do not try to challenge or deny the importance of a particular reality or system, but instead disassociate themselves from it to fulfil other aspects of their life they consider more of a priority. Such acts are 'largely concerned with immediate, de facto gains' and not 'formal, overt, [...] systematic, de jure change' (Scott, 1985). However, the long term consequence of such individual private acts of passive resistance will result in the appearance of systematic subversion and a picture of intentionality after the fact. For instance, in Chapter 4 I examined how the use of specialist advisors or consultants is an accepted practice in Oxfam. I also provided an example of how this accepted practice has been used to displace responsibility for adopting a GAD approach: In this example I highlighted how Margarita (the Lead

Gender Advisor) had organised a meeting with the Campaigns Director and the advisor for the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Campaign to discuss gender issues in the campaign. Margarita was annoyed that they had not made use of the opportunity the Beijing +10 conference gave the campaign for promoting gender in the MDGs. After a heated and tense discussion the Campaigns Director suggested that 'there are enough gender people (read: experts)' and they should have been involved to put gender in the campaign. It would be unfair at this point to suggest that the Campaigns Director is against the goal of achieving gender equality in his work and thus intentionally resisted promoting gender in the MDGs. However, the Campaigns Director did intentionally use the accepted practice of taking on specialists to absolve himself of responsibility for taking any personal action with regard to a GAD approach.

Subconscious resistance on the other hand is an act of resistance that transcends any understanding of intentionality by the actor, either in terms of immediate gain or long term change. Understanding such a model of resistance stems from interpretations of Bourdieu's concept of 'learned ignorance' whereby actors 'are not fully aware of their own conduct and operate from [...] a mode of practical knowledge which does not include knowledge of its own principles' (Risseuw, 1991: 164). This practical knowledge can be seen as knowledge which stems from the cultural system that surrounds the actor. The actor merely accepts the realities of the system in which he or she is embedded and takes actions based on their knowledge of those realities. Actions based on this practical knowledge may lead to acts of resistance that are beyond the understanding of the individual (either in terms of short term personal reasons or long term change). They are unintentional but also beyond the actors grasp of understanding.

For instance, in Chapter 4 I examined how gender has been incorporated into the management and planning structure of the organisation – the SCO framework. In discussing the SCO framework I highlighted how the incorporation of 'Gender Equity' as a distinct niche in the organisation, despite explicit reference to mainstreaming, has actually served to distance staff in other SCOs from delivering a GAD approach in their work. The case of the Livelihood's Project Officer who noted the important gender implications of a project but left them aside because it was not in his direct remit was used to highlight this (see **Case Study 4.1**). Again, after a long

discussion with the project officer it would be unfair to accuse him of actively or even knowingly resisting institutional change around GAD (to the contrary he was actually very concerned with implementing GAD thinking and practice). However, the Gender Equity SCO made it hard for him to understand how he should take responsibility for such practice. In the end he left it out, not because he was trying to absolve himself from the responsibility of delivering on it, but because he just could not see how he could deliver it within his current job mandate.

In **Table 6.1** I have attempted to highlight instances of both passive and subconscious resistance within the sites of ‘non-conflict’ highlighted by the Oxfam case study in Chapters 4 and 5. It is clear to see that both forms of resistance do not explicitly or intentionally challenge the process of gender mainstreaming – GAD ideas and approaches are clearly seen as a key aspect of all development practice in the organisation – but at the same time resistance to such changes is occurring and the implementation of GAD approaches in practice are being subverted. Hence the policy impasse exists.

Table 6.1: Sites of ‘non-conflict’ and instances of resistance in Oxfam

	Passive Resistance	Subconscious Resistance
The Strategic Change Objective	Constructing gender as an ‘add on’ in Oxfam provides an easy opportunity for staff to pass responsibility for applying GAD thinking and approaches in their work onto others. As Case Study 4.2 highlights, senior management and livelihoods policy makers didn’t need to challenge the importance or need of a GAD analysis to resist the ambitions of mainstreaming. Instead, by adding on a gender analysis to the original analysis they shifted responsibility for delivering on GAD to the Regional Gender Advisor. As was seen in this case study such practice makes delivering on GAD approaches extremely difficult but at the same time provides signals that gender issues are being taken seriously by staff working on areas outside of SCO 5.1.	In placing Gender Equity within the Strategic Change Objective framework Oxfam has set up gender as a distinct area of work in the organisation. However, such a distinct identity, posited within a framework that actively encourages the separation of work, does not sit well with the goal of mainstreaming. As a consequence, rather than call into question the validity of the system, staff place GAD approaches and goals solely within the Gender Equity SCO. Staff working on the other SCOs in the organisation therefore absolve themselves of responsibility for carrying through on GAD approaches in their work as they see it primarily as the responsibility of others (those working on SCO 5.1). Case Study 4.1 provides a good example of this.
The Planning Approach		The planning approach in Oxfam sets up the external environment as the priority – gender mainstreaming becomes a process that provides the ‘tools or knowledge’ necessary to change the lives of people in the projects and programmes of Oxfam. Internal change therefore becomes a secondary issue that is dominated by external concerns (see Case Study 4.3). As a consequence, change within the organisation is resisted by staff, not because they may not value it, but because it does not confirm to the direct needs of external environment – gender mainstreaming has become goal rather than process orientated. Through ignoring the internal dynamic of mainstreaming, individual responsibility for delivering GAD approaches fails to be developed.

Ways of Working	The accepted practice of using internal experts/advisors and external consultants within Oxfam provides staff with ready excuse to leave out gender issues and have them 'added on' later by a gender 'expert or consultant'. Responsibility for developing GAD thinking and practice therefore no longer rests with the individual staff member involved in a project or programme. Annulling ordinary staff of responsibility for putting into practice GAD often results in the over burdening of gender staff, poor incorporation of GAD approaches, and little uptake of GAD thinking or practice within a project, programme or campaign.	The division of work in Oxfam between 'development' and in-house' affairs has created an artificial division of responsibility in the organisation for carrying out the process of gender mainstreaming. Those responsible for development issues have no remit to change staff practices or organisational structures, whereas those responsible for staff practices have little knowledge of the developmental needs of GAD approaches. Such a division of responsibilities among staff makes creating effective institutional change extremely difficult as no-one can take complete responsibility for managing the process of change.
The Technical Enclave		The creation of GAD as an 'expert' and technical area of knowledge within Oxfam discourse, as well as the subsequent reverence of the 'gender expert', sets up 'ordinary' staff as incapable of grasping what is needed to deliver a GAD approach in their work. Such discourse both annuls responsibility for GAD among the majority of staff, as it is something beyond the comprehension of 'ordinary staff', and shifts responsibility for delivery to those with the appropriate 'technical expertise' (see Case Study 5.1 for a good example).
The Acceptable Mystification of Gender	Creating a vision of GAD as an 'expert' and technical area of knowledge has allowed staff to renounce personal responsibility for dealing with it. Though they may agree with the principles of GAD they also frequently state that it is too complex to understand. For instance, the example of the comment on the Graffiti Wall about the 'Gender Equality and Men' toolkit in Chapter 5 highlights well how staff see complex language and concepts around GAD issues as a legitimate reason for not engaging with GAD approaches and thinking.	Furthermore, such passive resistance is bolstered by the fact that 'mystification' of GAD has been institutionally authorised as a valid reason for not engaging. The desire to over-simplify and intellectually under-develop staff capacity on GAD thinking and practice continues to reinforce the idea that being mystified by GAD is acceptable. This acceptability shifts responsibility away from the individual who actually needs to grapple with these issues in their work and on to the Gender Advisors to provide ever more oversimplified and meaningless tools and checklists.
The Dilution of Meaning	Gender mainstreaming and associated GAD terminology have become common terms in Oxfam. However, staff frequently know when and where to use such terms to appear to be doing something on gender but at the same time take very few actions at all. For instance, project reports often say they are 'mainstreaming gender' and adopting certain GAD approaches but at the same time have only very rudimentary gender analysis incorporated into project reviews.	This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that 'institutionally' the terms have become increasingly vacuous with little meaningful content about what action a specific term entails (see Case Study 5.2). The dilution of meaning has meant that staff within Oxfam may use gender mainstreaming and GAD terminology freely and ubiquitously but at the same time the use of such terms ties them down to very few specific actions. The vacuous use of such terms reduces the burden of responsibility for change from staff. Furthermore, when staff do take some action within their projects, no matter how rudimentary, gender mainstreaming is believed to have been achieved. Getting staff to take action on some more difficult aspect of change around GAD approaches becomes increasingly difficult if they already believe they have mainstreaming gender in their work.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that many of the acts of resistance that can be identified, whether they are passive or subconscious, are posited in terms of 'responsibility for' rather than 'rejection of' the ideas and approaches of GAD. Resistance to change seems to be

permitted through a low sense of personal responsibility for actually carrying out the changes demanded by gender mainstreaming to put the Oxfam Gender Policy into tangible practice. Examining sites of 'non-conflict' has made these acts of resistance more readily discernable and understandable. However, such acts of resistance have not been noted by those carrying out and assessing the process of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam.³⁸ As a consequence, these acts of resistance, and more importantly the issue of personal responsibility, have not been considered or countered by the process of organisational change in the Oxfam and as such the problem of a policy impasse continues.

Overall, the case study of Oxfam has attempted to highlight that the culture of the organisation contains hidden sites of conflict and subsequent acts of resistance which have in turn led to the process of institutional change instructed by gender mainstreaming ambitions becoming quietly subverted and neutralised. Conflict over and resistance to mainstreaming now centres around the idea of 'responsibility for' rather than 'rejection of' GAD ideas and approaches in development practice. These new understandings of conflict, resistance and responsibility with the context of development organisations will be developed in the following section that will examine the role of values in the process of organisational change. But for now it is just important to note that the current process of organisational change inspired by a desire to mainstream gender in Oxfam has actually contributed to the marginalisation of GAD approaches in the organisation's projects and programmes.

Marginalising Gender: The Process of Mainstreaming in Oxfam

The wholesale incorporation of GAD into the organisation, into its structures and discourse, has resulted in a situation whereby progress on the implementation of GAD approaches has become increasingly difficult. The Gender Policy has become both mainstreamed and marginalised in Oxfam: 'mainstreamed' in the sense that it has, in many ways, radically altered the organisational makeup in line with GAD beliefs about development; 'marginalised' in the sense that such thinking and approaches are almost entirely excluded from the majority

³⁸ A review of a number of the key documents mentioned in Chapter 3 would make this fact readily apparent. Such documents would include: Oxfam GB, 1994; Oxfam GB, 1996a; Oxfam GB, 1996b; Oxfam GB, 2002c; Oxfam GB, 2006b; Porter, Smyth et al., 1999; Sinha, 1996; Smith, 1995; Smyth, 2005; Teigeler, unknown.

of Oxfam's actual programme and project work. Mainstreaming has created an organisational reality whereby gender is both appreciated as a crucial aspect of development work but at the same time it is not seen as a personal responsibility among the majority of staff. Without a developed sense of personal responsibility for challenging gendered injustices, the use of GAD approaches are unlikely to be anything more than a well intentioned and widely accepted (but unimplemented) policy in Oxfam.

Oxfam did not initiate this process of organisational change with the intention of marginalising GAD approaches and thinking in the organisation, yet this is the situation in which it now finds itself. This situation in Oxfam raises a number of wider questions and issues. Is marginalisation an inherent danger in the mainstreaming process? Is the removal of personal responsibility an inescapable consequence of the process of directed institutional change? Despite an organisation's commitment to raising the level of gender awareness among its staff, can it actually make its staff act on this knowledge? Does gender mainstreaming require replacing all staff with 'gender experts' to achieve its goal and would this be a productive or desirable solution? And perhaps most crucially, does this analysis of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam give support to those who believe that the process of gendered institutional change should be put behind us as a well intentioned but doomed attempt at achieving social justice for women in development contexts?

These questions are critical and will be dealt with in the third section of this chapter. However, before this there is a need to ask a much more rudimentary question: What can this examination of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam tell us about the actual process of institutional change demanded by mainstreaming? This thesis has not only developed a case study of gender mainstreaming but also contributes to an understanding of institutional change processes in organisations more generally. Understanding the nature of institutional change and its relationship with the promotion of radical ideas and policies will be key to going on to understanding gender mainstreaming more fully as well as shedding some light on the questions raised above.

‘Master Plans’ or ‘Misconceptions’: Norms and Values in Organisations

What should we take from this analysis of the gender mainstreaming process? What does it say about the nature of institutional change? Moser and Moser argue that ‘an organisational culture which is male-biased, in terms of attitudes, recruitment, working conditions, and structures and procedures, discriminates against female staff and clients’ (Moser and Moser, 2005: 16). Following this chain of thought, institutional change, along the lines suggested by gender mainstreaming, is a process embedded within a patriarchal system – the organisation – and it is therefore highly likely that the interests of women will be marginalised. Change is constrained by a system that places the ‘feminine’ as secondary. Such an argument is very clear and direct, but, in reality, how far can this type of analysis of GAD, organisations and the process of institutional change take us?

Patriarchy is no doubt an important concept for understanding conflict over and resistance to processes of organisational change around GAD approaches. However, does this level of analysis do justice to the case study of Oxfam in this thesis? Can Oxfam really be characterised as an organisational culture that is male-biased and essentially patriarchal? Is resistance in the organisation an expression of male centred values? I believe not. In fact, Oxfam was selected as a case study primarily because it is seen as an organisation that today is far from patriarchal, an organisation that has nurtured and developed GAD ideas and approaches. To blame the failure of change upon an embedded patriarchal culture – a deep structure that actively serves the interests of men and is perhaps even consciously maintained by the interests of men – is just too simplistic and covers up the complexity of institutional change, personal actions and relations of power in the organisation.

At the beginning of the thesis, I examined the nature of power. When discussing Lukes’ third dimension of power, and the consequent need to examine sites of ‘non-conflict’ located within organisational culture, I noted that Foucault drew attention to the idea that power can no longer be ‘substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it [...]’; it becomes a machinery that no one owns. [...]It’s a machine in which everyone is caught,

those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised' (Foucault, 1980a: 156). To blame the failure of gender mainstreaming upon a patriarchal system ignores the often complex ways in which power operates and resistance is expressed, this inevitably reduces our understanding of the process of organisational change.

Indeed, I went on to highlight the relevance of Ferguson's analysis of the development apparatus in Lesotho. In his analysis he highlights that

It is tempting to see in the discourse and interventions of such parties the logic that defines the train of events. Such a view, however, inevitably misrepresents the complexities of the involvement of intentionality with events. Intentions, even of powerful actors or interests, are only the visible part of a much larger mechanism through which structures are actually produced, reproduced and transformed. Plans are explicit, and easily seen and understood; conspiracies are only slightly less so. But any intentional deployment only takes effect through a convoluted route involving unacknowledged structures and unpredictable outcomes. (Ferguson, 1994: 276)

'Plans are explicit, and easily seen and understood; conspiracies are only slightly less so'. To question the relevance of 'patriarchy' as an answer to why the impasse faced by gender mainstreaming in Oxfam exists is not to deny the idea of or belief in the masculine 'conspiracy' but to acknowledge that 'master plans' do not provide true accounts of reality. They merely place a façade of intentionality onto reality after the fact. The failure of institutional change, in this instance, cannot and must not be seen as the result of intentional subversion by 'controlling minds' (whether they be disembodied or not). Such an assertion corresponds with my discussion of resistance and actor intentionality in the previous section of this chapter. Instead, the answers must be seen within the more mundane aspects of change. The case of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam must be examined and an attempt must be made to decipher what has occurred during the actual process of institutional change in the organisation to produce such a dire result. If an outcome – the inability of gendered institutional change to support the implementation of GAD approaches in development practice – is not the direct product of intentionality, then the process of organisational change must in some serious way be lacking? The following section will attempt to uncover, using the example of Oxfam, the flawed nature of the organisational change process adopted by those attempting to mainstream gender in development institutions.

'Values' and 'values': Organisations and their Staff

Gender mainstreaming has very specific goals and desired outputs but it also remains at its core a process of institutional change. Gender mainstreaming is a process that must challenge the status quo in organisations, both in what they do and how they do it. As such, it is a political process that implicitly acknowledges the institutional reality of competing and oppositional ideologies (Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006; Verloo, 2005). As a consequence, gender mainstreaming is in essence a process of value change. It is about changing what is considered important or fundamental as well as about creating the desire to act on this new understanding. However, value change as a concept within studies of organisations is not a simple one to understand. What are 'values' in the context of organisations? What or who holds them? How can they be changed? Ignoring the subtlety of understanding around values in organisations can easily lead to an intended radical process of change becoming deradicalised, technicalised and managerialised. The case study of Oxfam developed in this thesis provides a case in point.

For many, Oxfam has transformed its values with a certain amount of success. As was noted in Chapters 3, 4 and 5: policies, reviews, performance management guidelines, organisational objectives, strategic frameworks, toolkits, concept notes and the wealth of other material and structures within Oxfam express an organisation that holds a GAD ideology as a core value. Perhaps most importantly of all, the adoption of the Gender Policy in 1993 is a clear and unequivocal statement of gendered organisational values:

Oxfam believes in the essential dignity of people and their capacity to overcome the problems or pressures which can crush or exploit them. Oxfam's principles apply across the gender divide – to allow women as well as men their essential dignity, and to work with women and men in its emergency and relief programmes in overcoming the pressures which exploit them. To achieve this, gender relations need to be transformed. (Oxfam GB, 1993)

In a break from the past, where organisational values could be considered masculine/sexist or, at the very least, unconcerned with women or gender, the Gender Policy redefines Oxfam. Oxfam is now an organisation that values GAD approaches both for what they can achieve in creating a lasting solution to poverty but also because they tackle an unacceptable and unjust form of inequality. As I noted in chapter 5, redefining the 'terms' of Oxfam is an approach to

value change that can lead to substantive changes among staff practices – staff face the possibility of becoming redundant (in a social and practical sense rather than necessarily in an employment sense) if they do not conform to explicit organisational values. Such attitudes towards the process of institutional change are based on a systems theory of organisations that suggests ‘an organisation can have values and that these values should be fully shared by the employees; the way to undertake strategy, then, is to have a strong vision for the organisation [...] and to find ways of airing this vision so that employees can commit to it’ (Mowles, Forthcoming: 1).

Systems theory first emerged in organisational theory and practice in the 1950s and was heavily influenced by behavioural positivism that was popular in the natural sciences at the time. Systems theory continues to have an important influence on organisation studies and praxis today.³⁹ Such thinking visualises organisations as an idealised whole, or a system, with the parts and levels of that organisation intrinsically interrelated to the whole. The organisation can therefore hold certain values which will by necessity be mimicked within its constituent parts. Within such a model it becomes the responsibility of individuals (a sub-component of the whole) to match their values with those of the organisation’s (Pasteur and Scott-Villiers, 2004). However, despite this popular approach to understanding organisations and processes of change, I have repeatedly found this is not to be the case in my own research. Despite affirmation by staff of Oxfam’s gendered ‘values’ (defined within documents such as the 1993 Gender Policy), their actual sense of responsibility for bringing their own values and (more importantly) actions into line with it is generally low.

Changes in the vision, language or goals of an organisation are important but bringing about value change, especially around an inherently controversial and political concept, requires a much more sympathetic and socially grounded understanding of organisations. Models that see an organisation as a system or organic whole do not really distinguish between the organisation and the individuals who work within that organisation. The individuals are

³⁹ Wiener (1948) provides one of the first examples of systems theory, or cybernetics, in organisational studies literature. More recent examples include: Argyris (1982), Jackson (2000), Senge (1990) and Schön (1991).

distinct merely to the extent that they are components or parts of the whole and not the whole themselves. Within this model, changes to the whole inevitably lead to change in the individual as individuals run the risk of becoming redundant if they do not adapt to system changes. Values are both developed and held by an organisation and, as a consequence, these values are held, as a matter of inevitability, by the individuals within the organisation. However, to what extent is such a model useful for understanding (or even creating) institutional change? Is it really a help to see an organisation as something that can actually hold values – desires, motivations and beliefs that can be shaped or changed?

For those involved in gender mainstreaming in Oxfam, the organisation's Gender Policy or the Aim 5 Strategic Framework are real and tangible 'values' and are seen as essential for change in the institution. And in a sense they are right. These are real and tangible aspects of change and do have an important role to play, but there is a need to distinguish between what we could call organisational 'Values', and 'values' held more generally within organisations. 'Values' are not the same as 'values', confusing the two misses the subtlety and complexity of organisations. Organisational 'Values' should more accurately be defined as 'norms'.⁴⁰ They are 'obligatory and constraining and provide moral criteria for assessing what ought to be done', whereas 'values' held by individuals within an organisation are 'compelling (in a voluntary sense) and uplifting at the same time, as they are freely chosen' (Mowles, Forthcoming). Within such a train of thought, individuals cannot be seen as components of organisations – miniature expressions of the whole – but instead must be perceived as autonomous agents within that whole. Their free choice distinguishes them from the framework they are embedded in. Their 'values' cannot be set by the organisation, they are the very thing that distinguishes the individual from that organisation. (Joas, 2000)

⁴⁰ Within the context of my research the concept of a (organisational) 'norm' is being interpreted in a more traditional philosophical sense rather than from a social science perspective. For instance, a 'norm' here is being interpreted as meaning something that suggests how things *should* or *ought* to be. For instance, the Oxfam Gender Policy is an example of an organisational norm as it an authoritative organisational document that expresses that all development interventions orchestrated by the organisation *should* include a GAD approach in their planning, delivery and evaluation. It is instructive rather than descriptive. A 'norm' here is not being interpreted as meaning something that highlights a widely accepted form of social etiquette, behaviour or belief among a group.

Understanding processes of institutional change therefore requires recognising individuals as distinct from the organisations to which they belong. It also requires understanding the relationship between 'Values' (henceforth referred to as 'norms') and 'values'. For instance, norms – the overarching policies, directives and goals that suggest appropriate thinking and action – in organisations can be changed with some degree of relative speed and ease. They are much easier to change than values as they merely require an alteration of the formal boundaries that exist in organisations through the creation or alteration of a policy, framework or vision. An organisation has no inherent bond to the norms by which it operates. Values, on the other hand, are held by individuals and, as such, they are both innately personal and extremely resistant to large changes. This has three implications: firstly, successful institutional change requires a corresponding shift in both norms and values in organisations; secondly, shifts in norms within organisations do not automatically change an individual's values; and thirdly, substantially altering an individual's values is a drawn out and involved process of change that cannot simply be achieved through a managerial deployment of rational and analytical tools (Mowles, Forthcoming).

Despite these distinctions between norms and values they are still implicitly linked in the process of institutional change. Norms do inform values (but only up to a point). When norm changes require only marginal or notional shifts in an individual's values, then the mere act of changing norms can be enough in itself to encourage or precipitate change within an individual's values. Norms are idealisations designed to inspire an appropriate value and/or action (Mowles, Forthcoming: 13). Given this reality, it is easy to understand how the process of norm and value change are frequently mis-construed as one and the same. Yet when norm change in organisations promotes a radical shift in thinking and practice, it is inappropriate to expect a parallel shift in values among staff – it is impossible for a person to reconsider their beliefs, motivations and actions to that extent even in the face of rational argument (Joas, 2000). Individuals must be directly encouraged and coaxed to arrive at corresponding values, they will not come automatically or through rationalised instructions. Such a process of change is personally intensive and reflective –

Joas (2000) draws parallels between a moment of true value change among staff with that of an epiphany in religious experiences, such moments cannot be mechanistically induced. Radical processes of change in institutions (and this is not limited to GAD concerns) therefore require strategies and initiatives that work with both norms and values – with organisational policies and frameworks as well as with staff and their personal beliefs. The more radical the process of change needed, the more focused that process needs to be on staff values as opposed to organisational imperatives and the less such a process can follow a prescribed 'one-size-fits-all' approach to change.

Submerging Conflict, Preventing Change

Without recognising these realities within organisations, mainstreaming radical ideas, such as GAD, will be unsuccessful. If the organisations are equated with systems and the difference between norms and values is not fully recognised or understood, a situation emerges where values frequently become ignored (or rather subsumed) within a rationalised process of norm change. Once this happens, change becomes increasingly hard to achieve as conflict, and subsequent acts of resistance to change, become submerged in the organisation. For example, value change only occurs through a slow and drawn out process of inspiration, education and reflection. It rarely occurs by force of will or rationalised policy and action. As a consequence, conflict inevitably occurs if norms within an organisation are significantly altered but the values of staff remain unswayed. At first this conflict will be visible. The establishment of GADU and the development of a gender policy in Oxfam are cases in point. As two employees of Oxfam noted at the time: Bridget Walker noticed that an initial reaction to GADU by some colleagues was to openly refer to it as the 'feminist thought-police', and to deride its role (Walker, 1999: 101), whereas Dianna Melrose was taken aback in a meeting of trustees and management when she was asked 'why gender?' after using the whole meeting to argue for practice to be brought in line with the 1993 Gender Policy (Melrose, 1999: 110). However, open and explicit conflict between new organisational norms and pre-existing staff values, such as this, is in many ways a good thing. It can be reacted against and countered. While conflict and resistance to change are visible dialogue can occur and the need to tackle the values of actual staff members remains clear.

A more serious problem occurs when value change continues to be subsumed within a rationalised process of developing and reinforcing organisational imperatives. Such a continual focus upon organisational norms is a popular aspect of management practice in development, stemming from organisational systems theory outlined above, and it assumes that staff values will ultimately fall into line with norms so long as the norms are passionate and inspirational enough.⁴¹ However, my own research has highlighted that a continual reinforcement of norms without proactive development of an individual's values will only create a presence or image of conformity in an organisation. An individual will ultimately accept and work within organisational norms. Yet conformity to norms does not necessarily mean value change among staff members. An individual's values can essentially remain unchanged. They may accept the organisational norm as important within the context of the institution, but a personal belief in this norm as an important principle in their life may not exist. Within such a situation once visible conflict becomes submerged and hidden. Oxfam's approach to the process of institutional change around gender is a good example of this. The approach to mainstreaming tends to over focus upon differing aspects of norm change and generally skirts around the more difficult activity of staff value change. The Gender Policy in Oxfam is clearly an organisational norm and it has also been complemented by a number of additional forms of norm change to increase its basis as an important and overarching 'moral framework' in the organisation, such as gender objectives within the performance management system, gender indicators and targets within monitoring and evaluation procedures and the development of an Aim 5 Strategic Framework, to name a few.

Work on value change is less clear. Gender training sessions are a key part of the induction process for all new staff as well as a part of the ongoing development of existing staff in Oxfam. However, such training sessions (lasting 1 or 2 days) can only really be seen as an entry point to the process of value change among staff. Value change is a long term introspective process involving dialogue, education and reflection. A 'quick fix' session on

⁴¹ Chambers (2005) provides a clear example of such thinking in his discussion of ActionAid's core 'organisational values' and the concept of 'non-negotiables'. For Chambers, inspirational and uncompromising norms are enough to change organisational practice. Staff values will either change automatically and come into line with organisational norms or staff will leave and simply work elsewhere taking their old values with them.

policy, gender analysis frameworks and monitoring and evaluation techniques will be unlikely to produce serious shifts in what inspires and motivates individuals. Without an extended and personalised programme of gender 'training' (for want of a better term), spanning a staff member's entire career, such sessions merely become a further outlet for disseminating and reinforcing organisational imperatives. In fact, many attempts in Oxfam that initially look like they may attempt to tackle staff values frequently become no more than a distorted form of norm reinforcement to fit into the organisation's rationalised model of change. The Gender Action Research project (see **Case Study 4.3**) in Chapter 4 is a good example of how a strategy that could potentially have developed staff values became a mechanism for reinforcing norms on gender and in so doing lost its potential to change staff values. I highlighted that the 'need' to produce 'good practice stories' (that can essentially be seen as 'ideal type' interventions to which members of the organisation must adhere) undermined the ability of the strategy, through the process of researching gender inequality and empowerment, to develop individuals' understandings of and motivations for dealing with gender inequality.

By continually ignoring, downplaying or placing secondary the essential process of value change and instead focusing upon reinforcing gendered imperatives within the organisation, conflict over GAD approaches and thinking has become submerged. Without directly challenging and developing the values of staff, personal responsibility and motivation for taking forward GAD approaches in practice has been underdeveloped, providing a conduit through which conflict over and resistance to such change manifests itself. A situation can now seemingly exist whereby belief in GAD as an important aspect of development and personal inaction to take GAD forward as an approach can seemingly coexist without contradiction among individuals in Oxfam.

Recognising the Political (and the Non-Political) Aspects of Institutional Change

Effective change in organisations requires both changes to norms and values but the approach to changing them may differ dramatically. Norm change is a managerial rationalised process of technical change. It is about changing policies and human resources

strategies, disseminating rules and regulations, altering language and terms used in the organisation and the like. The process may be perceived as political because of the goal it desires to achieve (its new imperatives) but the process itself is still essentially technical and managerial – the organisation has no ‘personal’ relationship to its norms, it has no particular preference or bond with them, organisational imperatives can be changed (in theory) swiftly and easily. This is not the case with values and value change. Individuals are intrinsically attached to their values as the individual is, in a sense, a sum of the values he or she holds. The process of value change is therefore intensely personal and therefore intensely political. It is rarely, if ever, rational, technical and managerial.

Thus successful institutional change requires an understanding of three differing aspects of the change process: the nature of change, the organisation (and its norms) and the individuals within that organisation (and their values). It is important to examine the nature of change. To what extent is the nature of change political? Is it something that challenges commonly held values or does it reinforce them? It is also important to distinguish between and to examine norms and values in organisations. How are norms changed? How are values changed? What type of strategies will best achieve norm and/or values change in an organisation? In examining these issues the task of actually creating change becomes clearer. If change reinforces commonly held values, then norm change alone is perhaps sufficient to create change in organisations. However, if institutional change goes against or is not supported by commonly held values, then norm change alone is not sufficient. The more radical the nature of change, the more focused the process of institutional change must be on staff and their values. If norms are focused on within organisations, at the expense of values, then the process of change will become subverted as conflict and resistance, far from disappearing, become submerged within the institution. In understanding the relationship between norms and values in organisations and their implications for the process of organisational change, appreciating the reality of the impasse facing gender mainstreaming becomes easier.

The Need to go ‘Behind’ rather than ‘Beyond’ Gender Mainstreaming

How did ‘doing gender’ become something different to ‘doing feminism’? (Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2004)

For some, gender mainstreaming has ultimately become a diversion from achieving real change among (and for) women in development projects and programmes. For others, gender mainstreaming was just too ambitious and, on the whole, just failed to be achievable – it simply became a monolith of a concept. As a consequence, many advocates of GAD approaches now believe it is time to solve the impasse around gender mainstreaming by simply moving beyond it. Gender mainstreaming has been attempted but it has failed to achieve its goal. The rapidity and frequency with which the term (as well as GAD concepts) have been taken up within the international development community may even have hampered the feminist project of achieving equitable social change more generally. For many, the death of gender mainstreaming is welcome and its loss must not be mourned. As its pyre is set alight, we must celebrate the achievements of gender mainstreaming. And, if justice for women is to be truly achieved in development, we must move on, learning from the mistakes made.

My analysis of the mainstreaming process was an attempt to better understand the impasse faced by gender mainstreaming and question this pessimistic conclusion. I did not set out to merely point out the magnitude of the impasse or the barriers to gender mainstreaming strategies. Instead, I attempted to better understand both why and how the process of institutional change has not created an appropriate transformation in development practice despite its omnipresence in development policy and rhetoric. Yet, can I say the outcomes of my research have questioned this conclusion? Have I not merely fanned the flames under the pyre of gender mainstreaming? On a superficial level, perhaps this is the case. However, unlike previous analyses, I have also attempted to look past the outputs and goals of gender mainstreaming and have directed my attention towards really understanding the underlying process of change at the root of the concept. In so doing, I may have highlighted the harsh reality of the impasse that exists for those attempting to mainstream, but I have

also provided the pieces of a puzzle needed for understanding this impasse and why gender mainstreaming has been so consistently silenced across a range of institutional contexts.

Gender mainstreaming must be inherently political in both its goal and its process. However, the case of Oxfam indicates that, though the goal of gender mainstreaming remains openly political, the process of institutional change has become rationalised, technicalised and managerialised – its own political content has been underdeveloped and obscured. Change in Oxfam is approached from a common starting point from which the organisation is perceived as an artificial (scientifically controllable) system rather than a community of people. Within this model, changes in the rules and regulations of the organisation are believed to create changes in its constituent parts (its staff), bringing them into line with the whole. Individuals, in any independent sense, do not exist, they are merely parts of the whole. Nevertheless, this research has shown that this is not the case. Changes to the organisational context, its norms, have not automatically brought about changes among individuals in the organisation. Staff in Oxfam have embraced GAD as an important organisational imperative, yet at the same time, the personal motivations needed by individuals to be personally responsible for delivering on this imperative has not been challenged and is far from embraced. Institutional change has been only partial and as such an impasse has arisen out of acts of passive and subconscious resistance within sites of 'non-conflict'. Such an analysis raises a fundamental question: How has an overtly political process of change become an apolitical one in the institutional context – a question of changing evaluation forms or programme procedures rather than a process of challenging the values and motivations of individuals?

The experience of Oxfam documented in this case study suggests a need to go backwards to what lies behind gender mainstreaming to answer this question. Gender mainstreaming has consistently failed to create sustained change in development practice throughout a multitude of institutional contexts. This cannot merely be seen as a result of its radical goal, its expression of gender equality and social justice. It is also not just the simple operation of patriarchy in organisations. Rather, the process of mainstreaming gender, the very act of organisational change, is critically lacking in development organisations.

Delving into Gender Mainstreaming: Behind the Organisational Process

Can discourse (and practice) on GAD approaches and thinking exist without reference to a wider feminist literature? This may seem an odd question, yet Smyth has drawn attention to the need to pose it. She highlights that with few exceptions 'most of the literature generated by Northern development agencies on gender and on women shares one characteristic: the absence of the term feminism' (Smyth, 1999: 17). This absence of any reference to feminism within Northern NGOs who claim to be mainstreaming gender is a worrying point given the fact that GAD – and as a consequence gender mainstreaming – is an approach developed out of the ideas of feminism and the critiques of development by feminists (Rathgeber, 1990). Smyth states that

we write and talk about gender-sensitive policies and strategies, of gender work and gendered activities or approaches, and even of engendering or genderising (!) this or that aspect of our work. But on feminism, feminist policies and strategies, or on feminists, there is a resounding silence. (Smyth, 1999: 17)

Oxfam has been no exception to this trend. It has readily adopted GAD concepts, ideas and practices. However, it is hard to find any direct reference to specific feminist ideas or even reference to the more general ideas contained within feminist literature. For instance, one particular member of staff I interviewed stated that he was attracted to Oxfam because it was concerned with gender issues but also because it was 'not one of those feminist organisations'⁴². Having shown recognition of the importance of a GAD approach in the organisation, he paradoxically goes on to disassociate it with the ideas and beliefs of feminists. Is such a dislocation between gender, gender mainstreaming and GAD from a wider feminist literature and perspective a healthy basis for a development organisation attempting to mainstream gender?

The concern for achieving social justice, particularly for women, is what primarily binds together even the most divergent feminist thinkers. To this end, to define feminism succinctly, without entering into the endless existentialist debates, it is possible to say that feminism is 'essentially activism against gendered inequality and injustice' (Porter, 1999: 4) – 'activism' here is used in the broadest possible sense. This is a conceptualisation of

⁴² Based on an interview conducted on Friday 18/07/03 in Lima, Peru.

feminism that is reflected within the wider feminist literature on gender in Development Studies (Chigudu, 1997; Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Eschle and Maiguasha, 2007; Jaquette and Staudt, 2006; Mama, 2007). From this common ground, feminists in development often take radically differing viewpoints and approaches on how gender inequality and injustice can best be perceived and overcome. The feminist literature and practice surrounding the issue of women/gender in the development process, such as WID, WAD and GAD, is a case in point (Rathgeber, 1990). However, despite this diversity, there are critical ideas that bind advocates of feminism together. Perhaps most importantly among these are those I will term as epistemological issues. Establishing how we know what we know is a key aspect of feminist thinking and approaches. For instance, Haraway states that 'feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*' (Haraway, 1997: 57) – the belief that it is possible to see only partial truths as knowledge is dependent upon the viewer's own position in the world. This understanding about the nature of knowledge is a common assumption among feminist academics. As a consequence of this, the concept of 'positionality' forms a central theme throughout feminist literature, research, and activity (Grosz, 1986; Haraway, 1997; McDowell, 1997; Stacey, 1997). For instance, in doing research, feminists aim to recognise that they are not detached impartial observers of the world, but are deeply embedded within the social structures and cultural frameworks they are trying to understand. Grosz makes this assertion most pointedly when she highlights that

the conventional assumption that the researcher is a disembodied, rational, sexually indifferent subject – a mind unlocated in space, time or constitutive interrelationships with others, is a status normally attributed only to angels. (Grosz, 1986)

Recognising 'positionality' does not prevent feminists from making inferences about or acting in the world, rather it requires feminists to qualify inferences or reflect on actions with a certain degree of introspection. McDowell raises this issue in her review and discussion of research methods literature in geography (McDowell and Sharp, 1997). Such a perspective requires the researcher to ask him or herself who they are, what are their assumptions, what is their position in society, how do these factors influence the people around them and so on. Critically locating yourself within your own research or activity is a key aspect of feminist thinking and stems directly from an epistemological assumption of 'partial truth'. In turn and

as a result of this, the ideas and beliefs formed by feminists are very much a product of this process and cannot be fully understood, appreciated or acted upon in isolation from this perspective. Ignoring the introspective process of feminist understanding is detrimental to successfully embracing ideas and practices stemming from feminist thought.

Attempting to promote a GAD approach in an organisation's work therefore has implications that go far beyond the specifics of development practice in itself. To understand how an organisation's work can create change among men and women and alter current gender relations in a community (the goal of gender mainstreaming), the organisation must first reflect upon itself and understand its own relations of power, organisational norms and staff values (the process of organisational change). Kabeer highlights that

[Organisations] are relations of power. Very few institutions are egalitarian: they allocate decision-making power in a hierarchical way and they give authority to some people over other people. They give command over resources and command over people, and determine structures of power within institutions. (Macdonald, 1994a: 31)

Nicholson takes this perspective further and suggests that if organisations fail to examine themselves in a critical fashion, they tend to make do with inherited institutional structures and routines, rather than develop more appropriate new ones to meet the organisation's changing needs and objectives (Nicholson, 1994) – an interesting point given the analysis developed within Chapter 4 on the insertion of a gender goal within the Strategic Change Objective Framework. Staff within organisations must also recognise that they are not neutral actors in the development process, but are located in 'rules, resources, practices and hierarchies of command' (both individually and institutionally) (Kabeer, 1994a: 87). Gender mainstreaming that fully embraces its feminist underpinnings must go beyond trying to change practice directly and attempt to critically look at and change the organisation and its staff in a consistent and appropriate manner. As highlighted in Chapter 2, mainstreaming is political and challenging not merely because it promotes a GAD approach and talks about creating radical and transformative change in society at large *per se*, but also because it fundamentally deals with challenging the personal values of staff and the relations of power in development organisations (Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Goetz and Sandler, 2007;

Verloo, 2005). It is a process that values change for its intrinsic as well as its instrumental value. However, without acknowledging and embracing the feminist roots of the concept, the political element to the process of mainstreaming is lost. The process of institutional change contained within gender mainstreaming no longer becomes appreciated for its direct internal role in challenging and shaping staff values, instead it becomes only willingly accepted for its potential instrumental possibilities. Gender mainstreaming becomes synonymous with 'using' a GAD approach, and the politics of change become externalised onto the communities with which an organisation works. Gender mainstreaming becomes seen as political in terms of its goal of gender equality in development practice rather than (also) in terms of its process of change in organisations. The process of mainstreaming instead becomes rationalised and apolitical. Oxfam provides a clear example of this problem.

The Case of Oxfam: Avoiding Feminism, Losing Change

I used Smyth earlier to highlight the absence of any explicit reference to deeper feminist ideas or beliefs in development institutions which proclaim to be promoting a GAD perspective in their work. Oxfam is no exception to this. Smyth herself works for Oxfam and her article, *NGOs in a Post-Feminist Era*, was, in part, based on her experiences with the organisation. From my own research within the organisation, although gender, gender mainstreaming, women's organisations, gender analysis, female empowerment, women's leadership, masculinity, practical and strategic interests and a variety of other gender related terminology are used on a regular basis, deeper and more explicit feminist ideas and beliefs are rarely used and are frequently disassociated with Oxfam. Despite Oxfam and its staff having accepted and supported GAD thinking and praxis within the organisation's work, the wider body of literature and thinking from which it stems has not been acknowledged or utilised.

In failing to acknowledge the roots of gender mainstreaming in feminist thinking and practice – and therefore the epistemological ideas and beliefs upon which the concept rests – those promoting gender mainstreaming have frequently overlooked the most important aspect of it. For instance, as I mentioned in the 'planning approach' in Chapter 4, Oxfam's Gender Policy

puts its emphasis into trying to use a GAD approach to change the world in which it operates and downplays the importance of examining and changing the world in which it exists. The organisation has been so focused upon trying to create projects and programmes that transform gender relations among the communities in which it works that it has failed to recognise and examine its own structures, discourses, norms and values, let alone attempt to seriously transform them in a meaningful and consistent manner. Policy makers and managers within Oxfam perceive gender mainstreaming as something that essentially and primarily changes the way the organisation operates, rather than something that changes the way in which the organisation and, most importantly, its staff think and act. This becomes apparent if I return to the objectives of the 1993 Gender Policy (see **Box 3.3**) as well as some of the examples found within the thesis.

I noted that when examining the Objectives of the Gender Policy, it was possible to categorise them into two types: objectives that say what the organisation must do in its work to reach the vision developed in its Principles, and objectives that say what the organisation must do institutionally to reach that vision. I referred to these two forms of objectives as level 1 and level 2 objectives. I went on to note that the second category of objectives is not directly related to gender issues in development work but focus on what Oxfam needs to achieve if the first types of objective are to be met. As a consequence, though level 1 objectives deal with the details of GAD in Oxfam's development work, they will be difficult to achieve without meeting level 2 objectives. Changing the way the organisation works (meeting level 2 objectives) is a necessary condition for changing what the organisation successfully works on (meeting level 1 objectives). In many ways, these level 2 objectives place internal change as an essential (if a somewhat instrumental) aspect of gender mainstreaming. At first glance, they seem to suggest that change to the operation of the institution and its staff is crucial and recognise the importance of internal political change.

This is an encouraging sign, yet it is undermined by the weak language used. I highlighted that unlike the level 1 objectives, the language used in the level 2 objectives is much weaker. For instance, the level 2 objectives contain ambiguous and weak phrases such as 'developing

positive action to promote', 'takes gender considerations into account', and 'wherever appropriate'. Such phrases and words lack the force needed to express a sincere commitment to instigating real change within the organisational make-up and among the values of staff, unlike the commitment expressed to promoting gender transformative practice in the strong and authoritative wording of the level 1 objectives. Institutional reflection and organisational change stemming from GAD approaches becomes not only seen as secondary to change in the projects and programmes of the organisation among staff, but are also relegated to something less significant by the language used. The consequences of this have been far-reaching.

Up to the present day, gender mainstreaming in the organisation has become peppered with the understanding that external change, change in the 'real world', is of primary concern. Mainstreaming, or any issues for that matter, must primarily focus upon what it can achieve in the projects and programmes of Oxfam. The Campaigns and Policy departmental meeting, highlighted in Chapter 4, set up to discuss the ongoing review for developing a coherent Oxfam International identity was a good example of this. During this meeting a number of staff members raised the need for more than just a 'paper identity'. They suggested that there was a need to actually cultivate shared identity and beliefs (values) among staff, as this would be a key mechanism for getting policies, such as gender, implemented. When these comments were aired, they were met with responses (from the manager running the meeting) in the order of 'too much to do to deal with direct organisational change' and 'we don't want to open that box', expressing a clear belief that external needs (the goal of gender mainstreaming) should and will be prioritised over and above the needs of internal change (the actual process of gender mainstreaming).

However, obsession with 'real world' change goes beyond simply brushing aside substantial internal matters relating to change. For many, the need to tackle internal issues, such as working with staff to develop a sense of common purpose or identity on gender, becomes denigrated. At the Oxfam Global Gender Meeting in March 2006, the scorn for internal matters was openly expressed. Following a brainstorming session, three key members within

Oxfam's management were upset that the vision of what a gender mainstreamed organisation would look like was too inward looking, one going as far to suggest that 'always thinking about ourselves is pathetic [...], we need to look at what we can change in the world' (Oxfam GB, 2006c). This outlook on gender mainstreaming – an outlook that devalues the need for internal reflection and fundamental intrinsic changes to an organisation – remains a basic outlook throughout Oxfam. Oxfam's definition of gender mainstreaming (see **Box 5.3**) highlights well the organisation's continual focus on the external. Three of the four objectives look at changes in the communities in which Oxfam works. Only the fourth and final objective refers directly to Oxfam and only then to say that it should make strategy consistent with the other three (externally focused) objectives. The process of gender mainstreaming is not seen as something primarily focused upon changing the organisation and staff *per se*, but as a process that promotes GAD approaches in the organisation's projects and programmes – the 'real world'. The difference is subtle but nonetheless crucial. The goals and outputs of gender mainstreaming have overshadowed the process needed to achieve them.

Putting Feminist Thinking and Action back into Gender Mainstreaming

Many have now recognised that development organisations need to directly engage with feminist ideas of personal political change and these ideas need to be explicitly reflected in conceptualisations of gender mainstreaming (Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Mama, 2007; Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006). However, what are the implications of putting feminist ideas and action back into the process of gender mainstreaming? Embedding a GAD approach into the heart of an organisation seems not to be enough, organisational change needs to be clearly restated with gender and feminism in mind. Much like Haraway's (1997) idea of 'resonance' between researcher and the researched, there also needs to be a certain degree of 'resonance' between the goal of mainstreaming and its process. GAD approaches intend to transform society, within the context of development projects, by essentially nurturing realisations and aspirations for equality among people. However, this process of value change needs to be recognised as applying equally to both constituents within the concept of gender mainstreaming: the development participant and the development agent. This point was made clear in the previous section, organisational change is only successful if both

organisational norms as well as staff values are brought into symmetry when radical change is attempted. An organisation that fails to recognise the importance of personal ideas and beliefs within its own staff as a catalyst for social change is woefully unprepared for recognising and transforming gender relations in society at large (Chigudu, 1997; Everett, 1997; Hadjipateras, 1997).

Feminist epistemologies have serious implications for what organisations promote and do, but they also have serious implications for the personal motivations and values of staff as well as the way staff relate to themselves, other staff, their clients and their organisation. Eschle (2007: 293) highlights that individual staff members in organisations must act out of empathy and a personal sense of responsibility if radical policies are to be enacted in practice. Unless this is taken on board by development organisations, radical and progressive feminist discourses, such as GAD, are unlikely to create any real change in the way development is practiced.

Rather than going 'beyond' gender mainstreaming, as many feel is necessary, the very process of gender mainstreaming needs to be reinvigorated and become a process that is more inclusive of and more explicit with fundamental feminist ideas and beliefs – it must become openly political and personal. Gender mainstreaming at present is all too reminiscent of the 'add women and stir' approach of WID. Organisations are frequently found taking, what could be termed an 'add gender and stir' approach, leaving GAD thinking and praxis heralded with new organisational imperatives but also with a corpus of 'submissive' staff that are left relatively unengaged and unchanged.

Goetz has suggested that instead of the term 'mainstreaming' there should be a movement toward the term 'institutionalisation' to reflect the importance of the process element to mainstreaming. She stresses that

in the politics of institutionalising gendered perspectives on development policy, different experiences of policy according to gender are taken to represent a challenge, not of political interest revolving around the question of *inclusion*, but rather of involving divergent meanings of social and economic change. In this sense, efforts to 'integrate' women into development policy are not necessarily

transformative, so the concept of 'institutionalising' women's interests in policy processes is used here to indicate a more transformative process. Sometimes the term mainstreaming is used to indicate this process, but the term 'institutionalising' will be preferred here because it puts the accent on institutional change. (Goetz, 1998: 17)

Institutionalising gender implies a process that above all else both seeks and requires the organisation to remodel itself around the needs of the GAD framework. Adopting a GAD perspective becomes not just an objective to be achieved in an organisation's work, but also one to be cultivated and developed within the organisation. Any organisation that is attempting to transform gender relations in society must necessarily start with understanding and transforming itself. The importance of the internal 'community' becomes central within such a definition.

However, reasserting the internal 'community' dimension to gender mainstreaming is just one step. Creating a shift in terminology to account for this may be appropriate, but it is far from enough. In fact, shifting terminology in this way without fully accounting for what is actually necessary to create an organisation that implements GAD approaches may do more harm than good. A shift in terminology that refocuses attention on the internal – that puts the accent on 'institutional change' – but fails to examine what that actual process of institutional change involves continues to make the same definitional mistakes as those who have defined gender mainstreaming previously. As True (2003: 387) has pointed out, who becomes responsible for GAD once it has been 'institutionalised'? Recognising the importance of the internal element of gender mainstreaming – the process of change – is not enough. There also needs to be a better understanding of what that process entails in an organisation. As a consequence, in the conclusion to this thesis I will draw upon all the insights developed within this chapter (on both institutional change and feminists' engagement with mainstreaming in development organisations) to argue for a more sophisticated understanding of gender mainstreaming. In so doing I hope to tackle the problem as to why gender mainstreaming has so consistently faced a policy impasse within international development.

Conclusion

Where Now with Gender Mainstreaming?

What are we mainstreaming when we mainstream gender? (Eveline and Bacchi, 2005)

Eveline and Bacchi pose this question in a recent article, and in turn they answer it by examining the concept of gender within the context of mainstreaming. They also focus upon the loss of gender's political element – its feminist ontology as they see it – and go on to highlight the need to perceive 'gender' as a verb rather than a noun. Using 'gender' as a verb 'has the potential to build on the insights that a feminist ontology of representation can provide for our understanding of the embodied effects of power and advantage which are always partial and incomplete' (Eveline and Bacchi, 2005: 508). However, though their reply to this question is insightful, and has a certain resonance with my discussion of the need to re-engage with feminism in development, they have perhaps missed the point. They over focus upon 'gender' as a concept and try to understand how this concept is situated within an (abstracted and idealised) vision of mainstreaming – gender equality in development practice. The problem with this is that gender mainstreaming in its totality is not a concept solely defined by debates on gender equality in development, rather it is also a concept that encompasses the activities of change in organisations. To stress only the 'gender' aspect of 'gender mainstreaming' is neither to fully appreciate nor analyse the essential and complex process of change that must occur in organisations – achieving gender equality within the work of development organisations is the goal of gender mainstreaming, however, such discussions do not encapsulate the means to achieving it. This thesis was an attempt to systematically examine the means of achieving gender mainstreaming – not to challenge work such as Eveline and Bacchi's, but to complement it.

The impasse faced by gender mainstreaming in development was noted at the beginning of this thesis to be at a critical point. Few now believe that gender mainstreaming in development can deliver on the promises it made when the concept rose to prominence in

the early 1990s. With practice consistently failing to match up to the stated aims of gender policies in organisations many now feel that institutional change along the lines of gender mainstreaming – which aims to develop the use of GAD approaches in all projects and programmes of development institutions in order to achieve a vision of ‘development’ that creates gender equitable social change – must be put aside in favour of specific women’s rights and gender focused programming (Cornwall, 2007; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2004: 1; Cornwall, Harrison *et al.*, 2007a; Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Porter and Sweetman, 2005; Standing, 2004; Subrahmanian, 2004). For instance, a recent article co-written by Deputy Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Joanne Sandler suggests that it is time for attempts at creating cross cutting action on gender in large bureaucracies to be brought to an end as it is doomed to failure. Gender equality work (or perhaps more specifically women’s rights) in her opinion should instead be seen as a distinct sectoral issue in its own right (Goetz and Sandler, 2007). However, in researching and writing this thesis it was my hope to challenge a total move away from the concept and practice of gender mainstreaming.

I intended to do this by examining in a systematic manner the actual process of mainstreaming – institutional change, rather than its goal or outputs – in order to understand how the policy impasse that blights gender mainstreaming has been so consistently maintained across the range of institutional contexts that exist in the world of development organisations. In order to do this, I took an approach that recognises and details the socio-political, and not just the technical, nature of organisational change in development institutions. I noted that, ignoring the politics of ‘process’ ignores the reality of institutions and the way bureaucratic culture impacts upon the uptake and delivery of radical policies. This analysis, using Oxfam as a case study, was intended to fill a significant gap in the literature both by highlighting and clarifying the politics of the actual ‘process’ associated with gender mainstreaming in development organisations, as well as by not confusing such an analysis with an examination of the political goals of this feminist strategy within development.

After reviewing the literature (Chapters 1 and 2) and developing a case study of the process of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam (Chapters 3, 4 and 5), in Chapter 6 I made number of assertions about the process element of gender mainstreaming. Firstly, despite a visible lack of conflict over and resistance to gender mainstreaming (in GAD pro-active organisations such as Oxfam) the reality is quite different. Under the surface of organisations conflict over and resistance to the institutionalisation of GAD approaches continues unabated and goes a long way to explain how the policy-practice impasse faced by those mainstreaming gender in organisations has been maintained.

Secondly, beyond the specifics of gender mainstreaming a more sophisticated picture of institutional change points to the need to recognise the difference between 'norms' and 'values' in organisations. A lack of serious attempts to directly tackle the politically charged issue of staff members' personal values around GAD thinking and practice has allowed conflict over and resistance to gender mainstreaming to become submerged within the culture of Oxfam. This has resulted in manifestations of 'non-conflict' and acts of resistance embedded in a discourse of 'responsibility for' rather than 'rejection of' GAD approaches. And finally, the explicit lack of open association between wider feminist thinking and epistemology and GAD/gender mainstreaming in organisations has resulted in the politics surrounding the process of organisational change to be undermined and undervalued in favour of overemphasising the external political goal of mainstreaming. Such an overemphasis on the (external) politically charged goal of mainstreaming has promoted a model of organisational change based on rationality and technicality, one which favours changes to institutional imperatives in organisations to the near exclusion of active and direct value change among its staff.

Given these assertions made in Chapter 6, it is in this conclusion that I hope to make a clear statement about the future of gender mainstreaming. I will base this statement upon the improved understanding, developed in this thesis, of the current impasse that threatens the gender mainstreaming project. An understanding that draws upon the insights I have developed about the process of institutional change in development organisations and the

relationship of such organisations to feminist ideas and epistemology. I also hope to provide a new perspective on the persistent question among practitioners and academics: 'What are we mainstreaming when we mainstream gender?' (Eveline and Bacchi, 2005).

Confusing the Politics of Mainstreaming

Development approaches that stem from GAD thinking attempt to highlight inequalities in the relations between men and women – whether they be political, economic, social, or cultural – and work with both men and women to transform these unequal relations of power into a situation of mutual respect and equality. These approaches are recognised as inherently political as they challenge the status quo in communities, affecting both the individual's values and beliefs within the community and the community at large. However, gender mainstreaming, despite being very clear on the political nature of change demanded by its goal of achieving gender equality in development practice, is rarely seen as something directly political in the way it must create change in development organisations. The previous chapter noted the silence over feminist ideas and epistemologies in development organisations. This silence is pervasive around the concept of gender mainstreaming and, in particular, the actual process element to that concept. For many, the actual process of organisational change is seen as rational and technical: it is about creating policies, developing training programmes and situating gender at the core of an organisation⁴³. It is only seen as 'political' to the extent that it promotes the radical goal of gender equality within ('real world') communities through development projects and programmes.

As a consequence, the process of gender mainstreaming is often seen as something that is indistinguishable from the GAD approaches it promotes in the minds of many in organisations. Gender mainstreaming becomes 'the GAD approach to development'. For example, in a critical review of mainstreaming strategies, Porter and Sweetman highlight that 'gender mainstreaming can only be brought about by equal attention to the empowerment of

⁴³ To list a few such examples: (Council of Europe, 1998; Dawson, 2005; Derbyshire, 2002; Goetz, 1997b; Hadjipateras, 1997; Hijab and Lewis, 2004; Jahan, 1995; Kabeer, 2003; Macdonald, 2003)

women as agents of their own destiny, and structural gender equality' (Porter and Sweetman, 2005: 9). Porter and Sweetman conceptualise gender mainstreaming not as a process of change located within the bounds of institutions, but as a process of transformation that directly brings about change in the 'real world'. This conceptualisation of gender mainstreaming, as something that is deployed to empower women and transform gender relations in the world external to the organisation, is a common one. However, it is misleading and inappropriate. As was noted in Chapter 2, the concept of gender mainstreaming is complex. It has three distinct aspects to it: process, output and goal. It is true that the goal of gender mainstreaming is to create gender equality in society through the medium of development programmes and that the specific outputs of gender mainstreaming are the adoption of gender transformational approaches in projects. However, it is the process aspect of gender mainstreaming that is the actual means to achieving such things. And this process aspect of gender mainstreaming is wholly concerned with the transformation of organisations and their staff to be more receptive to delivering on the outputs and goals of gender mainstreaming.

There can be no direct link between gender mainstreaming as a process and the empowerment of women (unless it is within the context of the organisation). To perceive a direct link between gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment and the transformation of gender relations is to confuse the process of change within mainstreaming with the goals of change. As a consequence, this blinds organisations and individuals promoting gender mainstreaming in organisations to the very real political nature of change that must occur within the development institution. Any attempt to revive gender mainstreaming needs to foreground the (explicitly internal) process of institutional change within the concept, a point well made by Goetz's decision to reconceptualise 'gender mainstreaming' in terms of 'gender institutionalisation'. Without explicitly acknowledging and understanding the differing aspects of the concept of gender mainstreaming (as well as how they relate to each other), the process of institutional transformation demanded will ultimately fail as the political challenge implicit within the concept becomes solely externalised onto the

communities in which the organisations works, leaving only a rational and technical process of change to be implemented in organisations.

There are now calls for more explicit and challenging feminist ideas around personal politics and change to be re-injected into development discourses on gender (Eschle and Maiguasha, 2007; Mama, 2007; Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006). These demands are no less important or timely for the concept and practice of gender mainstreaming in development organisations. Only when organisations, and those implementing change in organisations, reflect upon and foreground the more fundamental feminist ideas and epistemologies upon which the process of mainstreaming should be based will the accent on 'gender mainstreaming' shift. No longer should the principal focus of 'gender mainstreaming' be on 'gender' (or rather GAD approaches and theories of gender equality) *per se*, but on the actual process of organisational change – 'mainstreaming'. Once this is recognised, the political and personal reality of institutional transformation will demand greater attention.

In Chapter 6, I noted that institutional change, to be successful, requires an appreciation of three factors: the nature of change to be enacted, the organisational context (and its norms), and the individuals within the organisation (and their values). Thus far development organisations have not seriously distinguished between or acted upon these differing factors in their attempts at mainstreaming gender. Mainstreaming has not been recognised for what it is – a process of political change within an organisation – and the implications for this on change within norms and values in organisations has neither been appropriately distinguished nor seriously examined. The example of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam is a case in point. Values and norms have not been recognised as separate aspects of organisations requiring separate approaches to change. Norm change – the redrawing of organisational imperatives – has been focused on almost to the exclusion of value change. As a consequence, gender mainstreaming faces an impasse because the process of change has failed to directly challenge and develop the values of individuals in the organisation. This failure to tackle value change has become less clear as the continual focus upon redrawing and disseminating organisational imperatives has submerged previously visible conflict within

an underlying organisational culture. Continued disjuncture between norms and values means passive and subconscious acts of resistance to GAD approaches by staff play out within these sites of 'non-conflict'. As a result, a situation is created whereby acceptance of GAD approaches and the need for gender equality is widespread, yet a lack of acceptance of 'responsibility for' implementing GAD approaches and demanding social justice for women remains a critical, unseen and unaddressed problem.

Putting the 'Mainstreaming' back into Gender Mainstreaming

Few definitions or conceptualisations of gender mainstreaming explicitly foreground and illustrate the actual process of mainstreaming – institutional change – in any great detail and instead make bland non-specific references to 'change actions' or 'strategies' that will bring about the outputs and goal of mainstreaming (GAD approaches in development work and gender equality in society). As a consequence, such definitions and conceptualisations place few explicit demands on organisations about what institutional change around GAD entails and what implications it has for the organisations themselves and their staff. If I refer back to the selection of gender mainstreaming definitions featured in Chapter 2, it is possible to see that some make little or no effort to go beyond acknowledging the means by which change occurs. Instead, they direct their attention towards the outputs or goal of gender mainstreaming. For instance, the UN definition of gender mainstreaming states that it is:

the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (ECOSOC 1997/2) (Special Advisor on Gender, 2002: 1)

This definition repeats three times what gender mainstreaming aims to achieve – an organisation that understands GAD approaches and acts on the injustices women face in its work. The actual process of institutional change, the details of how an organisation can achieve the goal of gender mainstreaming, is given four words of explanation: 'it is a strategy'. 'It is a strategy' says nothing of the process, nothing of the complexity of

institutions, nothing of the staff working in those institutions, and nothing of the intrinsically political nature of change involved in such institutional transformation. In a sense, this is less a credible definition of gender mainstreaming and more a statement of aspiration. And like all aspirations, it is exciting and attractive precisely because reality is suspended and the actual politically charged nature of what such change involves is forgotten. Other conceptualisations of gender mainstreaming, referred to in Chapter 2, have focused more attention on the actual process of change. Though they still remain limited in their understanding. When they do highlight the process of change, reflections are brief and show a poor grasp of what institutional change demands. Baden and Reeves is a good example of this, they delineate gender mainstreaming as:

an organisational strategy to bring a gender perspective to all aspects of an institution's policy and activities, through building gender capacity and accountability. [...] With a mainstreaming strategy, gender concerns are seen as important to all aspects of development; for all sectors and areas of activity, and a fundamental part of the planning process. Responsibility for the implementation of a gender policy is diffused across the organisational structure, rather than concentrated in a small central unit. (Baden and Reeves, 2000: 9)

This definition more explicitly refers to the process of institutional change and what it should involve. It talks about building capacity and accountability, and it talks about diffusing responsibility across the organisational structure. Yet, to ask a rhetorical question, what does this mean? Without developing an understanding of the nature of change that is involved, it is difficult to appreciate how such change can be achieved. How is capacity and accountability developed? Is it a matter of developing the right tools and implementing the right evaluation and review mechanisms? How is responsibility diffused across organisational structures? Is it about placing gender within management structures? The case of Oxfam would draw into question the success of any of these methods. Without defining the nature of change that gender mainstreaming requires and its specific implications for change in institutions and their staff, talking about capacity, accountability and responsibility is an empty gesture as without a specific context these terms can become imperative driven, rationalised, apolitical, hollow and meaningless.

Given the generally vacuous content of gender mainstreaming definitions around the process of change, is it really surprising that the change hoped for by gender advocates in institutions

has not occurred? How can change happen when organisations adopt a term that expects so much but provides so little meaningful detail about the means to achieve it? Oxfam itself, an organisation recognised as serious and pro-active on gender mainstreaming, has an exceptionally poor definition by any standards. Other than highlighting the outputs and goals of gender mainstreaming, such as ‘recognising the links between gender inequality and poverty’, its only stab at identifying how the process of change should occur is to suggest that all Oxfam’s internal practices should be ‘consistent with the above’, the above being a list of outputs Oxfam wishes to achieve around gender equality in its work (see **Box 5.3** for Oxfam’s full definition of gender mainstreaming).

It has been over ten years since gender mainstreaming was crystallised as a term in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. It now seems an appropriate time for the focus on gender mainstreaming definitions to shift away from their love of outputs and goals associated with a GAD thinking in development and move towards detailing the process of institutional change required to achieve them. The relevance and centrality of ‘mainstreaming’ needs to be put into definitions of gender mainstreaming.

Promoting such a shift requires a more explicit definition of gender mainstreaming that goes far beyond current conceptualisations. It must be a definition that acknowledges and understands two important issues: the centrality of the institutional change process to the concept and the intrinsically and politically personal nature of such changes processes in organisations. Gender mainstreaming is a feminist political project in what it aspires to do but also in how it wishes to achieve it. The process of change is both political and key to making GAD approaches happen in development practice. Furthermore, to fully appreciate what the process of change in institutions entails, fundamental feminist ideas and epistemologies need to be re-engaged with and injected into the conceptualisation of the process of mainstreaming (Prugl and Lustgarten, 2006: 69). Feminism is both an intensely political and an intensely personal theory of change. It is political in the sense that it challenges dominant world views to achieve social justice around gender equality. But it is also personal in the sense that it does not just challenge grand schemes or theories on how society works, but it

challenges individuals personal values, forcing them to reflect upon how they view others in the world and their relationship to them. Feminist ideas and epistemologies encourages the individual to have empathy and a sense of responsibility for challenging injustices (Eschle and Maiguasha, 2007: 293). Gender mainstreaming conceptualisations need to acknowledge this political and personal nature of change that feminism espouses. It should no longer be acceptable for gender mainstreaming to be some vague process identified only as

a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. (Special Advisor on Gender, 2002).

Such bland and noncommittal terms allow the political content implicit within the process element of gender mainstreaming to become lost (or rather, as we have seen, totally externalised onto the communities in which the organisation works) removing the political change that is demanded within the organisation. Gender mainstreaming is a journey of change for the organisation but also for the individual staff within that organisation. Bringing resonance between the organisation, its staff and the GAD thinking and ideology it wishes to implement is what matters, not the actual external impacts of such GAD approaches.

In addition to centralising and embracing the feminist roots (and by default the intrinsically personal and political nature) of the gender mainstreaming process, it is also important for conceptualisations of gender mainstreaming to make clear the complexity of institutional change. The difference between institutional norms and values, as well as the different approaches needed to change them, must be made explicit. Norms are formal 'moral' imperative driven criteria embedded within an organisation. They can be changed swiftly and with moderate ease. It is a technical process of rewriting policy, changing procedure and developing mechanisms for compliance within an organisation. Organisations have norms, but they have no innate preference or attachment to their norms. Values, on the other hand, are not held by the organisation. Values are held by the individuals that make up the organisation. Challenging values is therefore a political act and the process of value change, for this reason, is personally both intensive and reflective. As I noted Chapter 6, both norms

and values need to be synchronised if change is to be successful in institutions. For an approach that is as controversial and challenging as GAD, change to organisational imperatives in organisations is essential but far from sufficient. If norms are focused on within organisations, at the expense of values, then the process of change will continue to be subverted but with conflict and resistance merely becoming submerged within the institution. Gender mainstreaming requires individuals to be directly engaged, otherwise resistance among staff will continue long after any signs of conflict disappear from view. Values held by staff in organisations must be directly challenged and negotiated if change is to be successful.

Tackling the Gender Mainstreaming Impasse: A Process Perspective

And so to seriously tackle the impasse faced by gender mainstreaming we must think again about the enigmatic question posed by Eveline and Bacchi (2005): What are we mainstreaming when we mainstream gender? Definitions of gender mainstreaming have sprung up throughout the past decade and they have all followed a similar pattern. They talk about gender mainstreaming in vague terms – ‘it is a strategy that aims to achieve such and such’ – never really grappling explicitly with the process of organisational change or the politics of such change processes. The emphasis has always been on what gender mainstreaming wants to achieve (in terms of both outputs and goal), with little content on the means to achieve it. These somewhat empty definitions have been accepted, frequently without question. It is perhaps their vacuousness and non-specific nature around change in organisations that has, in part, made them so popular within development organisations and assisted in their ascendance in global development discourse. It is easy to accept a vision for change when the details of what that vision commits an organisation to are either inexplicit or non-existent.

If gender mainstreaming is to overcome its impasse and bring about the consistent adoption of GAD approaches in development practice, this can no longer be the case, gender

advocates in organisations need to demand or construct definitions of gender mainstreaming that are much more explicit about both the process of organisational change and the politics of such a process for organisations and their staff. And so, perhaps, those implementing gender mainstreaming need to think less about 'what are we mainstreaming when we mainstream gender?' and more about 'are we *really mainstreaming* when we mainstream gender?' There is a need to focus a little less on the outputs and goal of mainstreaming – the collection of GAD approaches to development practice and the issues of what does gender equality mean in society – and instead there is a need to focus a little more on how organisations and their staff can be made more receptive to not just adopting but also believing in and demanding action on such ideas.

It is not my intention here to produce a new and definitive definition for gender mainstreaming, as definitions must always be negotiated and developed within each organisational context, but to highlight that if the impasse in gender mainstreaming is to be breached then the minimum requirements for gender mainstreaming definitions must become far more demanding. It was noted in Chapter 2 that gender mainstreaming in a development context could be summarised at its most basic as 'a process of organisational change in development institutions that aims to develop the use of GAD approaches in the projects and programmes of those institutions in order to achieve a vision of 'development' that creates gender equitable social change'. This is no longer an acceptable baseline. Too long have organisations hidden behind the production of checklists, the development of strategic frameworks and the modification of performance management systems as comprehensive and earnest attempts at achieving gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming must now be seen, at its very least, as an explicitly internal process of both technical and political change in organisations that wish to achieve a situation whereby GAD approaches are actively taken up and used in projects and programmes by an organisation's staff who themselves feel motivated and personally responsible for achieving social justice on gender. Accepting this basic conceptualisation of gender mainstreaming has a number of unambiguous implications. The process aspect of gender mainstreaming becomes much more explicit – gender mainstreaming is a process of institutional change that is not directly

concerned with the impacts of the organisation in the communities in which it operates *per se*. Gender mainstreaming is an activity that is solely concerned with change within the organisation and among its staff. Furthermore, there must also be recognition that norms and values are not the same thing in organisations and cannot be changed using the same approaches. Norm change is a technical process of change whereas value change is an intensely personal and politically charged process of change requiring a long term approach that works with individuals to develop their personal beliefs and behaviour.

If the impasse faced by gender mainstreaming is to be overcome the concept of gender mainstreaming must come to represent and promote a new maxim for feminists in development organisations. In the words of a colleague who has worked for over 30 years in development organisations on gender equality, 'as it came to be that *the personal is political*, it must now be recognised that *the professional is political*'. It is the task of those promoting and implementing the process of gender mainstreaming to now make the professional lives of members of staff political. The values staff hold must be challenged and reshaped – these values must support a personal conviction for fighting gender inequality in their work. Without such a change in values among staff the problem of 'non-conflict', as well as continued but submerged acts of (passive and subconscious) resistance to GAD thinking and practice, will continue to blight this ambitious feminist project in development.

Annex

Methodology

Researching Power in Organisations

Overview of the Research

In this research I examine the process of gender mainstreaming in development organisations. In doing so, I go beyond technical – and perhaps superficial – analyses of the process to examine the influence of organisational culture upon the implementation of radical development policies. As such, an analysis requires a much more detailed level of investigation than technical approaches to understanding gender mainstreaming. The ability to conduct research along the lines of a survey or comparative approach on the process was unlikely given a range of problems: the inherent lack of exposure to how organisations operate on the everyday level with such approaches, the thorny issue of gaining access to multiple and often quite protective organisations and the timeframe of the research. A consequence of this was that I focused my attention upon developing an extended and detailed case study of one organisation – Oxfam. The advantages and disadvantages of this approach as well as the methods used and the dilemmas involved in doing such research will be examined later on. But for now I will briefly provide an overview of my research in Oxfam.

In my desire to uncover sites of 'non-conflict' around gender mainstreaming in Oxfam, I needed to examine institutional change processes from a number of angles, for instance, the construction of gender policy, the interpretation of gender policy by staff, and the routines of gender and development work. It was unlikely that any one method would have been able to uncover the evidence necessary to develop such a case study. As a consequence, I adopted three differing research methods – participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and discourse analysis – as different methods reveal different aspects of reality. As such, I believe these methods worked well in uncovering the invisible sites of conflict between gender mainstreaming strategies and dominant development approaches in Oxfam as well as providing a comprehensive range of evidence to support such an analysis.

I conducted this research within a multi-sited ethnography in which I was as much a participant as I was observer – as a condition for being able to conduct my research in the organisation I would also work for the organisation as a volunteer researcher. The first phase of the research (carried out as part of my MPhil in Development Studies at QEH) was conducted from June to September in 2003 and I was based in Oxfam's South American (SAM) Regional Office in Lima, Peru. During this time, under the supervision of and in co-operation with a regional gender policy advisor, I provided a gender analysis for the SAM Regional Programme on their Livelihoods Strategy and later on their Right to be Heard Strategy. This experience was invaluable for understanding how gender is constructed, understood, analysed and incorporated into the work of staff in the organisation.

The second phase of the research was conducted from May to December in 2005 and I was based in the Oxfam head office in Oxford, UK. During this time, I worked in supporting the Lead Gender Advisor based in the Programme Team. This served a number of purposes. Firstly, it allowed me to explore and test some of the ideas and issues that had arisen during the first phase. Secondly, being located at the symbolic and managerial centre of Oxfam, it provided me with the opportunity to place my regional analysis in context and uncover perhaps further relational sites of non-conflict. Thirdly, through my work for the Lead Gender Advisor, I was able to survey the array of approaches Oxfam is using – and hopes to use – to overcome the problem of gender policy evaporation in the organisation. And finally, conducting the second phase of research two years later allowed me to take a more longitudinal perspective of gender mainstreaming in the organisation.

The third phase of the research was conducted from January to December 2007. It was an unplanned phase of the research that grew out of the relationships I developed with staff during the second phase. It was not a phase whereby I examined 'the everyday' of gender work in the organisation and as such it did not involve day to day work in the organisation as in the previous two phases. Instead it was a phase whereby I was kept abreast of changes concerning the organisation and gender mainstreaming by my involvement in a number of key meetings, planning sessions and workshops of Oxfam staff from across the organisation

on gender related issues. Though unplanned and less intensive than phase one and two, this phase of the research turned out to be extremely productive. Firstly, it brought staff together from across the regions and allowed me to assess the similarity of experience of gender mainstreaming with the South American region. Secondly, the information gained at these key events complemented the information developed about 'the everyday' during phase one and two. Such events can be seen as rituals – in the anthropological sense – that punctuate the everyday life of individuals in the organisations. Examining them provides another perspective into both the organisation and its staff. And finally, I attended these events intermittently throughout the writing up process. As a consequence, they maintained my focus in the development of the chapters and allowed me to continually test my analysis as it took form.

This chapter will attempt to define and explore the issues related to conducting this type of investigation. The initial section will briefly explore the methodological stance I have taken throughout the research process. Though it is based in terms of ideas rather than practicalities of research, it will become evident that the approach I have developed, the methods I have used and the dilemmas I have dealt with are all grounded in the methodological posture I have adopted. The second section will examine my overall research approach – the use of a case study – as an effective mechanism for collecting, analysing and presenting evidence on gender mainstreaming in development organisations. The third section will examine and discuss the specific methods used. And the final section will deal with a number of ethical issues related to conducting social research and, more specifically, on conducting research in organisations and on their staff.

Methodological Stance

Methodology in social research is concerned with procedures for making knowledge valid and authoritative. But questions of truth and authority are extensively disputed in western philosophy, and can be thought of in different terms in other ways of thinking. (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 9)

Production of valid and authoritative knowledge is the art of methodology. In all arts, different materials require different approaches and different appreciations. Methodologies are no

different. There are no right or wrong methodologies, just more or less useful ones (Silverman, 2001: 2). Questions, contexts and assumptions all need careful thought before an appropriate methodology can be selected and used⁴⁴. Clarifying and defining my own methodological stance at the beginning of this chapter is important as it aids in understanding why I believe the approach I have adopted, the methods I have used and the dilemmas I have faced and attempted to overcome all work to produce a credible, reliable and authoritative piece of research.

Having initially completed fieldwork based research on gender mainstreaming for my Development Studies MPhil, the questions, context and assumptions of my research were already lucid and fairly defined by the time I initiated my doctoral research. My research asked a very focused and specific question, it was located within a clearly defined context and it had a key underlying assumption. The research question asked why gender mainstreaming had failed to create gender sensitive practice within development organisations. More specifically, through this question, I wished to understand what has occurred in the spaces between policy on gender and implementation of projects and programmes. The context of the research was twofold. Firstly, the general context is one of an organisation. The research is located within a bounded community – as bounded as any community can be – and that community is the development organisation. Secondly, the research focuses upon the more specific context of the policy-practice interface. It concerns those in the organisation involved in producing, interpreting, reinforcing, policing or (not) implementing its gender policy. This research question and its context were based on one key underlying assumption: gender issues are inherently political and create conflict. As a consequence sites of conflict must be made explicit if failure to create change in an organisation is to be fully understood. This assumption is especially crucial when conflict is not readily visible, requiring an understanding of how conflict becomes submerged within an organisation's culture – its underlying structure and discourse.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that methodological stances exist within the minds of researchers before questions, contexts and assumptions are examined or developed and as a consequence they frequently shape those questions, define those contexts and inform those assumptions. This is inevitable in the research process, but it is important that the researcher remains open to the possibility that other stances to methodological practice may become more appropriate as the issues become clearer and more defined.

These three factors required evidence to be collected and analysed on a number of issues: how is gender policy constructed, how is gender policy interpreted by individuals with the organisation, how is gender policy disseminated and reinforced in the organisation, and how is 'development' in general approached by the organisation and the individuals within the organisation. Gathering and analysing such evidence demanded a number of considerations. Firstly, such evidence is inherently qualitative in nature. People's reflections upon their work and upon gender, the wording of policy and programme documents, the everyday realities of work within development organisations cannot be easily, and perhaps not even accurately, constructed into quantitative data. Secondly, the research process and the analysis of the evidence needs to be sensitive. The research focuses upon the norms of a community and the values of the people within that community. These norms and values need to be respected at all times, while data is being collected as well as when it is being presented with an argument. And finally, the research is primarily concerned at understanding policy processes around gender within development organisations. As such, this research is not about asserting blame for failure, instead it is about understanding, learning and change.

Given these considerations, any methodological stance adopted would need to have a number of characteristics. It must appreciate the richness of qualitative information and value methods that attempt to explore and collect qualitative information. It must also demand a commitment to a high level of honesty and responsibility to those it studies. And finally, it must prioritise the concerns of the wider community of people working on achieving justice for women – emphasising the learning potential of gender mainstreaming experiences and understanding how change can be more effectively achieved on gender equality. As a consequence, more classical positivist methodologies – focused on extending the principles of natural science into the arena of social science – would not be particularly appropriate for my purposes. Not only is qualitative data seen as the poor relative to quantitative data, but such methodologies tend to value the research and its position within the academic community above that of the research subjects.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the topic and substance of my research, I felt that a feminist methodological stance would put my research in better stead. It not only appreciates the richness of qualitative data, but it also incorporates “a shared political and ethical commitment that makes [researchers] accountable to a community of women [and men] with moral and political interests in common” (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 16). Accountability in this sense stretches to both the community of individuals in which the research is conducted as well as the larger community of people working to create social justice on gender. Such a stance fits not only the specific requirements of my research but also my own personal beliefs in the value of feminist politics in academic study – bringing to light the concepts of situated knowledge and gender relations as key issues. As mentioned earlier, a commitment to a methodological stance does not prescribe the adoption of a particular research method. In this instance, it expresses a responsibility to a

normative framework that interrelates ‘injustice’, a politics for ‘women’ (however these categories are understood), ethical practices that eschew the ‘unjust’ exercise of power, and theory that conceptualises gendered power within this normative framework. (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 147)

Within this section, it was my intention to only acknowledge the methodological stance I have chosen and the reasons for my choice. It is in the following sections, detailing the different aspects of my research, that I hope to demonstrate my commitment to meeting the demanding standards set out in feminist methodological literature (Calas and Smircich, 1992; Cockburn, 1994; Haraway, 1997; McDowell, 1997; Miller and Razavi, 1998; Oakley, 1990; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Roberts, 1990; Stacey, 1997). In attempting to achieve those standards, I believe I have produced a piece of research on gender mainstreaming and institutional change that will be accepted as both valid and authoritative.

The Research Approach: Using a Case Study

The case study is but one of several ways of doing social science research. Other ways include experiments, surveys, histories, and the analysis of archival information. Each strategy has particular advantages and disadvantages, depending on three conditions: (a) the type of research question, (b) the control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and (c) the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena. [...] In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with some real life context. (Yin, 2003: 1)

When considering the type of research approach I would take to examine gender mainstreaming in development organisations, a number of options presented themselves. I could have compared specific gender mainstreaming strategies from different organisations, examining their similarities and differences in order to see factors that contributed to their success or failure. Equally, I could have conducted a formal survey of staff attitudes to and understanding of gender policy and processes of change, and related this to the overall success of programmes. However, the usefulness of developing a case study approach was borne out of the specific direction in which I wished to take the research. In an attempt to go beyond more superficial technical analyses of gender mainstreaming in organisations, I required a research approach that would allow for a detailed investigation into organisations to uncover sites of 'non-conflict' around the issues of gender and institutional change. Uncovering and understanding these sites of 'non-conflict' take time and require significant immersion of the researcher into a particular organisation. Developing a case study of an organisation provided me with the time and scope to do this.

Furthermore, to refer back to Yin's three conditions for choosing a research strategy, developing a case study can be seen as a good match to my intended research topic. Firstly, my research explicitly examines 'why' and 'how' questions. I wanted to examine both why gender mainstreaming has failed to create successful institutional change as well as understand 'how' this failure had occurred – the mechanisms that have prevented appropriate gendered institutional change. Secondly, as a researcher studying a large international organisation, I had little, if any, control over the research subject(s) and their conditions. Thirdly, gender mainstreaming is a recent and ongoing process, very much a part of everyday life within development organisations. As a consequence, my research topic can be seen to meet the three conditions necessary for taking a case study approach. Moreover, a case study is particularly appropriate when "the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003: 13). Given that my preliminary investigations into gender mainstreaming suggest that organisational culture is the key factor for understanding policy failure, selecting an approach that appreciates that phenomenon and context are

intrinsically linked is an important decision. Such an approach does not attempt to divorce phenomenon from context but instead explore the links between them.

Beyond data collection and analysis, a research approach is also concerned with the presentation (or representation) of the evidence. This was also taken into account. Case studies provide an important communication device that both increases access to and understanding of research material as well as have the ability to do greater justice to those individuals participating in the research (Platt, 2006: 280; Yin, 2003: 145). Platt highlights that

[c]ase study material gives aesthetic appeal by providing “human interest”, good stories and a more humanistic mode of presentation than that of traditional “scientific”/quantitative style. To the extent that the material must particularize, it is harder to write about it in abstract theoretical jargon, and so it is (at least superficially) simple, even if what is described is complex. This makes for easy and pleasant reading, and a wide and not exclusively professional appeal. (Platt, 2006: 280)

Developing and presenting my case study material within the thesis not only helped me present my research more accessibly (and, as a consequence, expand the potential audience for my research⁴⁵), but also allowed me to give a voice to the subjects of my research.

However, in choosing a case study approach, there are a number of key issues that need to be considered and responded to: the choice of the case; the implications for use of particular methods; and the problems associated with delivering an academically rigorous piece of research using a case study approach. I have attempted to, in some way, deal with these issues below:

Selecting the Case Study

Selecting the case study is one of the most challenging parts of the case study approach, particularly when the approach focuses upon a single case rather than multiple cases. Sarantakos highlights that the case study approach ‘studies a typical case’ (Sarantakos,

⁴⁵ An example of this can be seen when I was invited to present at an international women’s rights conference after I submitted an article to them based on the case study chapters of my thesis. The participants of the conference were made up of 1700 mostly non-academic women’s rights workers considering issues related to creating more effective feminist organisations.

1988: 192). However, deciding what a 'typical' case is or whether a 'typical' case is actually the most appropriate choice is not simple, but nonetheless, a key factor in the success of both the process of data collection and the overall authority of the argument made in the write up. Within my own research, I have chosen to focus upon a single case study – Oxfam. However, the reasons for selecting Oxfam lean towards atypicality rather than typicality. This decision was not made lightly and can be supported by both practical and theoretical considerations.

A single case study was chosen because the research process was extremely time intensive. Overall it included over 10 months of participant observation in Oxfam as well as multiple return visits after the two main participant observation phases were completed. Given the time frame of the DPhil, the possibility of conducting a similar process within other organisations was not feasible. This has been a practical research decision, yet I believe this has not been detrimental to the quality of the research as it allowed for the collection of material for a much more detailed analysis. However, as a consequence of this, the selection of the case study was a crucial one and would be dependent on the theoretical assumptions of my research.

In general, my research posited that failure of gender mainstreaming is a consequence of institutional change processes becoming subverted by dominant development discourses. It also posited that subversion continues to happen even when conflict over gender can no longer be seen, as power continues to operate unnoticed at a more generalised level. It is this unnoticed operation of power that has led to the consistent silencing of gender mainstreaming over the range of institutional contexts that exist as it remains unchallenged in processes of institutional change. Following on from these assumptions, it would be logical to develop a case study of an organisation that provides the best opportunity to examine sites of 'non-conflict' over and above sites of visible conflict on gender. Such an organisation would ideally be one that recognises its failure to create change in practice, but also one that no longer confronts overt, or even covert, resistance to GAD approaches and issues. As a consequence, Oxfam was chosen as the case study.

In Oxfam, most staff recognise the importance of gender transformative goals in their work, yet, by their own admissions, little has changed in development practice. Unlike many organisations and institutions where gender mainstreaming meets open hostility (either directly or indirectly), this does not seem to be the case for Oxfam. The organisation in many ways epitomises the type of progressive institution where radical policies such as GAD are nurtured and where gender mainstreaming should create progressive appropriate institutional transformation. As a consequence, Oxfam makes a good case for my research not because it is a typical development organisation but because it is atypical. However, this atypicality should be seen to rest not so much in its difference to other organisations, but in its progress towards achieving a gender mainstreamed organisation.⁴⁶ Oxfam's characteristic as an 'ideal type' (though partly self constructed), in this instance, should be seen as a more important feature than its aberration to the gender mainstreaming norm found among development organisations.

Case Study Methods

Burns highlights three methods most suited to collecting evidence within a case study. He defines them as "observation (both participant and non-participant), interviewing (structured and unstructured), and document analysis" (Burns, 2000: 460). He goes on to highlight that "it is the poor study that uses only one source of evidence. Most studies are capable of producing several sources. The use of multiple sources is the major strength of the case study approach" (Burns, 2000: 469). In taking this advice on board during the design of my research, I have incorporated all three methods within my approach.

I favoured and undertook participant observation. Not only was this necessary because the terms for conducting my research in Oxfam obliged me to work as a volunteer researcher for

⁴⁶ For instance, many organisations practicing development see Oxfam as an example of successful gender mainstreaming. It was at the forefront of organisations mainstreaming gender, it has in many ways achieved a number of successes, and it has produced a large amount of literature on gender mainstreaming for other organisations to learn from. This image of Oxfam as good example of gender mainstreaming, though in part true, has sometimes caused problems for its work. Project and programme staff who work with partners often highlight how partners think Oxfam will come and show them how to mainstream gender successfully as they believe it has already been achieved within Oxfam.

the organisation, but because non-participant observation would have been highly inappropriate, and most likely ineffective, within an office environment. I also conducted semi-structured interviewing. This type of interviewing allowed the interviewee leniency to shape the direction and focus of the interview, and as a result, elicit a perhaps more honest and less guarded response to questions that essentially probed them on their work and attitudes towards gender. And finally, discourse analysis was essential as Oxfam provided a wealth of documentary material relevant to my research. Conducting participant observation provided me with access to this material and gave me the time necessary to search through it and draw out the most relevant pieces. These three methods will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Overcoming Case Study Shortfalls

Many of the criticisms levelled at case study research are the same as those levelled at qualitative research more generally. Burns notes several of these criticisms in relation to case studies – subjective bias and reliability, acceptability of generalisations, and validity (Burns, 2000: 473). It is impossible to prevent such criticisms. Qualitative research, and as such the case study approach, centres around human researchers with all their fallibilities. To remove the human researcher is to rob the qualitative approach of its unique benefit, its ability to take a holistic approach that continually explores and re-explores the links between context, phenomenon and researcher in the hope that complex social systems can be better understood. However, there are ways that problems inherently associated with qualitative research can be minimised. Throughout my own research, I have adopted techniques that should work to reduce the risks associated with case study research.

Firstly, I have used triangulation in an attempt to tackle the problems associated with subjective bias and at the same time increase the reliability of my research. Triangulation means that “researchers use different sets of data, different types of analyses, different researchers, and/or different theoretical perspectives to study a particular phenomenon” (Denzin, 1970: 300). I have adopted triangulation techniques with both my research methods and sources of information. For instance, as my research aimed to examine several aspects

of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam – the construction of gender policy, the interpretation of gender policy by staff, and the routines of gender and development work – it was unlikely that one method or one source of information would have been able to uncover the evidence necessary to develop a comprehensive case study. As a consequence, I adopted three differing research methods – participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and discourse analysis (each will be discussed separately in the following section) – that investigated different sources of information – cultural, human and documentary – as different methods and different sources reveal different aspects of reality (Denzin, 1970: 301). Though these methods and sources reveal different types of information they also overlap. Triangulating the overlaps allowed me to cross-check and test my evidence. This cross-checking increased my belief in the reliability of the evidence I had collected and reduced the concerns of selective bias in the presentation of the research.

Secondly, to reduce accusations of unfounded generalisation, I have taken two approaches. Firstly, I have detailed exactly why I think Oxfam is a useful case study and why I believe its ‘atypicality’ can provide an insight into development organisations more generally. In being transparent about the choice of the case and my assumptions for this choice, it empowers the reader giving them the knowledge necessary to decide if they agree or disagree with the terms of my research and therefore accept or reject my generalisations. Secondly, “many case study proponents would argue that any generalisations should be reader made ones [...]. the reader decides the extent to which the researcher’s case is similar to and likely to be instructive to theirs” (Burns, 2000: 474). While accepting this view, I would also maintain that the researcher is also a reader of the case study and, as such, is also entitled to make and express generalisations. To acknowledge this, in separating out the presentation of my case study (Part II) from the generalisations I attempted to draw out of it (Part III), I have given the reader the space to develop and decide on their own generalisations before I present my own.

Thirdly, issues concerning the validity of a case study are often the most hotly contested and as such I have taken particular care to minimise such accusations, not only because such

accusations reflect poorly upon my own academic integrity but because research is as much about being truthful to those you study as it is about being truthful to the academic community. As a consequence, I have chosen respondent validation⁴⁷ as a technique to increase the validity of my research. This technique allows those who are studied to play a part in the process of 'knowledge' production – such research is based on their input, patience and co-operation and, as such, research subjects should be given the chance to shape the details presented and the conclusions drawn. At the same, it time provides an opportunity for those who are studied to question and challenge any assumptions, details and analysis they believe to be erroneous or inaccurate. This is not necessarily a straightforward process. Presenting the finding of research in an intelligible way to some groups can be difficult. In addition, these groups may also have no interest in the research or the desire to influence it. Bloor highlights this problem well in his study of doctors' decision making (Silverman, 2001: 159).

However, in my own research, these issues were not a particular problem and I found the process extremely useful. Participants I had particularly close contact with in Oxfam were usually well versed in social research, many coming from academic or quasi-academic backgrounds, were passionate about gender research and practice and had a professional interest in developing a better understanding of gender mainstreaming in Oxfam. In all phases of the fieldwork, I discussed parts of my analysis and explored details of situations and information I had encountered with the participants I worked closely with, usually during informal conversations and chats. This played an important role in helping me shape my analysis as well as check if I had interpreted situations and documents correctly. In addition, between phase one and phase two of the research, I produced my MPhil thesis on gender mainstreaming in Oxfam. Upon completion of the thesis, I sent a copy to Susan Price, the gender advisor I worked with in phase one, who herself features in the research. After reading it, we met to discuss what she thought. I was further encouraged in the validity of my

⁴⁷ Respondent validation is a technique for increasing the validity of research by getting participants of the research to comment on the initial research output, such as evidence collected, and preliminary analysis and conclusions. The researcher must then take into account the extent to which participants perception of reality differs to that of the research and make adjustments accordingly in revisions of the work.

research by the fact she not only didn't take particular issue with any details of the research or aspects of my analysis but also because she highlighted that my work had been able to pull together and clearly express a number of undefined feelings and ideas she had been having, about gender mainstreaming in Oxfam, for several years.

Methods

As mentioned above, the validity and reliability of qualitative research is often heavily criticised and, in many cases, these criticisms are fair assessments of the problems this type of social research faces. Addressing these criticisms, not only in the research approach but in the methods deployed, is crucial for any social research investigation. Criticisms of qualitative research methods tend to focus on three issues: The impact of the researcher on the setting, the values held by the researcher, and the truth status of a respondent's account (Silverman, 2001: 156). In the following sections, I will explore in detail the methods I have outlined previously as well as attempt to allay the criticisms they face.

Participant Observation

Participant observation involves immersing yourself among the group your research is focused upon in an attempt to better understand the people within the group, their relationships, the significance they attach to those relationships and the group as a whole. Consequently, participant observation involves a certain amount of deception. The people you are studying, though they should know exactly why you are there and what you are studying, must come to think of you not as a researcher but as another (though obviously different) member of their group. Only by this process of blending in and making your difference less visible can the participant observer begin to see and understand the ways people interact with each other on a daily basis. Bernard highlights the role of the participant observer succinctly:

Participant observation involves establishing rapport in a new community; learning to act so that people go about their business as usual when you show up; and removing yourself every day from cultural emersion so you can intellectualise what you have learned, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly (Bernard, 2002: 137).

There are two forms of participant observation that can be undertaken by the researcher. On the one hand, the researcher can assume the role of 'participating observer'. In this role, while the researcher becomes known and hopefully accepted by members of a group, the researcher does not become involved in the activities of the group but merely observes them. Shelley's research on kidney dialysis patients is a case in point. Though she became a regular at the dialysis clinic, she did not pretend to be a nurse nor did she undergo dialysis treatment, she merely talked to, listened to and observed the patients and staff (Bernard, 2002: 138). On the other hand, the researcher can assume the role of 'observing participant'. In this role the researcher performs an active part within the community, no longer just observing community members, but interacting with members in a way that has meaning at the community level. Fleisher's research into the United States prison service is such a case. To be able to analyse the pressures facing prison guards, Fleisher himself trained to become a prison guard and worked for a year within a prison (Fleisher, 1989). At no point did he hide the fact that he was conducting research, but at the same time he actively fulfilled a defined role within the prison community.

In terms of data reliability, both approaches have positive and negative characteristics, yet the approach taken by the researcher is often defined as much by context as it is by choice. For instance, it is unlikely that a researcher can enter into a hunter-gatherer community as an observing participant. The techniques for hunting and gathering often take a lifetime to develop and the researcher has little chance of convincing people she or he is skilled in them. However, such participating observers can find themselves becoming observing participants as their relationship with the community develops and a role for the researcher in the community becomes defined. For instance, the researcher may find him- or herself becoming a spokesperson for the community when dealing with government officials. The lines between these two approaches often become blurred. In my case, the context suggested that the role of observing participant was not only the best way for me to approach my research at Oxfam, but the only possible way. I ruled out the role of participating observer, since it did not only seem unlikely to get much in the way of evidence about how people perceived the relevance of GAD within the organisation – for instance, sitting in

peoples offices watching them while they worked was more likely to highlight my difference, as well as elicit annoyance, than provide useful information – but it was also an approach which I doubt Oxfam would have agreed to, for it would have disturbed work within the organisation.

Before I go on to look at the usefulness and difficulty of using this approach in Oxfam for gaining information about gender mainstreaming, I should perhaps review why I thought participant observation was an important technique to use. As discussed in Chapter 1, there is a growing literature that conceptualises “organisations as cultural systems rather than objectively material and technical ones” (Roper, 1994: 87). The organisation’s culture, in essence, guides and gives meaning to those within the organisation (and at the same time it is produced and reproduced by those embedded within it). For instance,

each culture provides people with a way of seeing the world, by categorising, encoding, and otherwise defining the world in which they live. Culture includes assumptions about the nature of reality as well as specific information about that reality. It includes values that specify the good, the true, and the believable. Whenever people learn a culture, they are to some extent imprisoned without knowing it (Spradley, 1980: 14).

Oxfam, as an organisation, is no exception to this understanding. It provides a system of shared values and beliefs about how the world works, and in Oxfam’s case, how development works. People who enter Oxfam must learn and adapt to its culture if they are to successfully navigate their personal and work life in the organisation. As a consequence, staff at Oxfam are to some extent imprisoned by the culture of the organisation as much as by the culture of the community in which they live. Again, as discussed in Chapter 1, to understand why Oxfam and its staff have difficulties implementing gender policy within the organisation, it will be necessary to understand this organisational culture. The most useful method of gaining an understanding of any culture is participant observation. As a result, I believed participant observation would be an important method to use in my research examining the organisation and gender mainstreaming.

The benefits to this method were more numerous than I first imagined they could be in the context of examining organisational culture rather than the more traditional focuses of participant observation. Firstly, Bernard (Bernard, 2002: 140-142) and May (May, 2001: 138-

141) both highlight that participant observation allows the researcher to gain access to events and information to which 'strangers' usually will not have access. For instance, had I merely conducted a series of interviews of Oxfam staff, I would not have been in a position to sit in, and even participate, in meetings, workshops and training sessions. This is important as people often act and respond differently when they are interacting with others from within their group, than when in the sterile situation of an interview. Furthermore, access to files and information, such as project proposals, policies and other internal documentation, was dramatically increased given that I was exposed to it as part of my work within the organisation. At one point I was even asked to sort out the archive of the organisation's gender related documentation (policy drafts, memos, cases notes, project reviews), giving me access to a wealth of historical material on gender in the organisation. Leading on from this, a key aspect of participant observation is the aim of reducing reactivity to the researcher (Bernard, 2002: 141). As people became used to me working in the office, they came to see me as another member of staff rather than a researcher. In doing so, their reactions to my questions became more like responses to another staff member than to a researcher. I believe this increased the quality of evidence I was collecting, as people's more natural responses hopefully gave me greater insight into how people positioned and negotiated themselves within the organisation.

Secondly, May states that "fieldwork is a continual process of reflection and alteration of the focus of observations in accordance with analytic developments" (May, 2001: 142). Time spent in the organisation allowed me to rethink my questions and assumptions. My initial assumptions, which I had developed from my previous research interests in policy and indigenous knowledge, did not seem to sit right with the reality I faced. Although not totally inappropriate, they needed to go through a process of considerable reorientation before they seemed to reflect the situation more accurately. This would have been unlikely to have occurred had I based my research solely on interviews and documentation as social context is easily masked within these two forms of information. For instance, the willingness and enthusiasm to promote gender issues throughout the organisation by most staff members would not necessarily have been visible through discourse analysis or would have been

questionable in the situation of formal interviewing. Understanding this has had significant consequences for analysing why gender policy has been difficult to implement in the organisation.

Thirdly, an issue I did not expect to encounter was the problem of language. Participant observation gives the researcher the time and exposure to a language in order to become familiar with it and its layers of meaning: "the more familiar that researchers are with the language of a social setting, the more accurate will be their interpretations of that setting" (May, 2001: 146). Initially, I doubted that this benefit of participant observation would be of use to me in studying an organisation whose principle operating language is English. However, it was not long into my fieldwork before I realised that the organisation and its staff operated on a daily basis with language not quite as simple as I had thought. Both Chapters 4 and 5 have drawn attention to the organisations piquet for abbreviation and acronymisation. For instance, the term SCO (Strategic Change Objective) was used in nearly all conversations and written communications. These and other acronyms were batted about with relative ease by all members of staff. To be fully incorporated into Oxfam, fluency in this language was a necessity. Furthermore, knowing what the abbreviation stood for does not necessarily enlighten the user to what it means or its connotations. Participant observation provided me with both the time and the exposure to become fluent enough in this organisational language to begin to analyse the meaning held within the institutional context.

Aside from these benefits that participant observation offered me as a research method, it also had some significant drawbacks which needed to be kept in mind when assessing the reliability of the evidence it had produced. Firstly, Silverman, when examining evidence produced by participant observation, questions the validity and reliability of it given that he believes it is vulnerable to the problem of researcher selectivity, as noted within the case study approach more generally (Silverman, 2001: 153). For instance,

there is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of 'data' in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews, or examples of a particular activity are used to provide evidence for a particular contention (Bryman, 1992: 77).

Given this criticism and the problem it causes with respect to reliability, I have attempted to ameliorate it through the delivery of the research process. Though I started my research with a loose set of hypotheses to give it direction, I did not enter the fieldwork phase trying to prove these hypotheses. On the contrary, as the fieldwork progressed, I allowed my early hypotheses to be sidelined and the new ones generated as I gathered the information around me. Consequently, while this cannot quell all fears over validity, it shows a commitment to letting the evidence collected inform the analysis rather than the analysis select the evidence. Furthermore, conducting three phases of fieldwork provided a long research period in which it was possible to collect repeated evidence of both phenomena and context.

A second criticism often levelled at participant observation is the issue of objectivity. For instance, critics often claim that participant observers can easily become too involved within the community or group they are studying to be able to make a clear objective analysis of the situation. To some extent this criticism is always true. Subjectivity in analysis is inevitable, yet the skill of participant observation is the very ability to remove yourself from the situation and analyse it clearly and objectively. Critics too readily conflate the issues of neutrality and objectivity. Being objective in participant observation does not necessarily mean being neutral. In fact, it is virtually impossible to participate in social relationships and remain neutral at one level or another (Bernard, 2002: 153-154), especially when studying an organisation where the lines of hierarchy openly dissect the institution. For instance, during phase one of my fieldwork, I was asked to produce an analysis of gender and employment in Latin America and how the proposed regional free trade agreement may affect the status of women. Even as I was producing the analysis, it was clear that its direction did not match the ideas which many held at the regional office. These divisions of opinion became clear when I was asked to present and defend my analysis to senior staff at the regional office. Clearly, I was no longer a neutral participant observer, however, this did not mean that after the meeting I could not step back from the events and analyse it objectively. In fact, in this case, although the specifics of the arguments were largely irrelevant in terms of my research, the underlying conflict of opinion highlighted how gender issues were often used as a vehicle to argue other disputes between regional staff rather than actually deal with gender issues.

Conflict and non-neutrality can be an important element to participant observation and do not necessarily compromise objectivity. They can even be used to enhance it.

Interviewing

Interviewing was a valuable addition to the method of participant observation as it created a more formal environment where I could directly address staff members' understanding of Oxfam's gender policy for an extended period of time. Unlike participant observation, interviewing pushed people to verbalise their interpretation of the gender policy, the gender mainstreaming process, as well as how it all related to their work. In this respect the interviews were very useful and gave me greater insight into how staff approached their work on a daily basis.

When approaching the interviewing process, there were a number of models to choose from. The structured interview closely aligns itself with the positivist approach in the social sciences. Such an approach attempts to apply scientific methods to social research. Its aim is to mimic the objectivity and reliability of data obtained in the sciences. To achieve this goal, interviews must be approached in a similar way to natural science experiments – the researcher must attempt to “fix and control the circumstances of the interview so that the data [is] collected in a consistent a fashion as possible” (Moore, 2000: 121). Standardisation and comparability are paramount in such a model. Silverman highlights this approach in researchers such as Seltiz who suggest, amongst other things, that

[i]nterviewers should ask each question precisely as it is worded and in the same order that appears on the schedule. They should not show surprise or disapproval of an answer, offer impromptu explanations of questions, suggest possible replies or skip certain questions (Silverman, 2001: 93)

The structured interview aims to control the research environment and remains disengaged with the research subject at all times. Such an approach can be useful in certain specific circumstances. Yet, in research such as mine, where the interviewer aims to bring out people's interpretations and emotional reactions to the issues of gender in their work, the model fails to be useful on a number of accounts. Oakley discusses the problems of such an approach when she reflects upon her interviews with women about motherhood (Oakley,

1990: 30-61). She questions the appropriateness of the positivist model. Interviewing is a dialogue and responding to, rather than evading or not answering, the interviewee's questions is a crucial part of that process. Ignoring or skirting around questions posed to you not only prevents you from developing your dialogue with the interviewee but unnecessarily accentuates the exploitative nature of the research relationship (Oakley, 1990: 43). Not only is the structured interview, in the classic sense, a poor method for developing a holistic understanding of your research subject but the ethics of it must also be questioned in many circumstances. Research, by its nature, is often an exploitative process. It is the researchers task to make the situation as least exploitative as possible.

In my own case, the people I interviewed were frequently the people I had close contact with during my fieldwork in Oxfam. These people were also much more senior to myself in the organisation – as a participant observer, I played the role of a volunteer in the organisation. Maintaining a hierarchical relationship, suggested in the positivist approach where the interviewer asks questions and the interviewee responds, was not only a ridiculous notion considering my relationship with these people but practicably questionable as they were the ones who had allowed me to disturb their work by permitting me to conduct my research. Furthermore, my need to understand how people interpreted gender policy and how they responded to it would have been difficult to draw out from a series of pre-scripted questions. Such questioning, especially with individuals whose position cannot let them be seen to give the 'wrong' answer, can elicit guarded responses or responses that are officially viewed as 'acceptable'. Dialogue, which is more along the lines of 'friendly conversation' rather than 'official inquisition', is more likely to draw out personal view points on the issues concerning gender mainstreaming. As such, interviewing must involve a certain element of the unscripted to increase the rapport with the interviewee. For instance, responding to a person's answers is more likely to develop the dialogue than simply moving on to the next and perhaps unrelated question.

Given these problems associated with the positivist interviewing method and the specific requirements of my research, I decided to adopt a semi-structured interviewing style. Such a method still identifies a list of issues that need to be addressed but "is prepared to be flexible

in terms of the order in which topics are considered [...and...] let[s] the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher” (Denscombe, 2003: 167). To a large extent, this allowed the interviewee to define the direction of the interview, which, on the whole, suited my research purposes. Giving the interviewee a freer hand in shaping the interview allowed me to identify what issues and ideas the interviewee saw as relevant to the topic. Furthermore, in this situation, what the interviewee did not express an opinion on or give thought to was also just as relevant as those issues she or he did address.

Perhaps my most serious problem with this technique was the way the interviewee reacted to my research. At the beginning of all interviews, I provided a little introduction about myself, what I was doing in Oxfam, what my research was about and what it would focus on. Inevitably, the phrases gender mainstreaming and gender policy/practice were used by myself before the interview proper had begun. In keeping with theory about semi-structured interviewing, I would start my interview with an easy and broad question (unrelated to gender mainstreaming) about Oxfam more generally and what their work involved. Such a question was aimed to develop rapport, set the interviewee at ease and provide a more generalised understanding of how they viewed themselves in the organisation (Denscombe, 2003: 179-180). However, interviewees regularly went straight into talking about ‘gender policy’ in the organisation, how their work was trying to adopt a gender approach and so on. One interviewee did not even let me ask the first question but started talking in the pause between explaining what I was researching and my initial question. At first I viewed this as a serious problem, I believed that my introduction was biasing the answers they gave me – they were over-emphasising the way they perceived gender related to their work and the organisation. I began to have doubts about my personal approach to interviewing and the model I was using. However, I soon realised that this problem was unavoidable no matter what approach I took. Ethically I must explain to the interviewee exactly what I would be researching and the interviewee in turn would feel compelled (consciously or unconsciously) to provide that information and demonstrate that they took gender issues seriously. Once I realised this, I began to use it to my advantage. Their opening comments which were based mostly on my introduction and a desire to tell me all about the importance of gender to their work provided

a great deal of insight into how they conceptualised gender, gender relations and Oxfam's gender policy. These initial reactions to my introduction were often the most critical aspects of the interview because the interviewees defined what they thought was most relevant to the discussion and in doing so allowed me to understand how they interpreted, or rather how they believed they should interpret, gender policy in the organisation.

Discourse Analysis

Texts and documents are often perceived as too ephemeral or insubstantial for analysis in social science (Silverman, 2001: 59). However, texts can be a rich source of evidence on any number of levels and can tell us a lot about the people or institutions that produce them as well as the people who read and digest them. For instance,

[t]he presence and significance of documentary products provides the ethnographer with a rich vein of analytic topics, as well as a valuable source of information. Such topics include: How are documents written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads them? For what purposes? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? (Silverman, 1997: 60-61)

This is particularly important in my analysis of Oxfam – internal documents are crucial and form a large proportion of my sources. Firstly, such texts highlight how Oxfam positions gender within the organisation. For instance, what does Oxfam define as core issues and how do they relate gender to those issues. Secondly, it can reveal how gender concepts and language have been incorporated into different documents with respect to distance from policy making, for example by comparing project proposals to regional policy. And thirdly, they further highlight how Oxfam problematises the difficulties faced by mainstreaming gender. These three areas of analysis are important as they give strong indications to how Oxfam constructs and interprets the issue of gender as well as to what extent this construction is disseminated and absorbed by its staff. Internal documents are powerful instruments for informing and shaping the medium in which Oxfam staff negotiate their work.

Access to internal documents was greatly enhanced through participant observation. Being involved in working for Oxfam meant that I was exposed on a daily basis to e-mails, memos, policy documents, rough drafts of policy, proposals, project reviews and so on. These documents provided a rich and varied source for discourse analysis. When considering

discourse analysis, a wide variety of approaches are suggested in the literature (Denscombe, 2003; May, 2001; Silverman, 2001), ranging from simple word counting to linguistic analysis. After going through several initial documents, I decided on the approach best for my research and the documents I was analysing. Firstly, I would examine content directly: What did the text say about gender, the role of gender and gender relations in the organisations policy and practice? In what ways did the text guide staff to take a specific understanding of how gender issues should be approached in the organisation? How did it relate gender to other issues in the organisation? Secondly, I would look a little more abstractly at the texts and examine areas such as style of writing, language used and keyword or phrases associated with gender issues. For instance, was policy on gender authoritative? Was language about gender technicalised? What issues, words, meanings became automatically associated with gender and gender mainstreaming?

While discourse analysis is a very useful tool for the researcher, it has a tendency to produce a picture divorced from the reality of a situation . It can be too abstract, creating a highly artificial perspective. This can be a significant problem for the validity of any research based on discourse analysis alone. However, throughout my research, I have not only sourced a wide variety of documentation from within the organisation but have consistently cross-checked my assumptions and conclusions derived from discourse analysis with my observations made from my participant observation of Oxfam. This has proved to be a fruitful and worthwhile approach as observations of social context have had an important moderating effect on conclusions made from discourse analysis alone.

Ethical Issues

The American Association of Anthropologists note that in all forms of social research the researcher is entwined within a web of social complexity and, as a consequence, “in a field of such complex involvements, misunderstandings, conflicts and the necessity to make choices among conflicting values are bound to arise and to generate ethical dilemmas” (Spradley, 1980: 20). The Association further goes on to highlight that as a result of the inevitability of

such situations, "it is a prime responsibility of [researchers] to anticipate these and to plan to resolve them in such a way as to do damage neither to those whom they study nor, in so far as possible, to their scholarly community" (Spradley, 1980: 20). Should the research be unable to meet these two requirements, the research project should not be initiated nor continued (if already begun). Oliver goes on to underline that these ethical responsibilities continue to be important, perhaps even more so, after the fieldwork period is complete (Oliver, 2003: 62). Responsibility to both those you study and the academic community is central to the process of preparing, conducting, analysing and writing up research.

Throughout this research, I have grappled with a number of ethical issues. Some were foreseeable at the beginning of the research process and were resolved before my fieldwork began, while others did not surface fully until the research was under way and, as such, have been addressed *in situ*. Three issues have stood out in particular: consent, confidentiality and positionality. The first two mainly concern my responsibility to those I have studied, while the third concerns my integrity as a researcher and my responsibility to the academic community. The following sections will discuss each of these issues and demonstrate my determination to meet the ethical commitments necessary to conduct this research. However, I hope that it also shows that I have done more than just strive to meet the ethical commitments necessary to do this research. I hope that it shows that I have done justice to both the participants of the research and the evidence of the research. And in so doing, resolve the eternal tension in social research between the responsibility I have, as a researcher, to those I have studied and the academic community.

Consent

The issue of informed consent in academic research is not as cut and dried as many would believe. Israel and Hay have highlighted that gaining informed consent is often more problematic than many anticipate and the need for informed consent has sometimes damaged research without necessarily providing greater, if any protection, to the individual (Israel and Hay, 2006: 61-76). However, despite these debates, the issue of consent is still key in academic research. Though it may not guarantee beyond a doubt that the integrity of

the research subject will not be compromised, it does afford a level of protection to participants of social research that must be incorporated (or, if not, be given a great deal of justification) in the design and implementation of research.

Informed consent requires the confluence of two factors: comprehension and voluntary agreement. In gaining informed consent, “participants need first to comprehend and second to agree to the nature of the research and their role within it” (Israel and Hay, 2006: 61). Within my own research, ‘comprehension’ was not a particularly difficult issue, unlike some situations where participants may have a poor or misguided understanding of academic research and its implications or an inherent mistrust of ‘officials’, the participants I worked with understood the nature of social research and their involvement in it. Many of them were themselves engaged in research activities. However, ‘who’ should consent and gaining ‘voluntary agreement’ were more difficult issues.

Firstly, when considering ‘who’ should provide consent, it has been highlighted that “in some cases it may be necessary to obtain the consent of organizations, groups or community elders as well as the individuals concerned” (Israel and Hay, 2006: 70). This consideration is particularly important within my own research. Not only does it involve individuals within a particular context but it also explicitly involves that context – the development organisation. As a consequence, in addition to gaining consent of individuals, I would also have to gain consent from Oxfam as an organisation. Herein lies the difficulty: who within Oxfam can provide the consent of the organisation. The individual advisors and projects staff with whom I worked were not in a position to provide that consent. As such, I believe this consent was derived through the process of negotiating access with Oxfam.

In 2002, students at Queen Elizabeth House (QEH) Centre for International Development were contacted by Rosemary Thorp (Chair of the Trustees of Oxfam and then Director of QEH) with a view for possible collaboration between research students and staff at Oxfam. The students would be able to conduct research in Oxfam and Oxfam would get the benefit of the student and the research. I contacted Rosemary and declared my interest (emphasising

my desire to examine gender mainstreaming in the organisation), who subsequently put me in contact with a gender advisor to negotiate mutually beneficial collaborative work. After several months of e-mail exchanges an outline of my research was agreed with both the gender advisor and Rosemary . In an e-mail from Rosemary to myself, reiterating the contents of a meeting discussing my research in April 2003, she states there was agreement that:

[The] challenge was to figure out why gender mainstreaming makes so little progress, despite good intentions at higher levels. [...] You could do interviews and look at examples to consider the difficulties, which might be in people's conditioning, mindsets, in the paucity of ways of working to make people understand the importance, in procedures which don't actually build in paying attention to gender. [...] Who knows? But as much in the realm of psychology as anything else.

Given that it was I who was contacted by a representative of Oxfam (not the reverse), that this representative was the Chair of the Trustees (a position of authority in the organisation and someone who represents the interests of the organisation), that a process of negotiation ensued between myself, the representative and a member of staff in the organisation, and that, given the statement above, my research was well understood and voluntarily accepted by that representative, I felt that an acceptable level of informed consent had been reached with the organisation as a whole.

Secondly, gaining voluntary agreement (at the individual level) was also a challenge in some areas. During interviews this was not a problem. At the beginning of an interview, I would give a brief introduction about myself – who I was, where I was from, and the type of research I was conducting in the organisation. Given this information, the interviewee had the choice to participate or not participate in the interview. If the interviewee chose to remain in the interview, then it was assumed that voluntary agreement was given to their participation in the research. However, outside of the interview setting gauging agreement to participate in the research was a more difficult matter. The very nature of participant observation, especially when the emphasis is upon participation, is to reduce reactivity of a community to the researcher and gain an understanding of the 'everyday'. The good participant observer becomes indistinguishable, in the eyes of the community, from the members of that community. Unlike more traditional ethnographic situations, where the researcher is often

readily distinguishable from the community being studied – either because of race, ethnicity, religion, educational background, class, or perhaps even gender – conducting participant observation in a large international development organisation was an environment in which I easily blended in. For instance, working in a multi-cultural equality sensitive organisation essentially rendered readily visible markers of difference – such as race, ethnicity, religion, and gender – unimportant. In terms of other characteristics, such as educational and professional background and class, I actually fitted the profile quite easily: middle class with at least a bachelors, if not a post graduate, degree who had a work history in development⁴⁸. Blending into the organisation and being accepted as just another member of that ‘community’ was decidedly easy.

And herein lies the problem of, not so much gaining, but maintaining voluntary agreement. Upon meeting people in the organisation, I would introduce myself and make very clear what I was doing in the organisation. Most people found my research interesting and would furnish me with their own analysis of the situation, happily seeing themselves as a source of information. I would take this as a form of consent. However, my relationship with these people extended over months and frequently I would be involved in pieces of work with them. It is difficult to gauge to what extent they continued to recognise my alter identity, that of researcher, and the wider implications this had for our relationship. For instance, did they say things they would rather not have said to an ‘outsider’ of the organisation? This worry is essentially unanswerable. It would have been practicably impossible – as well as counterproductive to the participant observation method – to remind everyone within Oxfam during every interaction with them that I was a researcher and would be possibly noting down the exchange. However, though this issue is essentially unanswerable, it does not mean that it cannot be accounted for in the analysis and presentation stages of the research. Through the use of anonymity, I believe I have gone some way to countering, but not answering, the problem of ‘maintained consent’ and in the following section I will discuss my use of anonymity for research participants.

⁴⁸ My specialisation and interest in gender research also increased my ability to blend into sub-groups of the Oxfam ‘community’ specifically working on gender issues.

It is at this stage, I would also like to note that at several points during my research, I was reassured that members of staff did recognise my position as a researcher and therefore also recognised the role they played as informants. For instance, while engaged in conversations with several member of staff, I was asked if what they would say next could be 'off the record'. I would say yes and after the meeting I would note down roughly what they said with explicit instructions not to be referred to⁴⁹. In asking if the following could be 'off the record', the member of staff was acknowledging my identity as a researcher and at the same time drawing a line between talking to me as a member of Oxfam and talking to me as an 'outsider'. I perceived the action of actively withdrawing voluntary agreement to participating in my research as positive. It reassured me that, though I may have bended into the Oxfam community as intended, my identity as researcher was also still visible (even if it was obscured) and research participants maintained a level of informed consent throughout my research.

Confidentiality

When examining informed consent, it was highlighted that consent for participation in the research must extend beyond the individuals involved to the organisation as a whole. In a similar vein, when considering confidentiality issues, I would need to relate them to the individuals within the research as well as to the organisation. On the whole, I felt that the level of confidentiality necessary for the organisation was not as high as was necessary for individual participants. In gaining consent from both the organisation and individuals within the organisation a desire to remain anonymous was not expressed, though a certain level of confidentiality was assumed. However, during the analysis and write-up of the research, I decided that individual participants within the research would be made anonymous but the organisation as a whole would not. This does not mean that confidentiality issues concerning the organisation were not met but that the lower level attributed to it reflected the specific circumstances and implications of the research.

⁴⁹ Noting down what the informant said 'off the record' may be seen as breaking the bond of trust and not following their wishes. However, my intention in doing this was actually to protect their wishes. By noting down what they said with explicit instructions not to use I was making sure that I did not make the mistake of forgetting what could or could not be used. It is just as hard to remember what not to use as it is to remember the contents of a conversation without writing it up afterwards.

Given that this research aimed to provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of gender mainstreaming that would become an accepted example for better understanding within the development community (and not just a good piece of academic research), it was necessary to select an organisation that is both prominent among development organisations and respected for its dedication to gender mainstreaming. Oxfam fulfilled these requirements. However, to have created a pseudonym for the organisation would have negated the very benefits of selecting Oxfam in the first place. Therefore, in not using a pseudonym, greater creativity was needed in the write-up of the research to maintain confidentiality but at the same time represent the realities in the organisation. Without the protection of a pseudonym, I was careful to not use information that I believed to be directly harmful to the image of the organisation. This did not mean that I reduced the scope of my analysis or that I did not critique the organisation where I felt it was necessary. Rather it meant approaching the analysis from an angle that allowed me to make important insights into the process of gender mainstreaming without having to call into question the organisation's overall integrity.

In the process of analysing gender mainstreaming in the organisation, the use of respondent material may not always have been entirely complimentary as it often highlighted flaws or limitations in the ideas or practices of staff. Addressing and presenting this material as directly and precisely as possible was necessary for developing the analysis. However, unlike with the organisation, there is no particular reason why the reader of the research should need to know the individuals involved. Given these facts, I decided that anonymity would allow me flexibility to explore sensitive issues more accurately (particularly those arising out of participant observation) without the worry of the reader making a connection between a specific viewpoint or comment and a specific respondent (Oliver, 2003: 78). Anonymity has been provided in two forms. When input of an informant has been considerable or key to a particular argument, then I have created a pseudonym for that informant. This pseudonym makes the text easier to read and allows the reader to see the influence of particular informants within the research. On the other hand, where the input of an informant has been less sizable they have merely been identified by their position in the

organisation (identifying markers of this position have been removed). Anonymity in this case has not been used as a shield to make unfair or unjustified comments, but as a tool to improve my analysis while at the same time making sure that I maintain my responsibility to protecting the confidentiality of the individual participants.

Positionality

Recognising the impact of the researcher upon the gathering of evidence and the presentation of the research is an important theme within feminist methodology (Broussine and Fox, 2003: 32; Stacey, 1997) and an important ethical consideration. The production of 'knowledge' through the research process cannot be considered morally acceptable by the academic community unless the presence of the researcher is made explicit within that process. For example, Alvesson asks: "How are taken for granted assumptions, systems of values and commitments to particular social interests penetrating research approaches and results?" (Alvesson, 1991: 209). A key aspect of conducting research must then be to recognise your own position within the research process and to make that position both as unbiased as possible through sustained methodological development but also as clear as possible to those reading your research. The process of doing this has been referred to as 'reflective research'. Reflective research requires the researcher to "be critical of [their] own assumptions and to avoid making excessive claims to authority" (Broussine and Fox, 2003: 32). However, a researcher can only be critical of their assumptions up to a certain point and must also to some extent put forward an authoritative argument. As a consequence, reflective research also requires "a full account of the researchers' views, thinking and conduct" to allow the reader to place the research within that context (Olesen, 1998). Throughout this research, I have strove to meet these conditions.

In terms of being critical of my own assumptions, I have taken a number of steps to ensure that my assumptions are continually tested and that I do not close myself off to new ideas. Firstly, as discussed earlier in relation to increasing validity, the use of respondent validation throughout the differing phases of the research has been used to continually probe not only the validity of my evidence, but also the assumptions I am using to collect and analysis this

material. This technique has been particularly good at making sure my assumptions do not drift away from the reality of gender mainstreaming, keeping them grounded within everyday experiences. Secondly, I have also given presentations and seminars on my research since 2003 at key points in the development of my ideas and assumptions. Unlike respondent validation, these activities were not designed to see if my assumptions were consistent with the everyday experiences of mainstreaming but were more interested in the testing of my assumptions at a theoretical level. These activities often lead to a questioning of my conceptualisation of mainstreaming or the logic of my argument concerning institutional change. Both respondent validation and the presentation of my research to the academic community forced me to be critical of my own assumptions. This required me to reflect upon my assumptions and develop more convincing reasons why I thought they were important or accurate. This process also made me reassess some of my assumptions, providing the space to develop either differing or more nuanced ones.

Despite (and perhaps because of) this process of critical reflection, I have based my research upon certain assumptions, ideas and methods that some may disagree or take issue with. This is a matter of academic reality and, in keeping with the idea of 'reflective research', I have not attempted to bury my assumptions, ideas or methods within the research but instead have tried to make them as clear as possible. In Part I of the thesis, I outline in detail both my ideas and beliefs about the process of change in institutions – how power operates within organisations and the medium in which it operates – as well as what I understood gender mainstreaming to be and where current analyses of mainstreaming are lacking. The rest of this thesis has been built upon these two key chapters. In addition to this, within this methodology, I have discussed in depth the approach I have taken to examine gender mainstreaming in Oxfam and have also highlighted the problems I have faced in conducting this research. I have consistently attempted to provide the reader with "a full account of [my] views, thinking and conduct" (Olesen, 1998). In doing this, I believe I have taken on board the most important aspects of reflective research. I have not tried to mask my positionality and dress my research up as some kind of objective study of a social phenomenon. Instead, I have made my position apparent throughout the research process. As a consequence, I

have let my position be challenged and reshaped by both participants and the academic community during the assembling of this research. I have also made it clear within this thesis. Social research can rarely, if ever, be objective. I have not striven to be objective in the traditional sense, rather I have tried to produce a piece of research that creates a fair representation of reality and makes assertions about it but at the same time recognises its subjectivity.

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