



ENGENDERING GENDER RESEARCH IN SARAWAK

Hew Cheng Sim



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Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
Kota Samarahan

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PREFACE

One which started in my undergraduate years in the UK. Dr. Huseyin Ramazanoglu taught a course in the Sociology of Development. During the course of that term he was unable to teach for a few weeks and his wife Dr Caroline Ramazanoglu who taught at Goldsmith College, University of London took over his classes and gave a few lectures on feminism and development. I did not know it at that time but Caroline was a rising feminist theorist and was later to write the classic *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression* (1989). The ideas that she introduced in those few lectures when I was in my twenties was enough to spark a life-long intellectual affinity to feminism. Thus, as with many things in life, serendipitous encounters often shape our future.

I am a sociologist by training hence my research questions are necessarily sociological in nature. However, I am also an apologetic anthropologist. My geographical location in Borneo meant that my field-site determined my research interest and the research method that I used was more akin to anthropology. This said, I do not wish to overstate the disciplinary boundary between anthropology and

sociology because historically there has always been border crossing and hybridization between the two. This was advantageous because the prodigious publications by anthropologists in Borneo were immensely useful in providing ethnographic material for our current understanding of the changes occurring in Sarawak and I am greatly indebted to the scholarly contributions of the many illustrious anthropologists and researchers who went before me.

Someone asked me, "Why not just Engendering Research?" The root word for "engendering" is not "gender" but "engender" which means "to give rise to", "to produce". So, "Engendering Gender Research" is "Giving Rise/Doing to Gender Research". However, meanings of words have changed and "Engendering Research" will work just as well as a title of today's lecture. The lecture today will be divided into 2 main parts. First, I will begin with some reflections on feminist epistemology and methodology and the second part will anchor the first half by focusing on the state of the study of women and gender relations in development in Sarawak.

Hew Cheng Sim
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April 05 2017

In this book, the author reflects upon her journey as a researcher and an advocate for women in the Malaysian state of Sarawak. She discusses feminist epistemology and methodological issues in the context of studies conducted in Sarawak, using her own work to illustrate her discussion. It is a retrospective of her decades of research into women and gender relations and will be of interest to those intending to embark on this field of study.



Dr. Hew Cheng Sim is a Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Her first degree in Sociology was from Portsmouth Polytechnic, United Kingdom. She then went on to do her Postgraduate Certificate in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. On her return, she joined St. Joseph's School as a teacher and later Mara Institute of Technology as a lecturer. She then embarked on a Masters degree by research with the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Malaya. She subsequently joined the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak in 1994 and obtained her Ph.D from RMIT University, Australia in the year 2000. Her research interests include gender and development, urbanization, marriage, family and work with a focus on Sarawak. She has published widely in journals and her books include *Women Workers, Migration and Family in Sarawak*, London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon in 2003; *Village Mothers, City Daughters: Women experiencing urbanization in Sarawak (ed.)*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in 2007. Her book with Rokiah Talib, *Tra Zehnder: Iban woman patriot of Sarawak* was published by UNIMAS Press in 2011. Her fourth book, *For Better or For Worse: Marriage and Family in Sarawak (ed.)* was published by Whiting and Birch in London in 2015. She is currently working on her fifth book with Kelvin Egay entitled, *Beyond Romance: Fieldwork in Sarawak*.

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