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Women's Education: An International Perspective

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the
Department of *Teaching and Learning*

by
Nneka Dean

Under the mentorship of *Meca Williams-Johnson*
Acknowledgements to *Yasar Bodur, and Michelle Reidel*

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to dissect a topic that is heavily discussed around the world: women's education and the many diverse ways in which it is practiced. One of the reasons women's education is such a highly-debated topic is because there are still many differences in how people believe it should be accomplished while other places do not see the advantage or purpose of educating women. There are many countries with male dominated enrollment because of the women's traditionally-held gender role of staying at home or because the family's socioeconomic status. This study compared the experiences of women's education in the United States to those of women in foreign countries to help widen not only the understanding of how education is perceived and practiced, but also how different cultures affect how women's education is viewed. International female students who are currently attending universities in the United States were interviewed with questions regarding the education of women in their home countries and any barriers or obstacles women have had to overcome. Then, by comparing the differences in their educational experiences, this study helps the reader gain a better understanding of how far women's education has progressed, and the diversity in women's educational experiences.

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Women's Education: An International Perspective

INTRODUCTION

The education of women is a topic that is heavily discussed around the world. Though many agree that it is an important subject, there are still so many diverse ways, in which it is practiced. What are some of the key differences as well as links that contribute to the overall picture of women's education both within the United States and abroad? One of the reasons women's education is such a highly-debated topic is because there are still many differences in how people believe it should be done. Some places stress the importance of increasing the number of women who are educated not only locally, but globally as well. However, there are also many places that do not see the advantage or purpose of educating women. These differences in belief have caused a rift to form, when it comes how to actually go about educating women.

In a research review done by Osadan (2014) on the enrollment of girls versus boys in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, Osadan found that "male students have higher enrollment and completion rates" (p.218). Osadan also stated that "for every three students who were denied full and equal primary education, two of them were female. This basically relegates girls to the traditionally-held gender role of staying at home, doing household chores, taking care of children, and performing other unpaid work. Despite the fact that educating girls yields a higher investment return for a country's economic development" (2014, p.218). His research review goes on to discuss different approaches toward increasing the number of girls who attend school in the region as well as different barriers that have

appeared in the progression towards women's education in Sub-Saharan Africa (2014, pp.219-221). In a different study Brodsky et al., (2012) researched the journey of women's education in Afghanistan and discusses how the struggle for women's rights there came to light as well as different ways they have worked towards not only making it accessible to all women, but also making sure the education they received have a high focus on quality. One leading cause on the issue of women's education in Afghanistan is "lack of awareness of gender oppression to critical consciousness and finally the motivation to work for change" (2012, p.163). Brodsky et al., helps to identify the current obstacles women's education faces on an international level.

A journal article written by Madigan (2009) on the education of women and girls in the United States found that in the past girls did not receive or have access to an education. When they were finally allowed to attend schools, the girls "usually attended at different times of the day than the boys or on days when boys did not attend" (p.11). As the economy grew, it created an increase in the need for people who were literate. This need "provided some of the foundation for equal opportunities for men and women in the educational process" (p. 11). It wasn't until the 20th century that a majority of colleges were coeducational. Madigan (2009) found that although "girls have been raised to assume specific and limited roles in society such as secretarial, nursing or teaching school" (p.12), due to "the enforcement of equal access legislation, the options for girls have increased dramatically" (p.12). There are many studies done on the current progression or setbacks on women's education. However, not much research has been done on the comparison between the experiences of women in the United States to that of women who received their primary mode of education outside of America.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to compare the educational experiences for female international students in their home countries to their experiences in the United States. This study helped to increase not only the understanding on how education is perceived and practiced, but also how different people from different cultures perceive women's education. Another purpose of this study was to investigate the practice of education by opening doors on how women are taught. The information would then be used to develop different practices and better strategies for reaching students who are not only native born and taught, but also those who come over as immigrants. By using this study to gain knowledge on the different perspectives and methods of women's education, the understanding of how far women's education has or has not progressed can be better clarified.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How are the educational experiences of international female students in their native country and in the United States similar and different?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world there is still a gap between where women's education is and where it needs to be. The gap is caused by a number of issues. One issue is the restriction of women's education in comparison with men's education. There are fields that

are still male dominated, and viewed that way not only in foreign countries, but in the United States as well. Another issue has to do with the approach or level of importance of women's education. Around the world today there are still so many differences in how education is achieved. While some places are progressing forward at remarkable rates, other places have not progressed at all, and see no need to increase the number of women being educated.

MALE vs. FEMALE EDUCATION

In most cases the method used for determining who gets educated and how they are educated is determined by the head of state or government. They control how the money is distributed and which sections of a country receive what portion. In short "the state shapes the educational attainment of children most directly through laws that govern compulsory schooling" (Rankin & Aytac, 2006, p.27). Because of this reality, the prevalence of male or female education also rests in the hands of the ruling government. If the government decides that female education is more important than male education, then it is likely that you will see a prevalence of female education, and vice versa. Rankin and Aytac (2006) did research on the gender inequality of schooling in Turkey. In their research one of the main reasons they saw a low number of female education in comparison with male education was because of "restricted employment opportunities for women in developing countries" leading to parents being discouraged from "investing in their daughters' education" (p.27). If the government is not set up in a way that encourages the education of both males and females, then to expect there to be equality when it comes to educating the people would be without point.

Another factor that often plays a part in the education of males and females in different countries deals with the family status. One's family plays a vital part in how a person's life turns out. Family can impact a person's upbringing whether they are present and active or nonexistent in a person's life. In the study done by Rankin and Aytac (2006) they found that in developing countries a main factor to consider is the socioeconomic status of the family (p.27). If the family is of a low socioeconomic status then a common practice called selective education is introduced. Selective education of children is when "some go to school, while others stay home to help with household duties or go out to earn money" (p.28). Child labor laws are still permitted in many parts of the world due to the need for extra labor in order to keep the economic system of a country from failing. "Cultural attitudes and beliefs that privilege males over females are associated with wide gender disparities in educational attainment" (Rankin and Aytac, p.28, 2010). A cultural aspect of some Islamic society schools are believed to expose the innocence of daughters to the secular practices and beliefs of the world, so "a common response is to withhold daughters from school" (p.28). All of these reasons help to play a part into why the progression of women's education is still stagnant in so many areas of the world.

In the United States the climb for women's education started as a means for women to have "the chance to enjoy a self-esteem boost" and gain "the increased earning power that accompanies a college education" (Parker, 2015, p.6). However, as more opportunities grew and more fields became women-friendly, women's education transformed into women having "26% of the nation's colleges and universities" being led by women and having "women that serve as presidents and provosts of today's public and private coed institutions" (Parker, 2015, pp.11-12). The education of women still has a long way to go in

both the United States and other countries, but there is at least evidence that shows that if given the proper attention and effort, women's education can progress.

THE PROCESS OF EDUCATING

The way education is done is just as important as having access to education. When reviewing the differences between education in the United States and the education of women in other countries looking at the process is crucial in helping to understand the similarities and differences between the two. In a study done on the gender disparities for girls in Afghanistan, Kavazanjian (2010) found that one reason there was a low rate of attendance for girls in Afghanistan was due to the long distances between homes and schools. Also in many cases girls could not attend the same schools that male teachers teach, so they are left without an education opportunity, when no female teacher is available. The quality of the education people have access to can greatly impact the way education is received.

When it comes to comparing different practices in education on an international level it is important to consider the multicultural relationship between the countries being compared. Every culture has a different method of teaching or educating their youth. The practice they use is inspired and related to the area where they live. For example, some places are poorer in comparison to other places, so the level of education that they are financially able to give may be lower. The educational practices of other places are affected by regions. Therefore what they choose to teach might be more relevant to that area as opposed to another area in a different region. It is important to analyze each of these details when looking at how and why education is practiced the way it is. Arslan et al., (2013) wrote that in order to understand a culture we have to look at it in a multicultural

perspective, or with the aim of “learning about other cultures in order to produce acceptance” (Arslan, 2013, p.7). Eventually acceptance can grow into having an intercultural relationship, or one that extends “beyond passive coexistence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of understanding” (p.7). Arslan et al., writes that by incorporating diverse forms of thinking into teaching, teachers have been able to break down barriers for a larger portion of students, use the different perspectives to reach the typically under-represented groups, and impact not only how students learn academically, but also how they learn to be accepting of the differences that help to make the world so diverse (p. 11).

Women’s education in the United States has changed from women receiving no education at all, to receiving education in only certain fields, to receiving education in a wide variety of areas, and concluding with women having the same access to education that males have in the country. Although there are still some fields that are male dominated, such as engineering, with the passing of the Equal Access Legislation women have been given the opportunity to pursue an education in any field that they choose in the United States.

BENEFITS OF WOMEN’S EDUCATION

The ability to be able to receive an education, even a basic one, is beneficial to one’s life. Education opens doors, and provides a better understanding of concepts, objects, and people. Therefore, with the increase of women’s education, women and also the people around them are able to add onto their knowledge by cooperating, sharing, and learning from each other. A study done on the educating women in Turkey showed that education does not only give women access to knowledge but it allows them “to become individuals in

society” (Demiray, 2014, p. 332). According to Demiray, “research reveals that women benefit from education at least as much as -and often more- than men and the investments in education of women have produced more efficient output than the ones in education of men” (p.333).

One of the benefits discussed in the study talked about how simply being educated allows the women of Turkey a chance to gain understanding of the political laws that are in place to benefit them as well as some that can possibly serve against them. While being educated helps to elevate the country it also helps the women citizens of that country learn how to elevate themselves (p. 335). Kaifi (2014) wrote that one benefit of educating both women and men is that the more people who are educated the more a country is able to develop. Because of this it is important “to provide an environment where people are encouraged and supported to complete their educational dreams” (2014).

CONCLUSION

The world is a very diverse place. What one person is not able to accomplish the next person might be able to accomplish and exceed expectations on. Knowing that societies were founded on the different contributions and ideas of people should be a driving force in the goal towards the pursuit of education. Looking at the differences of education between males and females, the process of achieving quality education for women, and the benefits educated women, both in the United States and abroad, have to offer this study were able to highlight some key issues as well topics of interests to gain a better understanding of women's education.

Women's education is a widely-discussed topic. Therefore, looking at women's education through the different perspectives of international students will enrich this study by giving insight into how the different practices globally is affecting the progression of women's education as a whole. It is important to know about not only the education of women in the United States, but in other countries as well, because by having this understanding women's education can be better assessed in terms of identifying any highly beneficial or adverse practices.

III. METHOD

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The way women's education is practiced varies from country to country. In many places women's education lags behind men's education in terms of quality and importance. Research shows that the main reasons for the differentiation of education among women in the world is because of ranging economic statuses for different countries, cultural diversities, and differences in the perceived levels of importance for women's education. This study explored the differences in educational practices women received in their home countries with that of the education received in the United States. By interviewing female international students who are currently attending universities in the United States, and comparing the differences in their educational experiences, this study helped to gain a better understanding of the progression of women's education, and the diversity of women's education.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research approach that best fits this endeavor is a qualitative phenomenological design. Using a phenomenological design the researcher explored the educational experiences of international women students in their homelands and compared it with their educational experience in the United States.

The research question leading this study is:

1. How are the educational experiences of female international students in their native country and in the United States similar and different?

PARTICIPANTS

Data was collected through interviews of female international students who attend Georgia Southern University (GSU). I interviewed six participants from countries in various regions of the world. I gathered information from female international students who received an education in South/Central America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. I interviewed one person from South America, two people from Africa- one from North Africa, and another from the remaining part of the country, and one each person from the Middle East, Asia, and Southeast Asia. These students will be a mixture of undergraduates and graduates at GSU who have completed part of their education in their home countries and in the United States. Georgia Southern University is a public research university that hosts students from over 100 countries through their International Programs and Services. Participants were selected through any volunteers in GSU's Multicultural Student Center and the Office of International Programs and services, and through any willing participants

at the university's International Conversation Hour. The International Conversation Hour is an event hosted by Georgia Southern University's Multicultural Student Center and the Office of International Programs and Services. The event invites students with local and international backgrounds to join together in conversation with one another. Participation was completely voluntary.

DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected through the process of interviews. Interviews were scheduled with participants at a time that was convenient for them. The researcher met with participants at a quiet venue like the GSU library or the multicultural center to conduct the interview. The interviews lasted 30 minutes to an hour. The interviews were audio recorded for transcription. Each participant was asked interview questions that follow a semi-structural format about or related to what they've noticed about the differences as well as similarities between women's education in the United States and the education they received in their home countries, any barriers or obstacles women have had to overcome, or are still working to change to receive a better quality education, and how they believe understanding the different practices of women's education internationally will help to improve the quality of education overall. After the data was collected it was transcribed and analyzed for any similarities or differences that hold constant for the education of women in both the United States and the participating foreign countries. The study evaluated the practices of education for women, and helped to identify the ways in which certain practices were beneficial or detrimental.

INSTRUMENTATION

The instrumentation used to collect the data was a semi-structural. The interview questions served the purpose of collecting information on the participant's experiences in the educational field in the United States and their perspective country. The researcher used studies from previous research on women's educational experiences to create new interview questions that may be relevant to their experiences. The questions were reviewed by the researcher's major professor and revised as needed. To pilot the interview questions the researcher conducted a mock interview with a fellow student in the honors program. The following interview questions were used:

Basic Background Information

1. How old are you?
2. In what country or countries did you receive your K-12 education?
3. In what country or countries did you receive your post-secondary (college) education?
4. What major(s) have you or are you currently pursuing?
5. Why did you choose the major that you chose?
6. Why did you choose to come to the United States to receive part of your education?

Semi-structured interview questions

7. Since coming to the United States what are some differences you've noticed in the way education is practiced?
8. What are some of the similarities you've noticed in the way education is practiced in both your home country and in the United States?

9. Were there any challenges in adapting to the American style of education/teaching?

If so, what were they?

10. What were the views of your family on the importance of your education?

11. What are some specific experiences you can share in regards to your educational experience?

12. Is there any additional information you would like to add about your educational experience here in the United States, or in your native country?

PROCEDURES

An interview was conducted with each participant selected through voluntary participation during International Conversation Hour at Georgia Southern University, and some voluntary referrals by a professor in the College of Education Honors Research Seminar Department. The interviews were audio recorded with the purpose of collecting the experiences of women who have experience in schools outside of the United States. The information explored discussed why the importance of women's education is still a highly controversial topic, and why different countries have diverse educational practices as opposed to a unified practice.

DATA ANALYSIS

After the interviews were transcribed the data was organized into sections based on the native countries of the participants. The four focus regions for the six participants are South/Central America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. After the participants data was organized by that specific region, the data collected during the interview was categorized by differences and similarities in the educational practices women experienced in their

native countries and in the United States and barriers women have had to overcome or are currently overcoming in their native countries in regards to receiving quality education.

The data was analyzed for any reoccurring themes within the participants' interview responses. The final step of the data analysis was to interpret the data in regards to how it answered the research question.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations to this study are that the interviewing process was conducted on individuals currently residing in the United States as opposed to women receiving their full education in countries outside of the United States. Because they are currently residing in the United States their explanation of the educational practices in their native countries may not reflect the current educational practices or laws in place in that designated country.

FINDINGS

The focus of this research was to determine the similarities and differences among women's education in their home countries and in the United States. The research was conducted through a qualitative design via one-on-one interviews with women who received part of their education in the United States and part of their education in their native country. In the findings section of this research paper I will address the following

themes: influence of family, opportunities, importance of education, and educational experiences and perceptions as they relate to the research topic.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

One major theme that was discussed in the one-on-one interviews was the influence that family had on the participants' education in terms of the importance of their education, and their support in what area of education they were pursuing. I found that most of the participants' family members fully supported the women's choice to further their education. Participant 5 (2017) from Nigeria stated that in her family "education has always been seen as number one... a lot of people believe success in education is life." The participant went on to further say that it "gives you an idea that helps you in the future regardless if you want to use it. It's important to at least have it." (P5). Another one of the participants from Nigeria talked about how her mom and siblings were fully invested in the progression of her education. Her family believed that education was an important tool to have acquired, and they even went onto say that they would constantly be checking in on her progress, and asking questions as to whether the participant was going to further their education even more and obtain a doctorate. In the interview conducted with her she stated that "my brother and still my sister they're all like oh how's your education? You should do it. Are you trying to do your masters, or do you PhD? So they're all into my education." (P1) It was clear after having conducted the interview with her that the participant's education was a subject her family both valued and invested in.

Although many of the participants that I interviewed mentioned that their family members fully supported and encouraged their desire to expand on their education, a few of the participants mentioned that their family members did not always understand why they wanted to pursue an education at all. One participant from India discussed how “in Indian culture it’s become more progressive now, but most of the time it’s like the females usually stay at home.” (P4). When I interviewed my participant from Angola, she discussed how her father had the view that a women’s main focus should be to get married rather than receive an education. She mentioned that “if my father was alive, he probably would, arrange a marriage for me and my sister because he’s in that, he’s old fashioned. He was old fashioned, and for him once we are 19 we needed like, according to his culture we needed to be married.” (P2) One participant from China mentioned how her family believed that she was too old to be continuing on with her education, and that she should simply focus on getting a job from the education she had already obtained. She told me that her family would often ask her “why you are 36, why [would] you want to go to [the] States, and then go on there. You are old enough go back to school. Why not just work?” (P6) Interviewing these participants brought to light that there are still some countries and/or cultures that believe that certain social norms have a more important role in a women’s life over education, such as women being married at a young age or women being viewed as their main responsibility being within the home.

A final underlying topic that came up with the discussion of how family connections play a role in the education of the female participants that I interviewed was that oftentimes the family supported the participants’ choice of continuing in their education. However, they played a direct role on which field of education they should pursue. For

example, when asked why they chose the major they did, participant one Nigeria responded by saying “Now that I think about it I was pushed into it by my dad, because my dad is a mechanical engineer and he wants all his children to be like in that path over with robotics and engineering, so I just went for it.” (P1) Another participant from Nigeria mentioned that she actually wanted to pursue a different major than the one she was currently pursuing, but when the conversation was brought up with her family they responded by asking her “why can’t you be a doctor? Why can’t you be a lawyer? Like why can’t you be one of those things? What happened to engineering?” (P5). The influence and roles the family members played on the participants’ education was present among all the interview transcripts. Whether it was through the support, guidance, or another extraneous factor, the data collected from the interviews showed that family had a direct impact on both the likeliness and type of education the women participants received.

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES, PERCEPTIONS, and OPPORTUNITIES

Another major theme that presented itself in the interviews was related to the educational experiences, perceptions, and opportunities that receiving an education outside of their native country presented. A commonality amongst the participants was the encouragement to obtain an education in another country. While reviewing the data collected from the interviews on the participants, a few of women revealed that receiving an education in the United States held more weight than receiving an education in their home country. One participant told me that “in my country school people like finish college and they don’t get like I mean [a] job, and there is no[t] even [a] good education. That’s why my dad transferred me here, so that I can have like experience, and find a job easily” (P7).

Another one of the participants when asked how they came to the decision to receive their post-secondary education in the United States rather than in their home country expressed that “ I had wanted to do my undergraduate degree in South Africa, but it was like ah maybe you should go to the United States and get another, you know, as everyone know, I think almost everyone knows that the [United] States has like the best education system ever.” (P3) The data I collected showed a reoccurring perception amongst my participants that an education received in the United States would hold more weight over an education in their home country.

When asked why this perception existed, the interviewees revealed that it was related to the resources available within the United States, the employment opportunities that would follow a person with an education in the United States, and the method of teaching. Differences in the availability to resources was a common occurrence in the interviews amongst the participants. While reviewing the data, I found that many of the participants had either had little to no access to technology as they were progressing through their education. One participant from Mali mentioned that “people be like ughh they have the book, and the computer, [and] the internet. But in that, we don’t have no book, or the internet access with our internet or computer, or whatever it is.” (P7). The idea that resources were much more abundant was also expressed through another participant who said in the United States “you’re not like limited to work with certain resources, and not work with other resources. Um and you guys have a lot of resources like you like in America there’s a lot resources that you can actually use to get information and like in South Africa, some the really privilege people get all the resources and then other people don’t get resources. You have to work your way around to get what you need.” (P3).

Aside from the similarities and differences among access and quality of resources, another commonality that presented itself during this research study was about the participants' educational experiences in regards to the method of teaching. During the interview with participant five from Nigeria, she expressed that "the system it's more structured well, so it's easier to get your education, and be able to use it well." She went on to say that "There is structure in Nigeria back home, but you know sometimes you might not be getting the best of the education, because there's just some people like [are] to[o] lax to care...they just do not have hands on approach to students...They're just not responsible for them all the way through." (P5). A different participant from India expressed how in her home country "they would advise you to do your bachelors, which would be more like a foundation, back home in India and then they always advise that you know uh [go to] more developed countries like the US and all would have better facilities and research opportunities...better infrastructure to actually study the application of what we are studying." (P4).

In addition to a difference in the availability of resources, the research also brought to light some inconsistencies in the way education is operated in other countries. For example, participant one from Nigeria mentioned that "like the professors don't get paid so most of them don't ever show up. Then sometimes there can be [on] strikes for like two years." The participant went on to further explain that because of this "you can go to school for like a four-year program, and you'll graduate after like eight years or something." (P1). Another participant from Angola also mentioned how the credibility of the education of their professors was on the basis of trust. Participant two said "Yeah [the professor] just lecture[s]...That's one of the things. Professors in my country they gotta know the stuff.

Because they don't have, they might have the book, but they don't come in class, like in the classroom, with a book. You know they just teach you" (P2). One participant discussed how the information a student learns is dependent on what they acquire on their own. They said "you read the study material yourself, basically you teach yourself... You do have discussions groups like you go in the [inter]net and find discussion groups. But like I said, with limited resources sometimes you can't get through the discussion groups." (P3).

One final topic that came up, with the of the participants' educational experiences and perceptions had to do with the employment opportunities. Many of the participants talked about how their reasoning for receiving an education in the United States had to do with the employment opportunities that came along with having a degree from another country. However along with having numerous job opportunities a few of the participants expressed that even with an education there was still a likelihood that a male applying for the job would be more likely to receive it over a female. When asked about the employment equality in her home country participant from South Africa expressed that if a man and a woman were applying for the same job it was "Highly [likely the] men will get it. Like for engineering, men will get hired to be mechanical engineers than women. But for [their] education, it's the same. " (P3). Some of my participants expressed that within the field of work, there is an inequality present among the employment of women and men with the same educational background. When asked about why this was, a few of the participants replied that it had to do with the idea of what a woman could or could not do and social norms, such as some certain fields of work being viewed as male geared, and the view of what a women's place in society should be. Participant six from China expressed that with some jobs "it's easier for the man to get the position than the women even though that

position is female orientated. They prefer male ones.” They also discussed how with some jobs such as administrative jobs “women need more time to take care of the whole family. You don’t have that time and energy to, to, you know, do the administrative work. I mean a lot...the high rank not just, you know, the chair or dean. We do have women leaders for that but for the present there are really male ones. Takes much more I mean we kind of like have much more responsibilities for the families... You need time and energy to take care of the families and you need to get work to support the family too. So, you know, we do have 24 hours a day. Men, women, but man you can just immerse yourself in the work, but the women cannot” (P6). Participant four India discussed how the view that the role of women is that of homemaker still has a direct effect in the number of women in employment in her native country. She wrote that although “it’s become more progressive now, but most of the time it’s like the females usually stay at home”. She went on to talk about how “women are not expected to work and despite them working they still have to have another duty of being homemaker.” (P4).

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

A final theme that was present among the participants that were interviewed for this research project was the belief in the importance of education. When asked towards the end of the interview if there was any other information or details they wanted to add about their educational experience, many of the participants chose to discuss their view on the value of education, and the lifelong role it plays in one’s life. Participant four throughout her interview discussed how important receiving an education was to her family and to herself. She talked about how there was this view that if you were living in an

urban area, which is where she grew up, it was expected for both the males and females to receive an education. However, she mentioned that “in more rural areas, undeveloped areas, the notion is still that why does she need to study? She eventually has to make a home so what’s the point?” (P4). She elaborated on her belief that this was backwards thinking, because “just because she’s a girl, she should not be facing the bias although you are coming from a different community, or your economic status is low.” (P4)

Participant five also talked about having seen circumstances where due to disparity a family would choose to send a son over a daughter to receive an education. She stated that “for people that are living in areas that are not as developed or don’t have all the resources. There are people that still send their sons to school in place of their daughters. Not in place, but just like before them just so that they can go out into the world, and like bring back money so that the kid and the other girls can go to school. I know people that do that, and then there’s also situations where they literally they can’t afford it, or they can’t like, they can’t go to school. So they end up doing just like working all the time. So, like and it’s expected more for, you know, the girls to work. And like now just like staying with you mom and trying to help her kind of thing.” (P5). She also talked about how a lot of times the view or understanding would be that if “your mom is selling stuff like from home and you’d probably stay with her. Well let me not say they don’t still get an education. That’s just a barrier they have to deal with, but then, so may they have to go to school in the morning, come back, and then help their mom.” (P5). Both participants expressed how this disparity interfered with a lot of women being able to receive the same, equal opportunity to receive an education that their male counterparts would have a chance of receiving.

Aside from the disparity, many of the participants discussed their gratitude for being able to have the opportunity to receive an education. Participant seven discussed how she grew up in an environment where she felt she had a right to pursue an education the way she wanted to. She stated that her pursuing to further her education has “been one of those things where you just know as you’re growing up. You feel like you deserve to be someone.” (P7). Participant two discussed how having an education has allowed her to be more engaged with the things that she finds interesting or intriguing, she talked about how “I always want to know [and] discover why, and how it works behind, you know, the process.” (P2). Participant three mentioned that when given the opportunity she “usually tell[s] younger girls is that in my field there are few South African females that do what I do. So, I also um we need more in my field, and also they should just stick to what you want to do and don’t give up. Basically, just keep going cause you never know like sometimes you go in the different direction to the one you really wanted to take, like I did, but if you keep [it up] like, if you put your mind to they you’re getting where you want to be.” (P3). Participant six ended her interview by stating that “for the society or the country we need lifelong education. Not just staying in school, I mean, you know what I mean. I mean lifelong education like you can even educate yourself at home or at work or whenever and anyway do more readings. Not just get out of school and no books at home.” (P6).

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The guiding framework for this research was to discover more about the similarities and differences among educational practices for women in their native country, and that of

what they experienced in the United States. In order to learn more about women's education and the differences and similarities present in today's society, I interviewed female international students and asked them questions about their personal educational experiences both in the United States and in their native countries. Previous research on the topic of women's education has addressed how traditional gender-orientated roles, low employment opportunities, and one's family status can play a role on the educational experiences of women. In this section of this research paper I will address how the data collected from the one-on-one interviews supports, builds on, or opposes the earlier research done on the educational experiences of women.

According to earlier research, many times the way in which a country was structured the practices, and/or beliefs of that country directly impacted the likeliness of a women to become educated. This ongoing system caused many women to fall into traditional homemaker roles, which caused the view on the importance of their education to fall in terms of importance and value. This idea that women should have roles consistent with that of home caretaker was supported by the data I collected from several interview participants. In the interview with participant four, she discussed how in many parts of her home country of India there was still the lingering belief that the role of a women should not be to fall second to their traditional role inside the home. However, the data also revealed that the belief that women should take on more gender orientated social roles was a belief that was present mainly in more rural, or underdeveloped areas as opposed to more urban, developed areas. For the sake of this study "underdeveloped" refers to the families who came from poorer neighborhoods or areas, and were not financially stable enough to provide their family members with the same opportunities for each child.

“Developed” refers to the families that had financial stability, and were able to provide each of the family members with the same opportunity to succeed. This suggest that the similarities among the educational practices of women are correlated to location. For example, one finding that was consistently present among the participants who were interviewed was that family who had financial stability often times had the resources and funding to provide their children with the equal opportunity and quality of education regardless of gender. However, in other areas, depending on how developed or financially secure a family was the family might be more likely to send a son to get an education, while the daughter stayed home and helped provide for the family as a home caretaker. The finding in the data that location and class has a direct influence on the educational experience of a women was supported in earlier research done by Rankin and Aytac (2006), when it stated that families often are placed in circumstances where they must engage in selective educational practices for members of their family based on their ability to provide and the traditional norms already present in their society.

Among previous research I found that in some areas, families did not allow the women in their families to attend the same schooling facility as their male counterparts. Among the participants I interviewed, this was not found to be an experience they were familiar with. The data collected among the participants showed that at least for their personal experiences where they grew up, the education they received did not differ from the education of a man in the same area. However, I will add that among the participants I interviewed the majority of them did come from urban more developed areas. Therefore, the experiences of women in the rural, underdeveloped areas might be different.

A final detail about women's education that was earlier researched by Rankin and Aytac (2006) is that the value of women's education was downplayed because of the low employment opportunities present for women. Based on the data I collected from the participants, employment opportunities for women were present. However, there is still an inequality among the likeliness of a women to get a job over a male with the same educational background, due to societal beliefs about a women's capabilities to thoroughly accomplish the job in the same method of quality that a man could do. This shows that although employment opportunities are more present for both men and females, the opportunity for women to have the same chance at being selected for a position is still unequal.

After conducting this research many similarities and differences were found between education in the United States and education in other countries for women. Overall findings present in the data that was collected suggested that women want to be educated and employed, but due to circumstances, such as stereotypes, financial security of families, and the traditional views of women social norms. In order to better understand the similarities and differences among women's education more research should be done on what is being done to assure that women from under-developed areas still receive equal quality access to education, such as how they are aware that the information they receive from their professors or teachers is valid. Finally more research must also be done on how to increase the equality of employment once women have obtained the same education that men have. By further researching each of these areas, I believe that the research on the similarities and differences among women in the United States and in other countries can be better understood.

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