

**AWARENESS AS A PROCESS TOWARD A  
LIBERATING THEOLOGY  
FOR THE WOMEN OF SOUTH-EAST  
ZIMBABWE**

**ELESINAH CHAUKE  
972165992**

**Submitted in accordance with the academic  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**SUPERVISOR**

**PROFESSOR ISABEL APAWO PHIRI**


**PIETERMARITZBURG**

**October 2006**

---

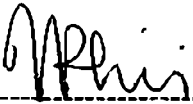
## DECLARATION

**I DECLARE THAT THIS IS MY OWN WORK. IT IS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL. IT HAS NOT BEEN SUBMITTED BEFORE FOR ANY DEGREE OF EXAMINATION IN ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY.**

  
-----

**Elesinah Chauke**  
31 October 2006

**As candidate supervisor I hereby approve this thesis for submission**

  
-----

**Professor Isabel Apawo Phiri**  
31 October 2006

---

## **CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE**

### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Due to issues of confidentiality, the names of the female interviewees have been changed; furthermore, the churches and organisations that were engaged with throughout the period of this study are not formally identified as the study was not concerned with church denominations, but rather with society as a whole.

Elesinah Chauke

31 October 2006

---

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Mrs. Ruth Hlungwani Chauke. I will always remember the unselfish spirit of this Godly woman. Although confined to her sick bed towards the end of her earthly life, due to a combination of high blood pressure and arthritis, she always put her children first. My mother often encouraged me by saying, "*famba uyatsala mabuku awena*" ('go and write your books'). As far back as I can remember, my mother prayed regularly for each of her children by name between 04h00 and 05h00 until went to be with her Lord, 11 February 2003. *Ninkensile Manana, hinkari lowu minganinyika wakutsala thesis yamina* ('Thank you, Mother, for the time you gave me to write my thesis').

I also dedicate this work to my respectable friends, Dr. P. and Mrs. C. Capp. Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, I am what I am today, because of the encouragement of the Capps. They believed in me and that encouraged me to try new things.



---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those individuals who supported me in one way or another while I was engaged in this research. Included among these are officials of the Free Methodist World Mission, Overseas Council International, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Religion and Theology for their financial support as well as my colleagues at The Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa for their moral support. My gratitude goes to Joanna Zeiner who helped me with typing at the early stages of this research and to a fellow researcher, Benson Okyere Manu for his technical assistance. My sincere thanks go to my spiritual parents Dr and Mrs Demarey for their continuous encouragement.

Special thanks go to the women and men of South-East Zimbabwe for allowing me to interview them. I want also to thank the many pastors who set aside time out of their busy schedules to give me invaluable information and the many teachers and education officials who helped me by answering my many questions. All of you were patient and co-operative in every way. Thank you.

A word of sincere gratitude goes to those persons who allowed me to use their personal libraries, including my brother Mr. H. Chauke, Revd T. Houser, Mr. K. Gwemende, and the many others who are too numerous to mention.

My sincerest thanks go to my supervisor, Professor I. A. Phiri, for her patience, insightful comments, availability, clear guidance and gentle spirit. Last, but not least, I would like to mention and thank *Tatana* (Shangaana for 'father') Daniel Muzamani Chauke, who went to be with the Lord in February 2003.

---

## ABSTRACT

This research is a study in systematic theology with strong implications on the biblical doctrine of anthropology for women. Having said this, it needs to be made clear that it was not the intention of this research to deal with the traditional abstract of theology in all its details. The doctrine however is alluded to, from the perspective of African Women's Theology, in that the research builds upon women's experiences, and looks at them in the light of what the researcher sees as God-given dignity for all humanity including women, from the time of creation. It is from this perspective that the researcher approached her synthesis and the basis of such analysis is multi-disciplinary. The people under study are that of the Mashangana (*va-Hlengwe*) and the (*va-Karanga*) who inhabit South-East Zimbabwe. Special emphasis was placed on the situation of women in this area.

Chapter 1 presents the motivation for the study, namely, the invisibility of women in positions of leadership responsibilities in the Church and in the public sector. The chapter seeks to investigate the causes of this imbalance and discusses the thesis of this study that women are capable of leading, but are prevented from doing so due to cultural and theological factors. The methodology and theoretical frame of reference used is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2 examines briefly the background information about the people under study, and related issues of geography, culture, Christianisation and civilisation. It should however be mentioned that this study has no intention of giving a detailed history of Zimbabwe and its people. Other scholars, including, Ranger, T. O. (1967; 1970); Daneel, M. L. (1971); Murphree, W. M. and Cheater, G. (eds.) (1975); Dachs, J. A. (ed.) (1973) provide adequate information in this regard. This study provides only the basic background on those aspects that are essential for

---

purposes of this present study; consequently, the background that is given is designed to set the stage for a deeper understanding of life in South-East Zimbabwe.

Chapter 3 investigates the contribution of Christianity and modernisation in shaping the identity of women. This is done in order to provide a further foundation upon which the interviews with the women and men of South-East Zimbabwe are presented.

Chapter 4 begins the analysis of responses from the interviews with the people under study. From this chapter the causes of the problem become identifiable and levels of women's awareness begin to show, as analysis of the responses is undertaken.

Chapter 5 continues with the analysis analyses of the responses of the interviews on the effects and influence of Christianity and western civilisation upon women, including, education, political and socio-economics.

Chapter 6 is the last of the three chapters that deal specifically with the analysis of the field research, and deals in particular with the responses on the question of leadership, Church and culture as it relates to women. The limited number of women in leadership is brought out in particular from the interviews.

Chapter 7 reviews African Women's Theology as a possible instrument of liberation. The goals and aspirations of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians are examined as a means of providing hope for the women of South-East Zimbabwe.

---

Chapter 8 investigates empowerment as a way forward. It discusses the empowerment of women through both Church and society. Suggestions are made as to how empowerment can be implemented. Women themselves are challenged to take action.

Chapter 9 is a summary of the entire research and a challenge to the women of South-East Zimbabwe to stand up and boldly claim their humanity and dignity and to exercise their God-given responsibilities.

*Key Terms: Awareness; Levels; Liberating; Process; South East Zimbabwe; Compromised; Dignity; Humanity; Invisibility; Leadership; Modernisation; Empowerment; Measurement; Responses.*

---

## PREFACE

The need to engage myself in this research resulted from an inner urge to find answers to some of the questions raised by what I consider to be the unfair treatment of women in society (within the family, church and community). I personally needed answers to questions such as:

- Are males more human than females?
- Is being a woman a handicap and a limiting factor to personal advancement?
- Would being created in the image of God mean one thing to men and another thing to women?
- What kinds of relationships did God intend between males and females?
- What would be the best way to understand God's reasons for giving spiritual gifts to all who believe, regardless of gender differences?

These and many other questions contributed to my taking upon myself this study.

I carried out this research as an insider, being a committed Christian from the Evangelical tradition. I understood that finding answers to the above questions, and many others would help me understand myself better and the society to which I belong. I also believe that such an understanding would equip me, so that I in turn could contribute towards the empowerment not only of women, but the church and society at large.

---

## **GLOSSARY**

|             |                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>ATR</b>  | African Traditional Religion   |
| <b>GAD</b>  | Gender and Development         |
| <b>KJV</b>  | King James Version             |
| <b>NFPL</b> | National Food Poverty Line     |
| <b>NRSV</b> | New Revised Standard Version   |
| <b>TCPL</b> | Total Consumption Poverty Line |



The Map of Zimbabwe showing the Area of the Research in South East

Base 802836A1 (C00254) 3-02

## MAP OF ZIMBABWE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

|                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| DECLARATION            | ii   |
| CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE | iii  |
| DEDICATION             | iv   |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS       | v    |
| ABSTRACT               | vi   |
| PREFACE                | ix   |
| GLOSSARY               | x    |
| MAP OF ZIMBABWE        | xi   |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS      | xii  |
| LIST OF DIAGRAMS       | xiii |
| LIST OF TABLES         | xix  |
| LIST OF FIGURES        | xx   |

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction                    | 1  |
| 1.1. Problems of the Study         | 3  |
| 1.2. The Aim of the Study          | 7  |
| 1.3. The Hypothesis of the Study   | 8  |
| 1.4. The Design of the Study       | 8  |
| 1.5. The Area of Investigation     | 9  |
| 1.6. The Population of the Study   | 10 |
| 1.7. Methodologies Utilised        | 11 |
| 1.7.1. Ethnographic Research       | 11 |
| 1.7.2. Individual Interviews       | 12 |
| 1.7.3. Group Discussion            | 13 |
| 1.7.4. Participant Observation     | 14 |
| 1.7.5. Key Informants Method       | 15 |
| 1.7.6. Literature Review           | 16 |
| 1.8. Theoretical Frameworks        | 19 |
| 1.9. Data Analysis and Measurement | 21 |
| 1.10. Summary of Work by Chapters  | 23 |
| 1.11. Meaning of Key Terms         | 26 |
| 1.11.1. Culture                    | 26 |
| 1.11.2. Theology                   | 29 |



---

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| 1.11.3. Empowerment        | 31 |
| 1.11.4. Patriarchy         | 32 |
| 1.11.5. Equality           | 33 |
| 1.11.6. Racial Terminology | 34 |

## **CHAPTER 2: THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH-EAST ZIMBABWE AND THEIR BACKGROUND**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 2. Introduction  | 35 |
| 2.1. The Geographical, Historical, and Cultural Background | 35 |
| 2.2. VaHlengwe   | 38 |
| 2.3. VaKaranga   | 39 |
| 2.4. Geographical Location                                 | 40 |
| 2.4.1. VaHlengwe   | 40 |
| 2.4.2. VaKaranga   | 41 |
| 2.5. Historical Background                                 | 41 |
| 2.5.1. VaHlengwe   | 41 |
| 2.5.2. VaKaranga   | 42 |
| 2.6. The Effects of Patri-Lineal Culture upon Women        | 45 |
| 2.7. Women and Economic Independence                       | 49 |
| 2.8. Women and Leadership                                  | 50 |
| 2.9. Women and Socio-Political Organisations               | 52 |
| 2.10. Conclusion   | 56 |

## **CHAPTER 3: THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY AND MODERNISATION IN SHAPING THE IDENTITY OF WOMEN**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 3. Introduction  | 57 |
| 3.1. The Affects of Christianity and its Western Influence | 57 |
| 3.2. Christianisation, Education and Western Influence     | 59 |
| 3.3. Literature Review on Leadership                       | 65 |
| 3.4. The Function of a Leader                              | 66 |
| 3.5. The Meaning of Leadership                             | 67 |
| 3.6. The Qualities of a Leader                             | 73 |
| 3.7. Becoming a Leader                                     | 74 |
| 3.8. Aspects and Styles of Leadership                      | 79 |
| 3.9. Conclusion  | 81 |

---

## **CHAPTER 4: WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF WOMANHOOD**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 4. Introduction   | 82  |
| 4.1. Interviews Concerning Cultural Expectations of Women in Present-Day South-East Zimbabwe    | 85  |
| 4.2. Analysis of Women's Responses as to the General Cultural Expectations of Women             | 87  |
| 4.2.1. Self-Identification of the Interviewees in Terms of Tribal Grouping / Division of Labour | 88  |
| 4.2.2. Sex Education and Virginity  | 92  |
| 4.2.3. Foods for Different People   | 98  |
| 4.2.4. Lobolo   | 101 |
| 4.2.5. Married Women and Their Place of Residence   | 108 |
| 4.2.6. Married Women and Their Rights to Their Own Bodies                                       | 111 |
| 4.2.7. Widows: Ownership and Responsibility of Property and Children                            | 114 |
| 4.2.8. A Christian Woman Married to a Non-Christian Husband                                     | 117 |
| 4.2.9. Women, Culture, and Community Involvement  | 120 |
| 4.2.10. Women's Perceptions of Changed Oppressive Cultural Practices                            | 122 |
| 4.2.11. Conclusion  | 124 |

## **CHAPTER 5: WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMANHOOD BY CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN CIVILISATION**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 5. Introduction  | 128 |
| 5.1. Analysis of Responses on the Effects of Theological Understanding in the Church relating to Women                           | 128 |
| 5.1.1. Self-identification   | 129 |
| 5.1.2. Common Understanding of the Doctrine of Creation and its Implications for Women   | 132 |
| 5.1.3. God's Revelation through Jesus Christ: An Implication for God's Gender  | 136 |
| 5.1.4. The Common Understanding that a Minister is a Representative of God: Implications for Women                               | 140 |
| 5.1.5. Jesus' Call / Selection of his Twelve Apostles: An Implication of the Gender of those who should Represent God as Pastors | 143 |
| 5.1.6. The Entry of Sin: An Instrument Used for Women's Accusation   | 147 |
| 5.1.7. Males, Females and Gender Equality  | 150 |
| 5.1.8. Christianity and Change to the South-East Zimbabwe Culture  | 153 |
| 5.1.9. The Churches Teaching on Liberation for Women   | 156 |

---

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 5.1.10. Church: Membership, Leadership, and Preference for Church Leadership                 | 160 |
| 5.1.11. The Effects of Christian Influence: Church and Women's Development                   | 167 |
| 5.1.12. Church and Cultural Practices from which Churchwomen Still need Liberation           | 172 |
| 5.2. Analysis of the Responses Regarding Effects of the Education System upon Women          | 174 |
| 5.2.1. Education, Children and Priorities  | 175 |
| 5.2.2. The Enrolment of Boy and Girl Children  | 180 |
| 5.2.3. School Pass Rates of Boy and Girl Children at Ordinary and Advanced Levels            | 190 |
| 5.2.4. Married Women Continuing Education while Husbands Care for Children                   | 195 |
| 5.2.5. The Influence of Education on Culture   | 198 |
| 5.2.6. Improvements that one would like to see Education make on Culture                     | 202 |
| 5.3. Analysis of Women's Responses on the Effects of Political and Economic Systems on Women | 207 |
| 5.3.1. Employment Status: Equity for Men and Women in the Workplace                          | 207 |
| 5.3.2. Promotion: Men and Women Considered as Equals in the Workplace                        | 210 |
| 5.3.3. Women and Ownership of Family, Money and Properties                                   | 214 |
| 5.3.4. Women and Family Inheritance  | 218 |
| 5.4. Conclusion  | 223 |

## **CHAPTER 6: WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF CULTURE AND CHURCH CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 6. Introduction  | 228 |
| 6.1. Interviews on leadership, Culture, Church and Women                                     | 229 |
| 6.1.1. Analysis of Responses of Questions on Leadership, Culture, Church, and Women          | 229 |
| 6.1.2. Self-identification and People's Expectations of a Leader                             | 229 |
| 6.1.3. Qualities Expected in Church and Society Leaders by the People of South-East Zimbabwe | 231 |
| 6.1.4. Women's Appointment to the Office of Pastor   | 233 |
| 6.1.5. Women's Response to the Idea of a Female Pastor                                       | 236 |
| 6.1.6. A Daughter's Succession of her Father as Chief  | 239 |
| 6.1.7. A Woman Elected as State President  | 241 |

---

---

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 6.2. Men's Views about Women in Leadership                              | 245 |
| 6.2.1. Leaders, Staff and Organisation Identification                   | 246 |
| 6.2.2. Male Leaders' View of Female Leadership                          | 247 |
| 6.2.3. Equality Between Men and Women in the Workplace and Organisation | 250 |
| 6.2.4. Advice for Young Women Aspiring for Leadership                   | 254 |
| 6.3. Summary Analysis   | 258 |
| 6.4. Conclusion   | 263 |

## **CHAPTER 7: AFRICAN WOMEN'S THEOLOGY AS LIBERATING THEOLOGY FOR THE WOMEN OF SOUTH-EAST ZIMBABWE**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 7. Introduction   | 270 |
| 7.1. Women's Need for Liberation  | 275 |
| 7.2. African Women's Theology: Hope For The Women of South-East Zimbabwe  | 279 |
| 7.2.1. African Women's Experiences as Starting Point towards Self-Realisation                                     | 285 |
| 7.2.2. Cultural and African Women's Hermeneutics: A Process towards the Realisation of Women's Dilemma            | 287 |
| 7.2.3. Gender Sensitive Cultural and Biblical Hermeneutics : A Working Instrument towards the Liberation of Women | 290 |
| 7.3. Conclusion   | 294 |

## **CHAPTER 8: EMPOWERMENT AS A POSSIBLE SOLUTION FOR WOMEN'S DILEMMA**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 8. Introduction  | 296 |
| 8.1. Empowerment of Women by Women taking the Initiative | 298 |
| 8.2. Empowerment of Women by Empowering the Church       | 302 |
| 8.3. Empowerment of Women by Empowering Societies        | 312 |
| 8.4. Conclusion  | 319 |

## **CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION**

---

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| 9. Introduction | 320 |
|-----------------|-----|

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Bibliography                        | 327 |
| (A) Primary Sources                 | 328 |
| (B) Discussion With                 | 329 |
| (C) Government Documents - Zimbabwe | 330 |
| (D) Unpublished Documents           | 330 |
| Secondary Literature                | 330 |
| (A) Books                           | 330 |
| (B) Journals                        | 342 |

## **APPENDICES**

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Appendix I   | 346 |
| Appendix II  | 356 |
| Appendix III | 373 |

---

## LIST OF DIAGRAMS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Diagram 2.1 Groupings of Machangana - Tsonga                     | 38  |
| Diagram 2.2. Groupings of the Shona-speaking people              | 39  |
| Diagram 2.3. Groupings of vaKaranga                              | 39  |
| Diagram 3.1. What other People Say about Leadership              | 67  |
| Diagram 3.2. Foundational Christian Leadership                   | 69  |
| Diagram 3.3. Two Responsibilities of Christian Leadership        | 69  |
| Diagram 3.4. Relational Picture of Christian Leadership          | 69  |
| Diagram 3.5. Biblical and Feminist Model of Leadership           | 72  |
| Diagram 3.6. Culturally Controlled Leadership                    | 77  |
| Diagram 3.7. Church Controlled Leadership                        | 78  |
| Diagram 8.1. Relationship between God, the Church, and the World | 307 |

---

## LIST OF TABLES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 4.1. Example of the Division of Labour in a Family in South-East Zimbabwe                       | 89  |
| Table 5.1. Enrolment Ratios Among Rural Children at Primary School by Age in 1993                     | 184 |
| Table 5.2. Enrolment in Forms IV, V, VI for the Years 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991.                         | 185 |
| Table 5.3. Enrolment at the Tertiary and Vocational Institutions in the Years 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992. | 186 |

---

## LIST OF FIGURES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 4.1. Percentage Responses to Division of Labour  | 91  |
| Figure 4.2. Percentage Responses on Reasons for Sex Education   | 95  |
| Figure 4.3. Percentage Responses on Why Keeping One's Virginity Until Marriage is Good Practice                                       | 97  |
| Figure 4.4. Percentage Responses on Evaluation on the Cultural Practice Involved in Customary Food Laws                               | 99  |
| Figure 4.5. Percentage Responses on Why <i>Lobolo</i> is Considered a Good Practice   | 102 |
| Figure 4.6. Percentage Responses on the Practice of <i>Lobolo</i> and Women's Exclusion from the Decision on this matter              | 107 |
| Figure 4.7. Percentage Responses on Reasons Why Married Women should do Most of the Work in the Home                                  | 110 |
| Figure 4.8. Percentage Responses on Determining the Limits of Wives Being Owned by their Husbands                                     | 113 |
| Figure 4.9. Percentage Responses on the Fairness of the Transfer of Responsibility of the Deceased Man to his Brothers                | 116 |
| Figure 4.10. Percentage Responses on Determining Awareness of Authority that Culture and Christianity might have Against Each Other   | 119 |
| Figure 5.1. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of the Implications of the Common Understanding of the Doctrine of Creation          | 134 |
| Figure 5.2. Percentage of Responses on the Implications of God's Gender from the Revelation of Jesus Christ                           | 138 |
| Figure 5.3. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of the Implications of Common Understanding that a Minister is Representative of God | 142 |
| Figure 5.4. Percentage of Responses on the Implications on Jesus' Call / Selection of his Twelve Disciples                            | 145 |



---

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 5.5. Percentage of Responses of Women's Understanding of the Entrance of Sin into the World   | 149 |
| Figure 5.6. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of Gender Equity among their People   | 152 |
| Figure 5.7. Percentage of Responses on the Church and Women's Awareness of Women's Need for Liberation   | 157 |
| Figure 5.8. Percentage of Responses on Awareness in relation to Duties that were only for Men in their Different Churches and Reasons for that             | 163 |
| Figure 5.9. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of Liberation for Women in the Church compared to Women outside the Church                                | 165 |
| Figure 5.10. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of the Meaning and Nature of Liberation that might have been Experienced by Churchwomen                  | 169 |
| Figure 5.11. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of the Implications of Cultural Education of Children's Priorities                                       | 178 |
| Figure 5.12. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of Factors Influencing the Enrolment of Boy and Girl Children  | 182 |
| Figure 5.13. Percentage of Responses on Women's Observations on the Children's Pass Rate and Awareness of Factors behind this                              | 192 |
| Figure 5.14. Percentage of Responses on Education Situation for Women and what Awareness was there for the Prohibiting Factors                             | 196 |
| Figure 5.15. Percentage of Responses Determining Awareness on the Employment Status, Equity for Men and Women in the Workplace                             | 208 |
| Figure 5.16. Percentage of Responses Determining Women's Awareness on their Economic Situation based on their Cultural Practices                           | 216 |
| Figure 5.17. Percentage of Responses Determining Women's Awareness on What their Culture had Destined them for   | 220 |
| Figure 6.1. Percentage of Responses Determining the Community's Level of Awareness and Reasons why / why not Women should Serve as Pastors                 | 235 |
| Figure 6.2. Percentage of Responses Determining the Level of Women's Awareness of Factors why / why not should a Woman take the Responsibility of a Pastor | 237 |
| Figure 6.3. Percentage of Responses on Whether a Daughter could  | 240 |

---

---

**Succeed Her Father as Chief or Not and People's Awareness of Reasons Why**

**Figure 6.4. Percentage of Responses Determining People's Awareness of Factors Whether or Not a Woman could take the Responsibility of a State President** 243

**Figure 6.5. Percentage of Responses among the Leaders Determining the Level of Awareness of the Women's Marginalisation in Leadership** 249

---

# **AWARENESS AS A PROCESS TOWARD A LIBERATING THEOLOGY FOR THE WOMEN OF SOUTH-EAST ZIMBABWE**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. Introduction**

This study will seek to establish from the viewpoint of an African woman, the causes for the marginalisation of women in Mwenezi, South-East Zimbabwe. By so doing, it is the hope of the researcher that it will be conclusively shown that women, as complete human beings created in God's image, are capable of responding to God not only as human beings, but also in accordance with their gifting.

This study represents the quest of feminist anthropology within the loci of systematic theology. It is based upon a concern for the compromised dignity of humankind, and in particular that of women. Throughout this study, the research approach will be multi-disciplinary in nature. Quantitative and qualitative methods will be used in analysing the narratives of women's experiences.

The compromised dignity of humanity and of women in particular is manifested in different areas of women's lives, all of which are contrary to the divine intention of the Creator. As Anthony Balcomb has rightly stated, "...stories create meaning...things that happen need to be explained" (2000:49). This being

---

the case, the narratives of women included in this study will be used to establish the causes behind the marginalisation of women.

Feminist theology treats experience as normative for doing theology. The researcher is aware that her position in relation to this study cannot rule out the possibility of bias, hence the need for her to declare her position clearly. From the outset, it is therefore important for the researcher to locate herself within this study. The researcher approached her study as a convinced Christian from the Evangelical tradition. As a Shangaan woman, born and raised in Mwenezi, South-East Zimbabwe, which is the location of the present research, the approach taken is from a distinct insider's perspective. The experience of the research population was also the experience of the researcher. In the view of the present researcher, this can only enrich the study as a whole, as the empirical research brought to this study can only be obtained by an insider. Furthermore, the quantitative approach that has been used in data collection was intended to assist with the possible problem of bias in that the concerns were noted by a number of the interviewees. This said, the analysis looked beyond the quantitative, and sought rather to assess the ways in which the interviewees looked and gauged their own situation. In addition, the researcher has attempted to give the actual responses from different women before attempting her own analysis so that the interpretation given may be assessed against that of the responses received.

This study does deal simply with the discovery of the problem. Rather, it suggests a way forward which, if adopted and implemented, could bring about the desired process of liberation.

The aim of Chapter 1 is to provide general background information to the study as a whole. This will be done by presenting the motivation for the study; the aim of the research; the problem that the study seeks to solve; the hypothesis, theoretical framework, methodology, and analysis of data and measurement, and finally, a summary of work in the proceeding chapters and the meaning of key terms.

---

## **1.1. The Problem of the Study**

The concern of this study lies in the invisibility of women in areas of leadership, both in the church and in public life. As will be demonstrated later, in a country such as Zimbabwe, where women are in the majority, women should enjoy good representivity, both in decision-making and management responsibilities, even within rural areas such as Mwenezi, where this study is located. Since this represents a widespread problem, there must be a number of significant factors present, which hinder women from exercising such leadership.

This study will firstly seek to establish whether the men and women that comprised the study group were aware of the invisibility of women in leadership. Secondly, the study will seek to ascertain whether the study group could articulate what was entailed in such invisibility and whether they could identify its root causes. Thirdly, the study will seek to determine whether the study group had an acute awareness that invisibility was the first step in the process toward the liberation of women and men in South East Zimbabwe. Consequentially, the title of this present thesis is:

### **Awareness as a Process toward a Liberating Theology for the Women of South East Zimbabwe**

A key term, used in the title of this thesis is that of 'awareness.' As a result, it is necessary to explain how the term is utilised within this study. Whilst there may be other ways of understanding 'awareness,' in this context it is understood in terms of being conscientised as to what is taking place both within and without the environs one's community. 'Awareness' in this study, points to the idea of becoming acquainted with new knowledge; knowledge which may have been triggered by something from outside, such as a question, statement, new work assignment etc. 'Awareness' can result in a new (or re-)awakening which leads to new ideas or enlightenments, bringing into clearer focus that which may have

---

been misunderstood or unobserved in the past. 'Awareness' may result in a new appreciation, or new realisation, or the acquisition of an inquisitive attitude that may lead to the search for something better. Such 'awareness' can become a force for change, in that it can serve to activate suppressed energies, and supply renewed efforts in the search for creative answers to past, present and future life-experiences. Such new searches can become empowered processes of transformation towards the liberation of the mind, body and spirit. 'Awareness' can become the driving force toward achieving the best for both self and the other. Finally, 'awareness' can enable the individual to see and understand what the past was, as well as supply the means to question the why, what and how of both the present and the future.

To summarise, 'awareness' in this study comprises of both the individuals historical and present experiences. These include:

- The engagement of the individual with God; culture, church and community;
- The involvement and contributions of the individual with family, church, and community;
- Being able to raise and confront questions,
- Dialog with culture, church beliefs and practices, community structural policies;
- Analyse everything in the light of the individual's relationship with self, God and the rest of humanity.

In order to achieve these goals, a number of personal questions will need to be raised from a gendered perspective, including:

- 
- Who am I as male or female?
  - Where did I come from?
  - What is the purpose of my being?
  - What are my abilities and contributions to my family, church and community?
  - How do my family, church and community evaluate my being and contributions?
  - What does it mean to be male or female and to have been created in God's image?
  - Where do I fit in God's creation?
  - What does it mean for one to be the object of God's love?
  - What does it mean for one to have both experienced God's gift of the Holy Spirit and received the gifts of the Spirit?
  - What are the implications of being a male or female member of the church that is Christ's body?

While the focus of this research is not based strictly upon biblical exegesis, 'awareness' in this study includes being able to raise questions about the meanings and interpretations of some foundational biblical texts. These include:

- Genesis 1:27-28. "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it...'"
- Galatians 3:26-28. "For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

---

While these biblical passages may pose more challenges than provide satisfying answers, the awareness of such texts may activate an inner desire within an individual for the search and better understanding of what the bible may say about original humanity at creation as well as redeemed humanity through acceptance of saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Evidence of such dialog among women is well expressed by Phyllis Trible in her reading of feminist hermeneutics and biblical studies in her measured contribution to the edited work by Ann Loades entitled, *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, where she helpfully states that:

Challenges have come...and they refuse to go away. As a critique of culture in light of misogyny, feminism is a prophetic movement, examining the status quo, pronouncing judgement and calling for repentance...Discerning within Scripture a critique of patriarchy, certain feminists concentrate upon discovering and recovering traditions that challenge the culture (Trible 1990:23-25).

What Trible says here requires some awareness on the part of the reader and/or community. In order for such an awareness to be realised, a new awakening and/or understanding is necessary. The 'challenges' that Trible writes about are what brings such a new 'awakening.' This new understanding or knowledge will lead individuals to raise questions, search for answers, and critically analyse resultant answers.

What is being asserted here finds resonance with Daniel Schipani's discussion on "Conscientisation and Human Emergence" (1988:9-55). Schipani speaks of "critical consciousness" as "active internationality in the examination and questioning of reality, with self-confidence and a sense of human interdependence" (17). This level of active awareness and critical consciousness is what forms the foundational process towards human liberation. This is evidenced when women are enabled to question and critically analyse patriarchal systems from bible stories and their own cultural societies and practices. Furthermore, they



---

are able to speak out without apology. In raising the critical questions about the patriarchal systems that operate and regulate their societies, they speak out for the justice of all people. Women are empowered to stand up and shake off the myths that have been drilled into them for millennia, that as women, they are weak and incapable. As a result, they begin to support each other in doing what they believe is God's purpose for their lives, and for the good of all. This they openly do without seeking the favour and approval of others. This new level of human consciousness marks the important process toward the desired liberation of the self.

## **1.2. The Aim of the Study**

In the light of the problem raised within this research, the overall aim of the study is two-fold:

1. To investigate the levels of awareness of the invisibility of women in leadership and public life and work towards raising 'awareness' as a process which leads towards a process of human liberation;
2. To demonstrate possible causes of such invisibility as exposed through the interaction with women and men as they respond to the interview questions.

In order to achieve these aims, the specific objectives of this research are as follows:

- Document the levels of perception amongst women of the cultural construction and identity of womanhood;
- Identify the effects and influencing factors in defining womanhood extant within cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

- 
- Ascertain whether women have the ability to analyse their experiences of God and self in the light of their invisibility in leadership within home life, the church and the public sphere.

### **1.3. The Hypothesis of the Study**

The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

The women of South-East Zimbabwe are hindered from exercising leadership in both the church and public sphere because of extant cultural and theological constructions of womanhood. The individuals concerned are unconscious of the fact that awareness towards the suppression of women is the first step in the liberation of women from invisibility.

### **1.4. The Design of the Study**

This study was designed around five methodological categories in the collection of research material:

1. Literature Review. This involved the collection of information on the historical and church background of Mwenezi. Where such information was not found in books, the study used ethnographic research principles. Written material was collected on African women theology, feminist theology and biblical hermeneutics. Where accessible, a limited number of church and government documents were also collected in order to provide more background information.
2. Conducted Interviews. These were completed at two levels in order to suit the comfort levels requested by the interviewees. One group of

---

interviewees, including teachers, nurses, and educationalists chose to write down their own responses to given questions, all of which are collected in the appendices. Another group gave oral responses to the same questions and the interviewer recorded their responses.

3. **Semi-Structured Conversations.** Semi-structured questions were used to initiate conversations. These were purposively chosen in order to collect background information for the study. These questions were formulated to suit the expertise and experience of the interviewee so that they could provide specific information. The people were allowed to talk as much as they wanted.
4. **Focus Group Discussions.** These were conducted with women and men from gardening projects, churchwomen organisations and local government officials.
5. **Participant Observation.** The details of the data collecting methods will be discussed in detail at a later stage in this chapter. First, there is a need to locate the area of study.

### **1.5. The Area of Investigation**

The study area lies in Mwenezi, South-East Zimbabwe. This district was formerly known as Nuanetsi: Matibi No. 1, although in recent years it has been referred to as the Batanai District Council area.

Zimbabwe (formerly, Rhodesia) was occupied in 1890 by the British South African Company (Dorsey 1975:35). Hlengwe oral tradition holds that the Hlengwe Chiefs, Chitanga and Mpapa, lived in the area between the main Beit Bridge to Masvingo (formerly, Fort Victoria) area road and Matibi No. 11 Tribal Trust lands, in what became European ranching farms. Between 1912 and 1914,

---

the European settlers became interested in the land where the Hlengwe people resided for the purposes of farming and national reserves. As a result, the British South Africa Company began to move the Hlengwe chiefs northwards. Hlengwe oral tradition also refers to finding the Vanyai (Karanga) of the Shoko totem in the same area they resided in South-East Zimbabwe, immediately north of the Limpopo River (Chauke 1997).

The two people groups learned to accept those things they shared in common, rather than become bitter over those in which they differed. Indeed, whatever differences they may have had became important only to the parents, whereas their children created a culture of their own. For the good of humanity, the people of South-East Zimbabwe need to accept the dignity and humanity of all people, female and male, freely adopting and applying the same attitude to any cultural tradition or pattern. The points of difference between male and female are much less important than are the points of commonality between female and male.

#### **1.6. The Population of the Study**

The research was conducted among the women and men of Mwenezi, South-East Zimbabwe. The sample included ordinary men and women, as well as church leaders and civic leaders in the public sector. While it might be helpful to group the interviewees according to the type of information they contributed, this became difficult because in some situations one person contributed in giving more than one type of information. Classification however was made within groups, rather than upon the topics, they contributed. The groups are only mentioned here in the population study but are explained in more detail the later chapters concerned with analysis.

The groups were listed in the following categories:

- Category #1 Person-to-Person Interviews;

- 
- Category #2 Discussion Groups;
  - Category #3 Individual Interviews.

## **1.7. Methodologies Utilised**

### **1.7.1. Ethnographic Research**

Kenneth Bailey (1979:221-222) has argued that while ethnography may not be thought of as a research methodology, as a social scientific discipline it can be a useful instrument when collecting information about the life and culture and of a given people group. This was found to be particularly true when collecting information for this study about the people of Mwenezi, a grouping that has no formal written literature. Although there may exist much written material on the history of the people of Zimbabwe in general and their different people groupings, not much exists about the vaKaranga and vaShangaan/Hlengwe ethnic groups of South-East Zimbabwe, particularly with reference to women. The scarcity of written information about these peoples contributes to the importance of the individual interviews that were taken for this present research.

As revealed by their group names, the vaKaranga and Shangaan, vaHlengwe are not of the same historical background. Due to inter-marriage taking place over the last two generations, the children have evolved their own culture. This has resulted in language changes, with words from the two language groups becoming intermixed. Family names have however remained untouched, and the people know who are from *Shangaan* and *Karanga* backgrounds. While this study is not strictly concerned with the history of these peoples, but rather upon the social situation of women in this area, it will be necessary to understand something about their cultural and historical background. Due to the lack of formal research and literature on how these two groups came together, forming new cultures and dialects, ethnographic research can ably supplement the available information about the historical, geographical and cultural background of these peoples.

---

Although such discipline may possess certain shortcomings, for the purposes of the study ethnography was helpful in providing a knowledge base of the community's past, its characteristics, and its problems. As Pratt and Loizo suggest, this knowledge can be used to understand the people concerned (Pratt and Loizo 1992:49).

### **1.7.2. Individual Interviews**

Individual interviewing took place between the interviewee and the interviewer alone. In this kind of interview, both the interviewee and the interviewer were aware of what was going on. They also agreed on how far such interviews could go. The interviewee was not obliged to answer questions that s/he was uncomfortable with (Pratt and Loizos 1992:52-53).

Individual interviews were conducted on two levels: Some interviews were conducted orally, while other interviewees chose to do it in writing. Both forms of interviews used the same set of guiding questions. The questions were open-ended, allowing people to respond freely.<sup>1</sup> During the interviews issues were raised which were not covered in the questions, this was particularly the case in the oral interviews (Nichols 1995:13). During the oral interviews, it was not necessary to follow the order of the questions as in some cases the interviewees sought to answer certain questions before they were formally posed. Interviewees would talk freely and by the time they had concluded would have answered many of the questions on the list. At other times, when asked by the interviewer to clarify some aspects of what had been said, interviewees often went deeper and offered information that was more helpful. At the end of the interview, the interviewee would be given a summary of the important points given. In a number of cases, when an interviewee seemed to have time, s/he often wanted to start talking over again, which called for the interviewer to spend more time listening.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendices I, II and III for examples of the questions posed.

---

### **1.7.3. Group Discussion**

In the group discussion method the interviewer meets with a group of not more than ten people and introduces a list of topics to encourage discussion (Nichols 1995:14; Pratt and Loizos 1992:55). This method was not originally planned as part of the research of this study but situations became apparent where this method could be ably used. Hence, an interview was planned to take place with a woman leader at her church on a given day at 14h00. The interviewer arrived at the church at the agreed time and proceeded to greet the woman leader concerned, whereupon the woman leader called twenty-five other women and the male church superintendent into the room. The interviewer was well known in the area; hence, she was not introduced to the group, but was welcomed with appreciation for visiting the church on that particular day.

The woman leader had told the other churchwomen that her guest (who was the interviewer) had come to share the word of God. The churchwomen proceeded to give her a bible since she had not brought her own. Following preaching, the male church superintendent in giving some words of appreciation extended an invitation to the interviewer to come back again. He then left. Once the male church superintendent had left the building, the women opened up, responding to my questions openly and freely. Although the women were familiar with each other, there was a problem with the younger ones. It seemed as if they were not able to speak their minds freely, due to the older women maintaining a 'standard,' which had to be followed by all women in the church. This meeting became the first of three that the interviewer had with this group by invitation, both to preach and to conduct group discussion.

In an attempt to give an opportunity to ordinary women to voice their opinions, the same methodology was used with four other women's groups. In addition, it

---

was successfully used in 1991 and 2001 respectively, with mixed groups of men and women from community gardening projects.<sup>2</sup>

#### **1.7.4. Participant Observation**

The participant observation method in collecting qualitative data was also utilised in this study. According to Nichols (1995:12), this method requires that the researcher participate as much as possible in the activities of the community under study. At the same time, the researcher takes written notes applicable to the study. With regard to the research undertaken for this study, the researcher joined a club called *Mushandira pamwe*, (lit: 'working together' in the Shona language). The group agreed to give one day a week to do some work for one of the members. They started working at 08h00 and finished at 11h00. The host then provided some food for the workers before everyone left for their individual homes.

As a participant member, the researcher went with the group to do whatever work the group might do on that particular day. The researcher hosted the group in her home on more than one occasion. As the area is rural, most of the work involved farming. In these activities, men, women and young people all participated. At least one member had to come from each family that had joined the club. The number of people working together varied from twenty to thirty members. These gatherings proved to be very helpful. The club provided an opening for new opportunities to conduct interviews for the purposes of the research.

As with other methodologies utilised in the research, participant observation had its own limitations that militated against it being relied upon alone. People were observed at work, yet life is more than simply work. This method was helpful in creating situations of trust that could be exploited well in the conducting of

---

<sup>2</sup> See bibliography for more details of these conducted interviews.



---

interviews, resulting in the interview realising more information that would have normally been the case.

#### **1.7.5. Key Informants Method**

Nichols (1995:13) has stated that this method involves interviews with a few selected individuals. The individuals might be selected because of their knowledge of the subject under discussion. The key informants might be leaders in the community under study and therefore be appropriate people for obtaining particular information. The key informant method was used in interviewing twenty leaders from different organisations in South East-Zimbabwe. The same method was also utilised in researching background information. Two older men, known in the area for their knowledge of oral history, were particularly helpful in providing such information. Women who operate initiation schools for girl children in the area were interviewed as key informants to find out more about women and culture. These were found to be helpful informants, particularly in investigating the situation of girl children who were refused attendance at school as well as the courses and programmes used for girl children in school and victims of such practices.

Selected key informants are important in the community they represent, and if they are open enough, prove to be a real 'window' into the community being researched. This was particularly found true following an interview with twenty male leaders in the study area, although some interviewees had difficulty in answering some of the questions being posed. The difficulties experienced can be explained in one of two possible ways: Firstly, some people tend to do things out of a sense of custom, and not know exactly why they do them; secondly, some interviewees did not seem willing to enter into the discussion about the question. Either way, they were communicating something about their community.

---

At this point in the discussion on the utilisation of methodologies within this study, it is important to highlight the thinking behind the choice of the sampling population. In line with the focus in this research, namely, the people of South East-Zimbabwe, the sampling group was made up of individuals and key informants from both ethnic groups that live within the research area.

Careful consideration was made as to the kind of people from whom certain information was to be sought. Everyone had thus to be specialists in their own right. This sampling criterion was utilised in determining the 130 women and 20 male leaders selected as interviewees in the research phase of the work.

Although it cannot be suggested that the 130 women and 20 male leaders represent a valid percentage of the population of South-East Zimbabwe, the population of this area consists of educated as well as uneducated; church people as well as non-church people; professionals as well as non-professionals—most of whom were involved in community projects. This sampling criterion took into consideration all of these socio-economic variables.

#### **1.7.6. Literature Review**

As this research is concerned with issues of gender, the objective of the literature review was to ascertain what literature is extant on the subject. Much has been written on gender-related issues. Because the focus of this research was upon a particular situation and context, such a body of literature can make a significant contribution to the study as a whole.

Many books and articles were sources of much inspiration and provided at times significant assistance to the researcher. This was particularly true of books and articles emanating from the Circle of the Concerned African Women Theologians (*hereafter*, the Circle). Amongst these, the following are worthy of mention:

---

Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Christianity: Liberative or Oppressive to African Women?* (1998:98-212). The author presents a telling critique of the church in its failure to follow in the steps of Christ in terms of its attitude toward women Phiri sets a pertinent example of how to deal with such a sensitive and possibly contentious issue in a gentle and composed manner.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, (1995:19-207) challenges the church in Africa to examine afresh its attitude towards women in the church. Oduyoye challenges women to start acting as agents of change and take up the responsibility for their own emancipation.

Kabamba Kiboko, *Sharing Power* (2001:222-244), throws light on why those who have power maintain it Women are only given the power to serve, and thereby become entirely subservient to those in power. Kiboko was helpful in comparing the results obtained in the fieldwork research.

Msimbi Kanyoro, in “Engendered Communal Theology: African Women’s Contribution to Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (2001:158-180) was most empowering. Her excellent handling of feminist cultural hermeneutics provides a means towards women’s self-realisation in that it creates an awareness of what society does to women, intentionally and/or unintentionally.

Nyambura Njoroge, in “Gikuyu Christian Women and their Struggle for Human Dignity” (2000:5) was an affirming experience, particularly for those women who have been raised in patriarchal societies, because it suggests that it is acceptable for women to exclaim, “enough is enough” (2000:5). Njoroge stresses that it is entirely correct for Christian women to struggle for their dignity and liberation.

Rose Materu, in “Women and their Role in the Church” (1990:155-160), highlights the status of women in the church, as well as in education and work, and discusses how this affects their development. The author notes that although

---

the experiences of women in Africa may be different in each particular context, there are many similarities. Materu's discussion was helpful in the present research for the purposes of comparison and investigation of those hindrances towards advancement that women experience.

Daisy Nwachuku assertion that "women collaborate with the oppression of women" (1995:65-66), particularly within African traditions was intensely helpful. In her work, Nwachuku reveals how the systems of society have successfully been used by women against women. This assertion makes it clear that women need to stand resolutely together against all forms of cultural oppression.

Although Ciru Getecha and Jesimen Chipika, in *Zimbabwe Women's Voices* (1995:11-170) say little on the situation of women in South-East Zimbabwe, their profile of rural Zimbabwean women proved most helpful, particularly for the purposes of comparison. The book also provided information about the many women's organisations in Zimbabwe and thus broadened the sense of belonging for women who often stand alone in their struggles.

Wilfred Tichagwa, *Health* (1998: 57-62) is another helpful source. It provides basic information on all possible areas of development for women, including, education, church, social structures, politics, economics. This was helpful in describing what women's organisations are doing and how donor agencies are committed to the development of Zimbabwean women.

Betty Dorsey in *Education, Race and Employment in Rhodesia* (Marphree 1975:14-174) was most helpful in her discussion of the social and educational system that existed previously in Rhodesia, and provided an important resource for background material to the present study.

---

When examining for the purposes of this research study the place and role of women in the church, many other books and articles proved helpful, inspiring, challenging and empowering. These included: Herbert Aschwanden, *Symbols of Life* (1982) in his discussion on Karanga culture; Freddy Khotso, *Tolo anga havuyi* (1985); Philip Junod, *Matimu ya vaTsonga* (1982) on Shangaan culture; Christine Qunta *Women in Southern Africa* (1987) on African women leaders in the period 1500-1900; Benjamin T Roberts, *Ordaining Women* (1997); Katherine M. Haubert, *Women as Leaders: Accepting the Challenge of Scripture* (1992).

### **1.8. Theoretical Frameworks**

In order to provide a competent theoretical analysis of the situation persisting among the women under study and their awareness of how matters could be improved required that an adaptation of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach within a distinct feminist framework be employed. The GAD theory seeks to understand situations in given societies, and focuses on the social differences that may be found between males and females. These differences may be from one generation to the next, or alternatively, from one society to another. This present study deals with power relationships between men and women.

The GAD Theory can be used to examine race, class, and gender relationships. Wilfred Tichagwa suggests that the GAD Theory incorporates both women and men, deliberately bringing both genders to the same place to talk about issues that concern their shared relationships (1998:16-20). GAD theory not only sensitises women, but also men. It brings men and women into the process of seeking ways towards forming better relationships and creating meaningful change through the participation of both males and females. To bring meaningful change to the situation in South-East Zimbabwe will involve the entire people of South-East Zimbabwe, therefore in the fieldwork both males and females were involved, including at the investigation stage, so that both genders would face the same questions and begin to think about the issues existing in their societies.

---

Concerned about the injustices women experience in both church and society, this study used the feminist theological framework. The feminist approach seeks to find means or ways to redress the unjust systems extant within societies (Keane 1998:123-124). It addresses sexism as a problem created by certain kinds of systems within society, which if changed, would deal with the problems decisively. The problems of women in South-East Zimbabwe have developed over time; hence, desired change cannot be expected to take place overnight. One can agree with reformist feminist theologians that change will be gradual (Keane 1998:124).

Within gender and development and feminist theories, there is both concern and persistence that the situation will be worked out. The theory operates as a process, seeking first to understand how societies are structured and how people of particular societies use their power. The theory assumes that since every person has some power, in this analysis one would ask questions such as:

“How do leaders use their power over those whom they lead?”

“How do the people who are being led use their power upon those who lead them?”

“How do men use their power over women and how do women use whatever power they have over men?”

“How do husbands use their power over their wives and how do wives use whatever power they have over their husbands?”

In examining the relationships within the workplace between employer and employee and between male and female, the same questions can be asked of young people and their parents. These questions can also be used to examine relationships in a church between the pastor and congregation members, between male and female, young and old. The questions can also be used in establishing relationships within the political and economic arena. Musimbi Kanyoro clearly states that such analysis seeks to, “Clarify...ways in which roles, attitudes, values

---

and relationships regarding women and men are constructed in...societies” (Kanyoro 2001:162-3). Because the way people relate to one another is a construction of society, it is only fair to question and examine a society about its cultural and religious, as well as political and economic philosophical understandings.

The concern of the research was to emphasise the influence that such operating systems play in the formation of societies. As a result, these systems, cultural and belief systems were carefully scrutinised. This was deemed of special importance, because, as the roots or influences go deeper than the operating systems themselves, and neither the laws of Government or the church can deal adequately with them.

### **1.9. Data Analysis and Measurement**

Three sets of guiding questions were utilised in the collection of data for this study. All questions were original to the study. The first set of question dealt with the cultural expectations of women in South-East Zimbabwe. It is important to note that although the questions concerned cultural expectations, in most cases the questions sought to ask the respondents to explain why this was so, thereby raising levels of awareness. The situational background information was compiled within Chapters 2 and 3 under the following headings:

1. Geographical, historical and cultural backgrounds;
2. Christianity, its Western influence as well as its effects;
3. Description of the qualities of leadership.

All this was in preparation for the discussion of the collected data from the interviews among the people of South-East Zimbabwe.

---

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 focused on the interview discussions and analysis of the research findings of the present situation of South-East Zimbabwe. This is where levels of awareness were determined.

The following three aspects were fundamental to the research problem:

1. Understanding and assessing the perception of women and men towards women holding leadership positions in both church and civil life;
2. Douting whether women have the ability to analyse their experiences of God, self, their families and community in the light of their invisibility;
3. Identifying influencing factors extant within cultural and belief practices which define womanhood and determine levels of awareness.

In order to quantify or measure 'awareness' the following was initiated in the research:

1. Questions were open-ended; people could give as many responses as they felt were appropriate to the question. The percentages recorded related to the categorised responses and not individual responses or respondents.
2. In analysing the data, questions were dealt with as individual questions first, and only subsequently as cluster questions.
3. The responses from the respondents were categorised according to the way they related to each other, and were recorded in percentages.
4. A summary explanation of the meaning behind the percentages was prepared, which included the possible influencing factors of each group of responses. These served as an instrument to determine levels of awareness of the respondents given at the end of cluster question. This was illustrated by a diagram indicating:
  - a. Positive Level Awareness = where the women or community concerned demonstrated awareness;



- 
- b. Positive (h) Level Awareness = where the women or community concerned demonstrated high levels of awareness;
  - c. Positive (l) Level Awareness = where the level of awareness seemed to be very low;
  - d. Negative Level Awareness = where women or community concerned demonstrated no awareness;
  - e. Indefinite Level Awareness = where the researcher was not clear of either side.
  - f. Where responses seemed to be influenced by culture a letter 'C' would be added, and where theological beliefs seemed to be the influencing fact the letter 'T' would be added. A letter 'O' would be added where the influencing factor was not clear.

#### **1.10. Summary of Work by Chapters**

Chapter 1 describes the problem and motivation for the research, namely the invisibility of women in leadership roles, within both the church and the public sector.

The aim of this study is to investigate the causes of this invisibility and work towards raising awareness as a process that leads towards liberation. Secondly, the aim is to demonstrate the possible causes of this invisibility as they are exposed through interaction and engagement with women and men within the controlled space of set interview questions.

Chapter 1 also presents the hypothesis of the study, namely that the women of South-East Zimbabwe are hindered from exercising leadership both within the church and public sectors by cultural and theological factors, and that they are uninformed that awareness of the oppression of women is the first step towards their liberation as women from invisibility.

---

Chapter 1 also describes the study design, area of investigation, and population of the study. Due to the complex background of the study population, a number of methodologies are considered. A combination of the Gender and Development theory, with the feminist theoretical frame of reference as an instrument of analysis for the research methodology is discussed. The chapter ends with a summary of work by chapters and a description of the key terms used within the study.

Chapters 2 and 3 are very important in that they provide background information, essential to understanding the life of the people under study. The background information provides the springboard upon which the research findings are bounced off in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 deals with situational information relating to geographical, historical and cultural aspects of the people under study. This includes issues relating to women and economic independence, women and leadership, and women and socio-political organisations.

Chapter 3 deals with background information relating to the contributions that Christianity and modernisation have made in shaping the identity of women. This includes issues relating to effects of western Christianity, western education, as well as what other literature says about leadership.

Chapter 4 of the study examines women's awareness of cultural and traditional constructions of womanhood. The discussion and analysis in this chapter is guided by the responses to interviews on general cultural expectations of women in present-day South-East Zimbabwe.

Chapter 5 examines women's awareness of the construction of womanhood by Christianity and western civilisation. The discussion focuses on the effects that

---

certain theological teachings maintained by some churches have upon its members. In particular, a number of related issues are discussed, including:

- Changes in the culture of present-day South-East Zimbabwe as a result of the spread of Christianity;
- Community preferences in church Leadership;
- Church and Women's development;
- Cultural practices from which church women still need to be liberated

In the second part of discussion, questions relating to the effects that the education system has on women are discussed. These include:

- The enrolment into education of boy and girl children;
- School pass rates for boy and girl children;
- Married women and continuing education;
- The influence that education has upon culture.

Finally, guided by the interviews, the chapter focuses on the effects that political and economic Systems have on women. In particular, the discussion focuses upon the following:

- Equity for males and females in the workplace;
- Women and the ownership of family, money and property;
- Women and inheritance;
- Summary of findings.

Chapter 6 investigates women's awareness of the influence of culture and church on the construction of women and leadership roles. Focused discussion included:

- 
- Questions of leadership, culture, church and women as expected in church and society leaders by the people of South-East Zimbabwe;
  - Views about women and leadership;
  - Advice for young women aspiring to leadership positions.

In order to determine the levels of awareness in relation to the focus in each chapter a summary analysis was also given.

Having identified need of awareness, Chapter 7 discusses African women's theology as a possible instrument toward the enablement of awareness – in other words the necessary process toward a liberating theology for the people of this study. Included in this discussion are the requirements for women's liberation, as well as the possibility of African women's theology enabling the liberation of the women of South-East Zimbabwe.

Chapter 8 discusses the way forward for the women of South-East Zimbabwe. The discussion will focus upon the different ways of empowering women to enable women to take up leadership positions in both the church and civil society, as a means of bringing hope to the people of South-East Zimbabwe.

In conclusion, Chapter 9 gives a summary of all the work covered, including the research findings, and ends with a challenge to the people of South-East Zimbabwe.

## **1.11. Meaning of Key Terms**

### **1.11.1. Culture**

Culture is a complex term that is understood and explained in different ways. In a more general way, an historical interpretation could imply that culture is

---

something that can be acquired through a process of education. Conrad Phillip Kottak understands culture as an attribute of the individual, not isolation, but rather as a member of a community or group of people. Kottak sees culture as something that is transmitted through observing, listening, talking and interacting with other people (Kottak 1991:35-48).

Anthropologists, such as L Ralph Beals, use the term in a more embracing way than that of social historians, understanding the term to reference patterns of human behaviour demonstrated through different forms of human activity. Both Beals and Nida would affirm that culture can be understood as the way by which certain societies behave, reason and react under given situations (Beals 1959:265-287, Nida 1981:28-49). Margaret Wardell and Robin Thomson recognise the complexity of the term and explain its meaning as, “characteristics of people’s way of life” (Wardell and Thomson 1994:3). Wardell and Thomson go on to suggest that although the culture of a given society may be observed through its patterns of behaviour, it might not be easily explained by people from outside that particular society. Hence, they speak of culture as being like an onion, in that it presents itself in layers (Wardell and Thomson 1994:5). Therefore, while outsiders may observe patterns of behaviour, they may never realise why things have to be done in a particular way until an explanation is offered by someone who understands the underlying layers. The same may apply to those who claim to adhere to culture—many will do things simply because they were done in a particular way by successive generations, but they may not know the exact reasons behind such practices.

An example of Wardell and Thomson’s illustration of cultural as layers and how outsiders view it, is given by Elizabeth Schmidt, in recalling a conversation between a Hartmann Jesuit father and Chief Chipanga of the Karanga people sometime during the early nineteenth century. The Jesuit asked the Chief how many people were in his village. In his reply, the Chief only numbered the men. When asked why he did not include the women, the chief curtly replied, “women have no count” (translated from the Shona language) meaning that the Chief did

---

not count women (Schmidt 1992:15). Hearing this statement, the Jesuit father deduced that women were regarded as non-existent among the Karanga people, a conclusion that was ill drawn from what the chief said.

The Jesuit father had in fact only understood the presence of the first cultural layer. Only someone knowledgeable of Karanga culture could explain what lies behind the Chief's statement that "women have no count." In those days of the early nineteenth century, counting was reserved for men who could be ready to go to war. A Karanga person would know what the chief meant, although s/he might not know the background to it. That is why only a close investigation and dialogue with culture will result in a true awareness of a peoples' situation.

In this regard, the definition of culture by Aylward Shorter is of particular help to this study. For Shorter, culture embraces all of life:

The product of a society's tradition and its interaction with other societies...is a dynamic not static phenomenon...the product of human history...a dynamic cluster of concepts and norms...is an aspect of what it means to be human...basic human right (Shorter 1998:22).

Culture may be revealed in the way that a particular society goes about producing products and the way in which those products are both shared and used. Culture can also be revealed in the way a people of a given society practice their religion. Although culture cannot be passed on biologically, it is something that may be passed from one generation to the next and thus can be understood in terms of human historical development. Being an aspect of development in human history, culture is never static. Indeed, Shorter raises the idea that cultures are not, "closed systems." (Shorter 1975:23). For him, people or groups give their own different definitions to culture. If cultures are open, then it is possible for an individual or society to utilise it for their own purposes.

---

The use of the term culture in this study reflects an anthropological meaning. Culture is viewed as a construction of society that influences social behaviour, and which is passed on from one generation to the next. Cultural factors referred to in this study would therefore be those aspects, considerations, influences, determinants, that are validated by the people of South-East Zimbabwe.

### **1.11.2. Theology**

Explained in a simplified and restricted way, theology can be defined as the study of God and the bible. Explained in more complex and inclusive terms, every aspect of human and creative life can be considered in the study of theology. Relationships between God and God's creation, as well as relationships between male and female have great importance in the study of theology.

Henry Thiessen, in his definition of theology suggests that theology needs to be understood in a broad sense. Hence he speaks of theology as the, "science of God and his [*sic*] relations to the universe" (1963:24). It is in this broad and inclusive way that theology is understood in this study. Thiessen is not alone in the idea of defining theology in this way. J. Millard Erickson also holds the same idea of inclusiveness when he states that theology is a:

Discipline which strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith based primarily upon the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life"(Erickson 1983:21).

This study concurs with Erickson in understanding scripture to be the primary source of theology, making all Christian doctrine a concern for theology. The idea of culture ably corresponds with theology in that it suggests similarities between the origins and make-up of humanity to that which both science and psychology suggests. The similarity of ideas includes:

---

What makes a human being?

What are the needs of a human being?

What promotes growth and development in a human being?

What destroys or incapacitates a human being?

The struggle of contemporary theologies is evidenced by the fact that theology is never an old and outdated discipline. Theology must be contemporary and address the issues of the day, both in the church and in society. Theology must also be practical. The way people experience relationships with each other, both in the church and in society is the concern of theology.

Christian theology can be explained as an expression of the Christian faith. This can be expressed in various ways, including the experience of life in the church by both male and female alike, and as experienced in the day-to-day life, and in the interaction and engagement of people (both male and female) in society.

In similar fashion to Thissen and Erickson, H. Orton Wiley defines theology as:

A science which treats of the existence, the character and the attributes of God, His *[sic]* laws and government, the doctrines which we are to believe, the moral change we must experience and the duties we are required to perform. Theology is the science of God and divine things based upon the revelation made to mankind *[sic]* in Jesus Christ (1946:116).

Others, such as John Mbiti, define African Theology as, “the articulation of the Christian faith by African Christians” (1998:144). Likewise, Mercy Oduyoye holds that, “theology is an expression of faith in response to experience” (Oduyoye 2001:22).

This discussion suggests that the scopus of theology includes humanity and its engagement with God’s self-revelation through Christ and the bible. As such, there



---

is a human element in theology. Working from this engagement, humankind beings try to explain who God is, what God says and to whom God may be speaking. As a result, this study speaks of “theological factors.” These would apply to what people understand to be God’s laws and government in relation to what people understand as God’s word to them regarding the need for changed lives and responsibilities that should be implemented by different people.

### **1.11.3. Empowerment**

This term suggests the idea of enablement and capacity building. It can be likened to giving someone a key to her/his own being and capability. Empowering someone is to help them achieve their true worth. As Oluwatosim Akintan has expressed it, empowerment is “increasing people’s power” (Akintan 2001:125-133), enabling people to do things which they never thought capable of doing before. Empowerment can happen through formal and informal education. It takes place when people are conscientised, take responsibility, and claim what is rightfully theirs.

Sara Hluphekile Longwe rightly states that women’s empowerment takes place when women increase their level of control over the allocation of resources, become literate and educated, gain the skills to enable them to produce, and finally, have access to capital and are confident in and of themselves (Longwe 191: 21-23). Although the meaning of the term has been associated with education and women, in reality the term is not limited in the field of its use. Jo Rowlands in her discussion of empowerment in relation to community work, social work and politics, suggests that empowerment may only be determined by the one doing the empowering (Rowlands 1999:141-150). In this understanding, empowerment would have to do with changing closed structures in order to allow those who have previously been left out to participate, be it in political structures, formal decision-making, or economic decision-making. Empowerment has to do with making someone “maximise the opportunities available to them without or despite, constraints of structure and state” (Rowlands 1999:143). As Rowlands sees it, empowerment from the feminist point

---

of view has a broader and even informal meaning than has been described elsewhere. Such meanings would include the need for women to come out of oppressive relationships and systems as well as other forms of internalised oppressions commonly found among women. Throughout history, women have accepted oppression as their lot in life, and have repeatedly told themselves that they are not able. Empowerment would thus not only provide, “access to decision-making, it must also include the process that leads people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy that decision-making space” (Rowlands 1999:143).

The use of the term empowerment in this study is reflective of such a feminist understanding, and is considered in its internal and as well as external aspects.

#### **1.11.4. Patriarchy**

According to Russell and Clarkson, patriarchy is a term made up of two words, *Pater*, meaning ‘father,’ and *arch* meaning ‘rule.’ The word ‘patriarchy’ thus has to do with a:

System of legal social, economic, and political relations that validate and enforce the sovereignty of male heads of families over dependent persons in the household...dependant persons, included wives, unmarried daughters, dependant sons and slaves, male and female (Russell and Clarkson 1996:205).

The term can also be thought of as an ideology, which arose out of men’s power over that of women, and hence, symbolises the controlling power that men often exercise over women. Marie-Henry Keane understands patriarchy as “rule by the father” (Keane 1998:122). The use of the term in this study is taken from this root meaning that the term, originating as it did from family situations where the father exercised his domination over the members of his family. In this study, the term is used to criticise the misuse of that headship by some men. It is a reaction against male domination at the expense of women.

---

Eunice Njovana thus makes a valid point when she writes that patriarchy is, “a system which promotes men at the expense of women” (Njovana 1995:16). It is the concern over this expense paid by women, which forms the main thrust of this study.

#### **1.11.5. Equality**

In using the term equality, there is no suggestion or desire to do away with one sex in order to exalt the other. Rather, the term has to do with concerns for equal opportunity and equal access. The researcher thus agrees with the definition of Thoko Rudzvidzo:

People then tend to look at petty issues like changing nappies. I am talking of the recognition that we should have equal rights and equal access to resources and participation in decision-making. At home we should be partners and be able to sit down and discuss matters. It should not always be the woman who is negotiating while the man does not (Rudzvidzo 1995:17).

It is important to affirm the humanity of all people, male or female, married or single, old or young, regardless of their race, ethnicity or nationality. The women of South-East Zimbabwe do not wish to become men, but are proud to be women (Njovana 1995:162). The hope of this study is to see women realise their full potential and respect as women and as human beings.

The use of the term equality in this study is based on Genesis 1:27, which states:

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

The discussion by Susan Rakoczy on, *Woman as Truly Image of God* (2004:42-43), makes much sense. For Rakoczy, the term ‘man’ (*adam*) in Genesis refers to its generic understanding. Hence the NRSV translation ‘humankind.’ One could say that the writer/redactor qualifies the statement by adding “male and female.” This

---

clearly indicates that both men and women bear the image of God. Both genders are essential parts of that image. Thus, an equality of standing before God as bearers of this image is made evident:

So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us (Rom. 12:5-6).

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died. And he died for all that, so that those who might live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new! (2 Cor. 5:14-17).

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is designed to function through the gifting of all of its members, bringing complementary gifts and abilities to enrich the experience of all. It is in reference to this form and understanding of equality that is maintained throughout this study.

#### **1.11.6. Racial Terminology**

In this study, the term 'Africans' refers to the indigenous population of Africa. 'Europeans' means all those whose forebears originated from Europe, and subsequently settled in Zimbabwe. 'Asians' refers to those settlers whose origins are from the Asian sub-continent. 'Coloureds' refers to people of mixed race. These are the main people groupings in Zimbabwe during the colonial era, when Africans were treated as being at the bottom of the social ladder.

---

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH-EAST ZIMBABWE AND THEIR BACKGROUND**

#### **2. Introduction**

Chapter 1 introduced the research problem and motivation for the present study. The main aims and the objectives were also given. In order to provide a solid foundation for the research the next two chapters will concentrate on essential background information. Whilst chapter 3 will focus on background information relating to the contributions of Christianity and modernisation in shaping the identity of women, this present chapter 2 will focus on the geographical, historical and cultural backgrounds of the people of South-East Zimbabwe.

#### **2.1. The Geographical, Historical, and Cultural Background**

The backgrounds of the different people groups in South-East Zimbabwe will be dealt with individually in order to demonstrate what have experienced beneficial change, which could be a valuable pattern for them to follow in the future. Although the people of South-East Zimbabwe have separate backgrounds, as people of African origin they possess many important similarities. In discussing the culture and background of the two groups, it will therefore be necessary to consider them at the same time.

---

In examining the background of any ethnic group, there is a need to present a comprehensive overview of the tribal unit. This is however not the particular concern of this study, which has a different purpose.

South-East Zimbabwe is home to two ethnic groups of people, namely the vaKaranga and Shangana (Hlengwe) peoples. Following World War I, decisions were taken which prompted the colonial administration to continue with the relocation of most of the Hlengwe people into the areas where they are found today. T. O. Ranger discusses these decisions at length in his book *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930*, (1970). In approximately 1919, the Paramount of the Hlengwe people, Chief Chitanga and his nine Kraal Heads were moved from their area to Matibi 1 Tribal Trust land. The purpose of this relocation was to make room for the Nuanetsi Ranching farm. The colonial government made farming one of their economic development objectives. Ranger thus states:

The best land resources were appropriated by the European farmers...after the advent of responsible government in 1923, the way was open for still further government support for European agriculture (Ranger 1970:112).

During the same period, some of Chief Chitanga's people were settled under the Karanga Chief's Neshuro and Negari in Nuanetsi. When Chief Neshuro himself moved north-west, some of his people remained behind because they did not want to leave the land of their birth. As a result, they became the subjects of Chief Chitanga of the Hlengwe people.<sup>1</sup> For many years, this was considered a Karanga area, and was part of the Nyaningwe district referred to as Nuanetsi. In 1953, Nuanetsi was upgraded to a full district status. At this time, Nuanetsi covered a significant area and included the areas then referred to as Matibi I and Matibi II.

---

<sup>1</sup> Many other Hlengwe chiefs were also relocated at the same time as Chitanga, but as they do not live within the study area, they do not form part of this discussion.

---

According to Schmidt, the Hlengwe are a reserved and conservative people, who are honest and retain a sense of pride. They are indifferent when it comes to accepting European civilisation. On the other hand, the Karanga are said to be aggressive and assertive, quick to accept European civilisation. Schmidt speaks of young Shona women running to the towns or mission stations away from situations such as arranged marriages (1992:89-179), something a Hlengwe girl would never have done previous to the arrival of the colonists. The forced resettlement of these two population groups encouraged integration between the vaHlengwe and the vaKaranga. Cross-cultural marriages, although not well received at first, were soon to take place, uniting families through marriage and children. Each group learned the other's language and culture for the sake of the children born out of such unions.

The Shangaan people, who were more open to new cultures and languages, learned Shona very quickly. While the Shangaan people hold that a child must speak the father's language, learning the mother's language is not mandatory. In order to assist the children in this, a Shangaan woman married to a Karanga man would have to learn to speak the Shona language so that when a child is born she would be able to speak to the baby in her/his father's language. For the Karanga people, who are not as open to learning other people's languages, the situation is somewhat different. When a Karanga woman is married to a Shangaana man, she would most probably continue speaking Shona, while her husband and his family would learn to speak the Shona language with her (Phukwani Chauke 1997).

In an effort to identify the people discussed, the following diagrams are provided.

---

## 2.2. VaHlengwe

The VaHlengwe, sometimes referred to as Shangaan-Hlengwe (Langa 1997), live in South-East Zimbabwe. They are a segment of the Shangaan-Tsonga people.

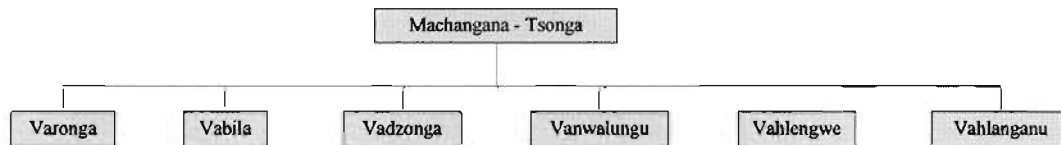


Diagram 2.1. [Source: Junod 1982:99 Tsonga Edition]

The name Tsonga is derived from the term *dzonga* meaning ‘south.’ As a result, they are sometimes referred to as the *Vadzonga* (VaTsonga), or ‘people of the south.’ A segment of the same group (as realised by similarities in language) reside further east in the Maputo province of Mozambique. These are referred to as *Varonga*. The name comes from the term *Vuronga* meaning ‘where the sun comes from.’

Another segment of the same people reside further north in the Gaza Province of Mozambique, consequently the *Gazakulu* homelands of South Africa and South-East Zimbabwe are referred to as the *VaHlengwe*.

Other theories hold that *Hlengwe* is the name for the area, because of its harsh climate. Another theory states that the term Hlengwe came from a term *Hlengo*, a Shangaana word meaning ‘collection.’ It is said that, in the days of the Nguni Empire, that the king’s subjects used to travel far north in order to collect taxes. As a result, the area became known as the *Hlengweni*, and the people, the VaHlengwe (Langa 1997).



The Hlengwe group is also referred to as the Northern Tsonga (Hammond 1974:69-71; Schapera 1966:55; Junod 1927:18).<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3. VaKaranga

Oral tradition claims that the Karanga are one of several groups that make up the Shona-speaking group of people.

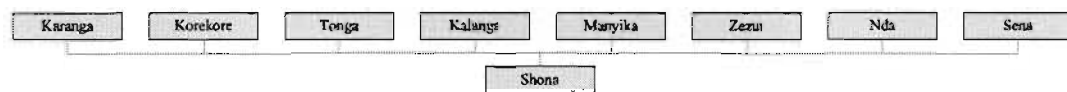


Diagram 2.2. [Source Author]

Although Junod adds two further groups, namely, the Tavara and the Rogwe (Junod 1938:20), the people groupings that are commonly known in Zimbabwe number but eight, as schematically illustrated in Diagram 2.2. The Karanga, said to be the largest of the Shona speaking groups (Aschwanden 1982:13), includes many subgroups as well.

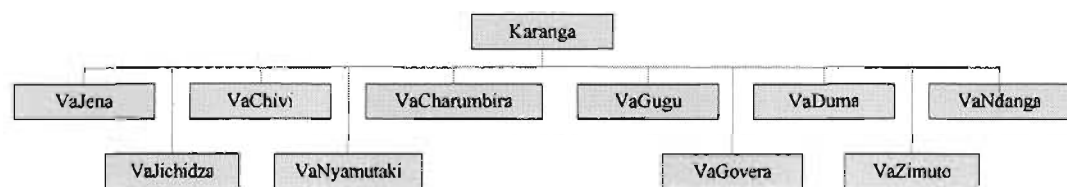


Diagram 2.3. [Source Author]

The Shona speaking people are associated with the dynasty of Mwenemotapa (Monomotapa). This suggests the group's occupation of the present Great Zimbabwe ruins. The Shona people have been in Zimbabwe since long before the

<sup>2</sup> It should not be assumed that what has been given here, as there is more than one theory on this subject.

---

Ndebele, who dominated the western half of the country, and the Hlengwe, who dominated the south-east corner of Zimbabwe (Tyrrell 1976:150-163).

Most rivers and mountains are known by Shona names, even those in predominantly Hlengwe areas. The Karanga consider Zimbabwe their country. A Karanga elder, in responding to a curious white missionary, is reported to have remarked that when the white missionaries took away their land, they wanted to take away their spirits as well (Aschwanden 1982:5). The land was Zimbabwe. Their 'spirits' referred to the missionaries' insistence in stopping the practice of ancestral worship.

Oral history holds that Shona people are good agriculturalists and blacksmiths (Samkange 1969:1-6), a statement reinforced by archaeological remains discovered at the Great Zimbabwe Ruins. While not everything is known, one cannot deny that the Karanga are a creative people, producing a variety of objects from wood and metal.

## **2.4. Geographical Location**

### **2.4.1. VaHlengwe**

While the Shangaana-Hlengwe people may be found in many other parts of southern Africa, areas with large populations include the Maputu province of Mozambique, the Northern Province of South Africa, and the South-East Zimbabwe. According to 1993 figures, Mozambique has a Shangaan-Tsonga population of 1, 503,000; South Africa has 11, 96,000; and Zimbabwe 143, 000 (Johnston and Mandryk 2001:688). According to the oral history of the Hlengwe-Zimbabwe people, it is maintained that the white colonists separated them from their people by creating boundaries that were not there before the colonist arrived. This is said in reference to the border posts between Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

---

### **2.4.2. VaKaranga**

The Shona people have lived in Zimbabwe and Mozambique since the first half of the nineteenth century. It is said that they lived in the area between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers, stretching eastwards as far as the sea (Samkange 1969:1-6).

While Shona-speaking people are found in Zimbabwe as well as in Mozambique, a greater number reside in Zimbabwe. According to the 1993 figures of Johnston and Mandryk (2001:688), the Shona-speaking groups in Zimbabwe make up 70.5% of the population, with the Karanga alone numbering up to 2, 250,000. In Mozambique, the Shona-speaking group consist only 20% (2, 327,000) of the country's population.

Although the Shona groups of people are found throughout Zimbabwe, the Karanga are mostly found in the Masvingo Province and Chiredzi. The area of study for this present research is that of the Mwenzi District in Masvingo Province, South-East Zimbabwe.

## **2.5. Historical Background**

### **2.5.1. VaHlengwe**

Between 1815 and 1895, Soshangana of the Nguni group and his people fled from Zululand. Moving northeast, he captured the Tsonga people and built his empire in the Gaza area. The Hlengwe people lived not far from the Gaza Empire. Some sections of the Hlengwe people were actually under the control of the Nguni ruler (Junod 1927:15). Oral history speaks of times when the Nguni people used to come as far as Zimbabwe to raid the people and take away their cattle. Local historians speak of paying tribute to the Nguni ruler. The Tsonga-Hlengwe, who lived along the Limpopo valley and present borders of Zimbabwe and

---

Mozambique, were referred to as Shangaan. Thus, both the Shangaan-Tsonga and Hlengwe-Shangaan are in fact, Hlengwe-Tsonga.

In order to make room for the Gaza Empire, some of the Hlengwe chiefs were forced against their will to move further north into Zimbabwe, away from the main rivers. Tshovani and Mahenye were two of such chiefs who, along with some of their subjects, had to move away from the areas alongside the lower Limpopo. These people lived under the influence and rule of the Nguni Soshangana, his sons, and grandson until 1895, when Ngungunyane was taken prisoner to Portugal. At the same time, in contempt of the invasion of the Portuguese, some Hlengwe-Tsonga moved further north hoping to find land where they could settle in peace with their flocks away from the interference of white people (Langa 1997).

It was during these times of movement that the northern Shangaan-Tsonga, or Hlengwe-Tsonga, moved further into the interior of Zimbabwe. As a result, there were clashes with the Ndau group along the eastern border and with the Karanga who lived near the South African border. As the Hlengwe moved into Karanga territory, the Karanga travelled further inland leaving the southeast region to the Hlengwe where the people lived until the resettlement precipitated by the Rhodesian Government circa 1912-1914 (Langa 1997). The Hlengwe chiefs, Xinyori, KhaMbala and Bangwani are associated with these movements (Muzamani Chauke 1997). Until today, stories are told of how the Hlengwe settlers came to Zimbabwe.

### **2.5.2. VaKaranga**

Oral tradition suggests that some groups of Shona people came from a place in the north called *Guruwuswa*, 'a place of long grass' (Samkange 1969:1-6). Another suggestion is that Chief Nembire-Shoko, together with several Karanga tribes-people came from the area now known as the Great Lakes region, as early as the

---

fourteenth or fifteenth century (Daneel 1971b:17). Some similarities between the Shona language and the Central African languages seem to support this theory. Two great powers remembered in connection with this period of Shona history are the Monomotapa and Rozvi dynasties. Motapa, (as Monomotapa was sometimes called), conquered the Tavora people who lived south of the Zambezi River and settled there with his subjects. Subjects of the Rozvi dynasty settled further south of the Zambezi River, into the interior of Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). The Great Zimbabwe Ruins are said to be the place of the first Rozvi capital. (Daneel 1971b:17).

In the north, the Motapa Kingdom progressed well. Around the sixteenth or seventeenth century, Monomotapa established good trade relations with traders from Portugal. Some areas of Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe paid homage to this kingdom. The success of the Monomotapa Kingdom was attributed to the assistance received from capable members of the rulers' subordinates, the king's spirit mediums and from other official guardians of the kingdom traditions who spoke on behalf of the ancestral kings.

In the south, the Rozvi claimed that their kingdom was appointed by God ('Mwari'), with the Mbire-Shoko tribe becoming the priestly house of the Shona-Rozvi kingdom. Their place of worship was situated among them, similar to the way that the ancient Israelites located the centre of their cultus. This place of worship, now known as the temple, was situated in the centre of the Great Zimbabwe Ruins. It is suggested that, following consultation with Mwari (God) sometime during the seventeenth century, the centre of the cultus was moved from the Great Zimbabwe Ruins to the Matopos, an area coterminous with the present city of Bulawayo. Daneel suggests that it was at that same time that the Rozvi administration centre was moved to "Matopo country" (Daneel 1971b:19-20).

South-East Zimbabwe, the geographic area of this study, is within what was the Rozvi Kingdom, hence some of the research population included in this study comprise of tribes-persons from the Rozvi kingdom. Clashes among the chiefs

---

within these kingdoms (sometimes over land boundaries) resulted in resettlement. Some of these people moved south toward the Limpopo River, while others moved east. The Karanga remained until the Hlengwe invasions from the south-east borders of Zimbabwe began, forcing them to resettle south of the Save River under Chief Chikovele. His great-grandson, Ngwena, led the largest group of Hlengwe, settling south of the Lundi River (the present area of Chief Mpapa). The present border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique divides the Hlengwe people in half. Although at first, the area used to be under Chivi, the Karanga chief, with the coming of the Hlengwe there were clashes, resulting in the movement of the Karanga, leaving the southeast predominantly under the control of the Hlengwe.

Oral history records that Ngwena was the Hlengwe chief who led the largest group of Hlengwe into Zimbabwe in the late nineteenth century. His son, Ndarega, tried to drive away the Karanga chiefs Neshuna and Madzivire, but he was defeated. Eventually they were to become friends. The Hlengwe and Karanga did not appreciate one another at first. In situations where two chiefs are said to be friends, it was not out of a sense of friendship, but rather a form of political alliance, enabling a weaker clan to co-exist alongside a stronger one. This was true of these chiefs.

In many cases, when the defeated opponents felt that they had regained strength, they would be ready to fight again. The stronger opponent always took advantage, going back as many times as they wanted in order to make further demands. This was true of Chief Ndarega of the Hlengwe and Chief Shindi of the Karanga (Muzamani Chauke 1997). For a long time Chief Chitanga of the Hlengwe (the son of Chief Ndarega) remained a 'thorn in the flesh' for Chief Shindi.

---

## 2.6. The Effects of Patri-Lineal Culture upon Women

Both the Hlengwe and the Karanga people come from a patri-lineal cultural background. Oral history states that it was an advantage for a Hlengwe man to have many sons for it meant more soldiers to protect his home and family.

In South-East Zimbabwean culture, the father was the owner of the children. Consequently, his family becomes the owners of the children. In many cases, his brothers and/or sisters would speak or make a decision about his children on his behalf. His wife spoke of her husband and his family as owners of her children (Masake 1997).

In a situation where a woman has children outside marriage, legally they belong to her father or her eldest brother. Stephen Kauta Mosiska spoke of a woman as a mere machine that produces children for her husband (1997:49). Research conducted among the Karanga people by Herbert Aschwanden and a group of Karanga nurses helps in understanding this thinking. In Karanga culture, a wife was like a field in which one plants seed. The produce from the field belongs to the owner of the field and not to the field. This suggested that a woman was an object used for the glorification of a man. Ester Chipape Masinge once grudgingly said, "*Vavasati i swibya swa va va nuna*" ('women are objects used for production on men's behalf') (Masinge 1997).

The Karanga believed that the male sperm causes a child, for without it the woman's egg would be too weak. This is reflected in the Karanga saying, "A hen may lay many eggs, but those eggs will never hatch into chickens unless she has been fertilised." A child would thus be known by his/her father's totem or family name, even after the child was married (Aschwanden 1982:6). A wife living with her husband and his family was considered a 'stranger' living with people of different blood. The husband's family would speak of her as, *mwana wa vanhu* ('child of her owners'). This implies that although she should be taken good care of, it would not

---

be for her own sake, but rather for her owner, namely, her father or brother. Old people have a saying to the same effect, *Wedu muviri musoro nde wa vene* ('her body is ours, the head belongs to the owners'). It is thus clear that in these cultures a woman does not exist for herself (Aschwanden 1982:29).

A married woman is fully integrated into her husband's family when she becomes a grandmother. This would result in her being included in the family business. Together with her sons, she would become co-owner of her grandchildren. She would be able to claim more ownership over the children than that of the birth mother (Aschwanden 1982:29). In other words, it was only at this point in her life that a woman could be recognised as a co-owner, yet not of her own children, but rather of her grandchildren. Again, this would only take place because the woman would be of advanced years. One day she would be dead and would then deserve full respect as an ancestor. If they did not respect her in her old age, when she became an ancestor she might be hard on them!

From this, it would seem that the recognition of a woman has nothing to do with her being a human being. Rather, she has earned respect solely by giving birth. A woman, who has never had children, and consequently no grandchildren, would not receive the same honour. Thus, as Oduyoye clearly states, "Childlessness is a taboo subject" (1999:108-109).

Another way of looking at how culture perceives women is through its proverbs. African culture is rich in proverbs that are used in various different ways. As Junod has shown, the Hlengwe people have such proverbs as:

*A sati ufana na shitsatsa e muzimbeni* ('A wife is like a tick on one's body'); *A wa sati angana hlayo* ('A woman has no count'); *A kute ka kutivekela nyoka shikhwameni* ('to marry is to put a snake in one's handbag'); *Loku a homu ya ntwele yi rhangela malweni, titawela xidziveni* ('If a cow leads a head of cattle all the cattle will fall into the pool') (translated from Shangaana) (Junod 1973:186-190).



---

Karanga culture has the saying, “Women are pots” (Aschwanden 1982:109-194). This refers to unmarried young women who are considered as unfired pots, unused, delicate to the touch and thus to be handled with care. In contradistinction, a married woman is a fired pot that is in use.

Although the people of South-East Zimbabwe have many negative proverbs, some are positive and empowering:

*Manana, manana, ku hava munhu la nga sivaka Manana.* (‘Mother is a mother; no one can replace her’). *Nkava wukoka nwana, Nkava wa moya, shinga shiboho shi bohaka Manana ni nwana awu tse meki.* (‘The umbilical cord pulls the child; the tie between mother and child is never broken’) (Junod 1973:161-163).

Mercy Oduyoye notes that proverbs can be used for the affirmation of a people’s dignity as well as to convey respect towards the individual (1995:55-59). Such affirmative proverbs can have a positive influence for children as they grow up. Children growing up in an environment, where its proverbs can be both affirming and non-affirming tend not to be mindful of the way they treat others.

Women’s acceptance of the treatment meted out to them is not however without resistance. Indeed, women have developed traditional ways of resistance, allowing them some measure of independence. African women, including the women of the study area, composed and sang songs during work, as well as at their traditional gatherings and dances. In appraising the words of these songs, one can tell whether the situation of the composer was a happy one or not. Both women and men hear the songs and realise their meanings, but no one would question the composer or hold her accountable for the song. A few examples of such songs translated from the Hlengwe language are:

*Anitekiwanga nilorhinha nandzu...*

(‘I am not married. I am an object of ransom...’)

---

*Kutekiwa valanga...Vonani nimina...*

(‘When you want to marry, please choose...learn from me...’)

*Minganiheleketa ka mudyiwa xuma.*

(‘Please take me back to the one who took the *lobola*’)

*Tatana va mina vani sindisile kutekiwa hi nunakulu.*

(‘My father compelled me to marry this old and ugly man’)

*Tatana vani kurhumetile kutekiwa hi nunankulu.*

(‘My father forced me to marry this old man’)

*Nite ka tatana aniswi rhandzi kulekiwa hi nunankulu.*

(‘I told my father that I did not like this old, ugly man’)

*Tatana vaku tekiwa.*

(‘My father said “marry him”’)

The first song carries with it a sense of regret. Possibly the writer had had not a bad experience within her marriage. The song discusses issues of *lobolo* (some call it ‘bride price’). The poor treatment received by the woman from her husband and the *lobolo* paid to her family seem to be the two issues that stand out the most in this song. The second song alludes to an arranged marriage. The concerns of the young woman seem to be compromised.

From these two examples, it is clear that while women do not have the opportunity to decide about issues that concern their own lives, they nevertheless have found ways to voice their resistance.

Children’s names are often a means of expressing resistance. Before the establishment of hospitals, the practice of traditional birth attendants was common in South-East Zimbabwe. It was the right of the birth attendant to give the baby’s first name. Sometimes, the attendant would give the child her own name. The mother of the child or some other relative could also name the child. A baby might receive the name of a relative or named according to the situation in the

---

family. In the case where a baby receives a name after a situation, the following are typical:

*Nyengera* – deceived (I have been deceived)

*Dzingai* – drive away

*Ndaizivei* – what did I know (a statement of regret)

*Taitivanhu* – we thought that they were people

Translated from Chikaranga. (Schmidt 1992: 19-21; Shava 1998).

The name *Dzingai* ('drive away') would be given in situations where a mother or grandmother might have been driven away from her married home. The names *Nyengerai*, ('deceived') *Ndaizivei* ('what I did not know'), and *Taitivanhi* ('we thought that they were people'), suggest sense of regret and great disappointment. In most cases, women would not openly tell their husbands or family that they were disappointed with them, but could freely express it through the naming of their children. In this regard, it should be noted that unlike the initiation schools of other African countries, where a child could be named after a maternal uncle (See, Nasimiyu 1995:4-7), it was not common practice in South-East Zimbabwe. Instead, the child would be named after a relative from the father's side. This said, a female relative of the mother could name the baby if she helped in the delivery. When children grow up, go to school or become Christians, when boy-children go for circumcision and girl-children attend school, they can, if they so wish choose another name for themselves.

## **2.7. Women and Economic Independence**

Although the situation of women is often favourable, women have not become despondent; instead, they continue to do things for themselves. Up until the 1960s, the most common kind of beer that people drank in the rural areas such as South-East Zimbabwe was that brewed by women in the villages. Beer making thus provided an essential source of income for women. Beer was not only made from grain, but also from fruit. During the months of February and March,

---

women collected marula fruits. During the days when the moon was full, some even wakened during the night to collect the fruit before the other women, because the women competed with one another in collecting the fruit and making this beer. Although today, some women still make beer, because of a relatively small market, it realises little by way of profit.

In their efforts to make beer, women soon found themselves competing with the modern liquor stores in the townships and shopping centres. Some women thus turned to making baskets from reeds from the river and fibre from trees, or clay pots suitable for cooking, or large enough to store beer or water. Thereby, women were able to improve their situation. Some women were more skilled and enterprising than others, and thus came into positions of leadership.

## **2.8. Women and Leadership**

The silence about women in leadership does not mean it did not take place. Historically, while most African cultures did not ordinarily make opportunity for women to become leaders, there were some situations where women exercised authority over communities without male resistance. Oral tradition reveals that women occupied leadership positions as diviners, mediums, prophets, healers and even counsellors (Chilver 1997:53-56; Khoza 1997).

During the fifteenth century, Queen Hatshepsut ruled over Egypt for twenty-two years and was said to be, “the most brilliant leader Egypt had known” (Qunta 1987:49-61). Queen Nzinga of Angola is another such woman. Remembered as, “a formidable strategist” (Qunta 1987:49), she was the Angolan army general who confronted the Portuguese and delayed their colonisation for forty years. These names are worth mentioning, because as women—and there are many more like them—who would have made good leaders had they been given the opportunity.

---

Mercy Oduyoye refers to the Thamaa Queen Mother as a, “female ruler and king-maker in traditional political systems of the Asante” (1995:92). Closer to home, and in regard to the women of South-East Zimbabwe, Nehanda, known to the people of Zimbabwe as *Mbuya Nehanda*, or ‘Grandma’ become legendary in the nineteenth century struggle against British colonialism. As Qunta records, Nehanda’s leadership gained the respect of both women and men alike:

She exhibited remarkable leadership qualities and organisational skills as she grew up....Another factor was her acquisition of an in-depth knowledge of the Shona religious creed and theology...Nehanda was one of the country’s most influential religious leaders, the other being a man called Kagubi..Nehanda opposed the (British) invader’s rule as soon as it was imposed...she believed these white people to be evil, inhuman and destructive, and she saw their presence as the greatest threat to the survival of African social, political religious and economic institutions (Qunta 1987:56).

As with Nehanda, other women were also considered leaders. Some were accepted as leaders because of their skills and abilities, while others were placed in leadership by traditional structures such as marriage.

For the men of South-East Zimbabwe, Historically, to have more than one wife was the culturally accepted norm, whereby women were expected to consent to it without question. Women who did not like sharing their husbands with other women were despised by the community and made to ‘swallow’ their jealousy. To be the first wife carried with it a kind of authority. In the absence of the husband, the first wife will stand in his place. The other wives would defer to the first wife with regard to questions and situations, which under normal circumstances they would refer to their husband. The first wife would make decisions on those situations that she could handle. She would refer to the brothers of her husband, those situations she could not handle. While she might not have power to sell cattle and thereby buy food for the family, she is allowed to sell goats in order to find money to take care of problems that the family might be facing during the absence of her husband (Langa

---

1998). Due to modernisation and the demise of polygamy, women have subsequently become.

Another situation of authority for women used to be within the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship, with the mother-in-law having authority over her daughters-in-law. Consequently, the more daughters-in-law a woman had, the more authority she possessed (Schmidt 1992:14-21). Most of these situations changed dramatically with the coming of Western Christianity because polygamy as a practice was stopped and children did not continue to live with their parents following their married. In this way, women again lost their authority.

## **2.9. Women and Socio-Political Organisations**

Even before the arrival of white settlers, the people of South-East Zimbabwe possessed social and political structures of their own. These structures still operate within the rural areas. Daneel suggests that in general, the structures operate hierarchically in three socio-economic units of different size (Daneel 1971b:32).

The smallest of these three socio-political structures was the village, made up of family members. In most cases, a family in this culture was an extended family, and included the father and mother, unmarried daughters, sons and their wives and children. The father of the family was the chief of that village. In this culture, having many wives was a means of a man being successful because of the many children he could father. In this understanding, marriage was not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Its purpose was to have children. Hence, for this culture, the idea of the family was very important and individualism an entirely foreign concept. An individual finds her/his identity within the family community. Hence, when children speak of their fathers and mothers, they are actually referring to their father's brothers and their wives.

---

Having children was thus very important within marriage. As Aschwanden (1982:234) has noted:

The Karanga people refer to a pregnant woman as:

*Wakanaka pamuri*. – She has a pretty body.

*Wave nomumvuri*. – She has a shadow.

*Wakarema*. – She is heavy.

*Wakakurirwa*. – She has been conquered by the night.

The beauty or prettiness referred to here has nothing to do with physiological beauty. According to Aschwanden, the beauty had to do with a number of things, including the happiness a woman feels in being able to carry a baby in her womb, which was life under no influence of evil. The happiness that other young men desire, includes that of the husband of the young woman. It also includes the happiness of the two families.

In the case where a husband is unable to father children, some families might secretly arrange for one of his brothers to have sexual intercourse with the woman so that she may fall pregnant and have children for her husband (Khoza 1997). In this, the wife's opinion is not invited. She will only be told what the family has decided and abide by it, so that the family may have children.

Daneel's second smallest socio-political structural unit is that of the larger community made up of a number of families. In most cases, the families that make up this larger community are related to the headman, or *Sabuku*. The headman was the chief of this larger community. Each family was accountable to the larger community (ward or *Dunhu* in Shona). A man who controlled his family, (i.e., his wife and/or wives and children) was respected by the ward. Each family made a point of training children in a community agreed code of conduct so that they would not bring shame upon the family or to the ward. In this culture, it was the responsibility of the women to train children so that they become respectful members of their community. The ward would organise secret societies where boy

---

children aged between ten to fifteen years old, and girl children aged between thirteen and sixteen years old were separately given some special training—the boy children being trained separately by the men and girl children being trained separately by the women. This was true of the Hlengwe more than for the Karanga people.

In these societies, girl children would amongst other things, be instructed on how to be good and subservient. Hence, from a very early age girl children would be conditioned to believe that they were not to live for themselves. The goal of such training was not necessarily in the best interests of the girl child, but rather that she brings pride to her father, her husband, and the larger community. The initiation of girl children was not only a reality in South-East Zimbabwe, but was maintained in other African countries as well. As Isabel Phiri notes these were, “ceremonies where sex education was taught. The girls were also prepared to take up their future roles as mothers” (Phiri 1997:34).

A woman’s place was in her husband’s home. She was to remain utterly subservient towards him, as one who has entire authority over her. Her main contribution would be to produce children for him and bring them up to work in the fields and accumulate as much money as possible. In addition, she was expected to cook and feed the family so that her husband would have a healthy family to brag about (Maklasi 1997).

The third and largest unit of Daneel’s three socio- political structures was the area or *nyika*. The *nyika* was ruled over by a chief and was much wider than the *dunhu* (ward area). Prior to the integration of the 1960s, the Nwanezi, chiefs, ward headmen and families were somehow related. They would be the same people. If a family did not comply with the code of conduct agreed upon by the ward, they might be asked to move away from that ward. Therefore, each family tried to comply with the expectations of the community.



---

Within these three socio- political structures, only men qualified to become leaders. Women were disqualified from leadership positions solely because God created them women. As the Hlengwe proverb states, *wasati angana hlayo* ('a woman has no count'). It was not only in leadership that women were not allowed to partake. They were also not to be involved in decision-making or other related responsibilities, even those that involved women's destiny.

The coming of the white colonial settlers did not change the situation for women in South-East Zimbabwe. If anything, it became worse. The colonialists created political structures that not only deliberately left women out, but considered women to be minors from the day they were born until the day they died (Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project 1992:3). An assessment survey on women carried out in 1982 by the development approach programme of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches revealed that women were left out in all areas of development (Mutambara 1994:28).

It is clear that the white colonial settlers did not support the development of African women. Although the employment of African women as domestic workers was discussed at some point by the white government, and missionaries before independence (Schmidt 1992:221-223), women's development was not addressed at any structural level, whether social, political or economical. Schmidt sheds light on the attitude of the settler's towards women in general when he writes:

The ideal of women remaining at home, cooking, keeping house, and raising children while men earned wages in wider society was an imported ideology rather than an indigenous cultural concept. The transplanting of the European ideology to African culture was largely the work of European missionaries and the wives of colonial civil servants. At mission school...boys learned skills that prepared them for employment in the European dominated economy, while girls were transformed into model Christian housewives (Schmidt 1992:22).

---

Some of the interviewees reflect upon similar conditions, as they lived during these colonial socio-political structures. The focus of this study is not however upon Western countries but rather about South-East Zimbabwe, and discussion about the African women of this area in particular.

### **2.10. Conclusion**

The thrust of this second chapter has been to discuss in brief the cultural, historical and geographical background of the people of South-East Zimbabwe. As culture is an important concern of this study, the cultural background has received particular attention.

---

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE CONTRIBUTION OF CHRISTIANITY AND MODERNISATION IN SHAPING THE IDENTITY OF WOMEN**

#### **3. Introduction**

Whilst in chapter 2 the geographical, historical and the cultural backgrounds of the people of South-East Zimbabwe were presented, chapter 3 will focus on the contributions that Christianity and modernisation has made in shaping the identity of women. Close attention will be made to the issues of women and the church; women and education; and what other literature says about leadership.

Due to the multiplicity of modes of African evangelisation that were used by Western missionaries, subjects such as education, politics and economics must be brought into the discussion. Much has been written on the early evangelisation and the civilization of Zimbabwe; this chapter will however only provide some brief background information in order to give better understanding to the research analysis that will be documented in the chapters that follow.

#### **3.1. The Effects of Christianity and Its Western Influence**

Several defining elements converge in the evangelisation of South-East Zimbabwe. As with many other African countries, Zimbabwe (previously, Rhodesia) was a colony of the West. According to Leonard Kapungu, it was during the later part of the nineteenth century that the British made a move into Zimbabwe (Kapungu

---

1974:2). Cecil John Rhodes, a British subject who lived in South Africa, desired to see Africa, from Cape Town to Cairo, under British rule. Rhodes was also aware that others, such as the German, Eduardo Lippert and Piet Grobler, a South African of Dutch descent, were seeking to entice King Lobengula, who had settled north-west of the Limpopo River to sign treaties with them. Rhodes anticipated that winning Lobengula's trust was not going to be an easy task. He thus engaged the missionary John Moffat, who was supposedly trusted by Lobengula, to speak on behalf of Rhodes and press Lobengula into signing a treaty. A treaty of friendship with Britain soon ensued due to Moffat's efforts, and hence began Zimbabwe's colonisation by western powers (Kapungu 1974:1-2).

With European colonisation, came Christianity, thus linking Zimbabwe to Christianity and its western influence. Furnival, Broom and Smith, who wrote about colonial policy and practice and the nature of white workers in Zimbabwean society, noted that it was characterised by two racially defined groups, namely, Europeans and Africans (Dorsey 1975:33).

While western missionaries were intent on evangelising Africans, the white settlers that accompanied them had quite different objective. According to Betty Dorsey, the majority of white settlers perceived themselves as superior to African people and believed that:

The African was to be Christianised and civilised and encouraged to develop within his own sphere of influence, largely in order to supply the labour needed in the European economy (Dorsey 1975:34).

This is no different to what Fiona Leach wrote about in reference to women, when she states:

Vocational opportunities for girls, when available, have been restricted to traditional feminine subjects such as home economics, secretarial studies, hairdressing and beauty care (Leach 1999:48).

---

Dorsey further refers to Groves as having written that these missionaries were not particularly effective in their efforts at Christian evangelisation (Dorsey 1975:39). Africans were confused. They did not know whether they were being converted to Western culture or to something else. The missionaries themselves seemed also to be caught somewhere between civilising and Christianising the African. Some missionaries found it easier to side with the European settlers than with the African. Dorsey states that it was obvious that the work of the church was dependent upon the law and authority of the British South Africa Company (BSAC). Missionaries tended to view African culture with the same low opinion as the other European settlers, therefore acceptance of Christianity usually implied an acceptance of Western culture as well (Dorsey 1975:40-41).

### **3.2. Christianisation, Education and Western Influence**

In order to 'civilise' Africans, European missionaries and settlers opened mission schools. This explains why the, "history of formal education for African people" in Zimbabwe was classified as being "synonymous with the history of Christian mission" (Dorsey 1975:39). In his discussion of education in mission, Daneel also refers to the role mission schools played in the evangelisation and civilisation motifs of European missionaries (1971a:210). Daneel also suggests that Rev. Louw, a missionary of the Dutch Reformed church understood clearly the important role that mission schools played in the spread of Christianity (1971a:211). In most places where missionaries sited mission stations, they opened mission schools and invited African people to learn to read and write as well as being taught the bible. As a result, education became one of the major tools of African mission evangelisation.

The Reformed church in Zimbabwe, one of the oldest mission-oriented church denominations in South-East Zimbabwe began its mission work in the area of the Karanga Chief, Mugabe. They established their operational headquarters at Morgenster Reformed church Mission in Masvingo Province. Kuda Kwashe Gwemende dates its opening, circa 1891 (Gwemende 1996:2-5; Daneel 1971a:205).

---

The Reformed missionaries felt divinely called to evangelise the *Vanyai*, or Karanga people (Gwemende 1996:2-5). As such, they focused their mission work around Morgenster and other places where they found the Karanga people. Accordingly, the Dutch Reformed church dominated the Southern Shona districts. This continues to the present day (Daneel 1971a:212).

Oral history reports when the Reformed missionaries came from South Africa to Zimbabwe, they brought with them a man named Mboweni, a Shangaana who spoke in a Shangaana language. Circa 1894, Mboweni left the white missionaries and came to the southeast part of the country to the Shangaana people. At this time, the Paramount Chief, Chitanga of the Chauke clan lived on and controlled a vast area of land in South-East Zimbabwe, later to become a white farming area. Mboweni communicated well with the Chief as they both belonged to the Shangaana people, and hence had no problem in accepting one-another. Oral history states that Mboweni opened a school where people learned to read and write as well as be evangelised with the Christian gospel. For about sixteen years, Mboweni worked and bonded with the Chief until the disappearance of the Chief's son, who was a learner at the school and who was thought to have run away to South Africa. Chief Chitanga blamed Mboweni for his disappearance, and thus shortly afterwards Mboweni left the area and travelled to the north-west, to Chief Xitanga's land within the area of Chief Neshuro of the Karanga. Here also, Mboweni started a school, taught the people to read and write, and evangelised.

Following Mboweni's removal to the Neshuro, the colonial government, in seeking land for white farmers, put pressure on Chief Chitanga to move from his land and occupy the land of Chief Neshuro. As a result, Chief Neshuro was pushed further westward. Neither Chief Chitanga nor Chief Neshuro appreciated the government's forced resettlement plan, as the two chiefs came from different traditions and were not good friends. The Karanga people who chose to remain in the land where Chitanga was to rule had to go along with what the Shangaan chief expected (Daniel Muzamani Chauke 1999). From this time, the people who lived in South-East Zimbabwe were neither entirely Karanga or Shangaana.

---

As the Reformed church missionaries focused the majority of their evangelisation efforts among the Karanga people, not much of their work took place in South-East Zimbabwe, where the majority of the Shangaan people resided. Hence, the church did not establish missions and schools as they did in other parts of the country. The schools begun under Mboweni in South-East Zimbabwe did not go beyond teaching people how to read and write. Consequently, there is little evidence, even today of the African Reformed church in this area.

South-East Zimbabweans, as with many other Africans, worshipped God in their own way. White missionaries, who were at times taken for colonisers, found it hard to win the African people towards Christianity. Missionaries had to offer the African people something that the Africans did not have and which they thought they needed. It was thus through mission schools and hospitals that Christianity was able to influence the African people.

According to Tillman Houser, a retired Free Methodist missionary to the Hlengwe people, the Free Methodists began to investigate the possibility of ministry among the Hlengwe people of South-East Zimbabwe circa 1930. Houser states that the chiefs were excited about the possibility of missionaries coming into their area, because they would provide medical care and schools for the people (Houser 1994:34). According to Houser, the first missionaries had to answer to the District colonial Commissioner of the area regarding the mission's willingness to co-operate with the government and to provide educational and medical services. This was entirely in line with Free Methodist Mission policy, which was, "to teach the unlearned and to heal the sick, as well as to preach the Gospel" (Houser 1994:42). As a result, the Free Methodist church Mission came to South-East Zimbabwe in 1938/39 opening schools and providing medical services for the Hlengwe people. Furthermore, all school buildings under the mission's management were to be used for church activities.

Elsewhere in Zimbabwe, other church missions were at work. Isabel Phiri, speaking about the Dutch Reformed church in Malawi, states that the church had a mission

---

education programme, which included “agriculture, industries and the formation of Christian families.” Furthermore, “the education of girls in the DRC Malawi was worse than that of boys” (1997:46-47). Education and medical services were models used for evangelisation in Africa.

John White, a Wesleyan Methodist minister, states that the, “objective in educating African girls was to prepare them to become good mothers and teachers for small children and good wives for their husbands” (Schmidt 1992:133-134). At this time mission education was only for men, as no one would have considered it acceptable for women going to become educated. As a seventy-year-old woman was to say, “I feel so angry at my father. So much that I would go to his grave and say—why did you refuse me to go to school?” (Changu 1999).

Throughout the early days of the church in Zimbabwe under colonial rule, schools had very few numbers of girls compared with that of the boys, as African fathers did not see the need to send their girl children to school. The researcher’s mother, who belonged to this generation, once mentioned that when her own father was away travelling, she and two other girls journeyed ten kilometres to attend one of the Reformed mission schools. When her father returned and did not find her at home, he went out after her. When he arrived at the mission school, he accused the teacher of influencing her daughter in a wrong way, took his daughter home and disciplined her for going to school. The father believed that girl children who attended school had loose morals.

Parents sent their boy children to school because they believed that when they were able to read, write and speak a modicum of English they would get better jobs and thus provide money for the support of their families (Houser 1994:34). The few girl children who went to school were not taken as seriously as that of the boys. Girl children were mainly taught domestic science skills and the church Women’s Movement *Ruwadzano rwamadzimai*, as referred to by the people of South-East Zimbabwe (Siya 1999). Tracing a history of Christian missions in Zimbabwe, Zvobgo has pointed out that:



---

The girls were taught housework, sewing and cultivation of the land, the object being to fit them to be suitable wives for the men (Zvobo 1996:158).

A retired matron in a Christian boarding school reported that during her early days at mission schools, although girls took some literary courses, the emphasis was mainly upon domestic science and Christian womanhood. The emphasis on the lessons received centred on such Sermon on the Mount, the “fruits of the Spirit,” with the emphasis on Christian principles and lessons about being a good wife as found in Proverbs 31:10-31. Some of the Apostle Paul’s writings were used to show what the bible taught about women (Mazive 1999).

Similar to that described above, is Mercy Oduyoye’s experience at Mmofraturu Methodist Girls’ School. Oduyoye mentions that during her school days in Kumasi, the girls would quote verses from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the Sermon on the Mount (Oduyoye 1995:172-187). These verses were considered to contain good lessons for girl children, because it was believed that it would well-prepare them to become good wives.

The Christian principles found in Proverbs 31 or in the Sermon on the Mount, when taken literally correspond to African teaching, especially for women. For the girl child, who went through a Christian Shangaan initiation ceremony, the lessons became character building. Examples of such were:

- Getting up in the morning before anyone else and going to bed after every one else in order to make sure that the work that needed to be done on a particular day was completed;
- Obedience and humility without question;
- Respect for adults, to the point of denying one’s own existence;
- Patience and perseverance under all circumstances;
- Avoid talking back when addressing one’s husband, or an adult who was speaking angrily.

---

During the colonial period, cultural practices such as pledged and polygamous marriages were commonplace. With lessons such as those learned above, some women endured hard situations for the rest of their lives. Accordingly, some Karanga girl children would run away from such situations (Schmidt 1992:90-117). In some cases, the mission provided a place for runaway girl children and women to stay. The colonial government and the mission churches however did not seem concerned to investigate the reasons why this was taking place, and thereby address the problem. Instead, some “missionaries were more concerned about African male authority and control over female mobility than with any grievances that might cause girls and women to flee their homes” (Schmidt 1992:163-164). While this was taking place in the church, within the Colonial political arena, African women were regarded as minors and were represented by males at every level of society.

One cannot deny that the mission schools were meant to evangelise the indigenous people and lead them to convert to Christianity. Ranger and Weller write of how African women in the Methodist church were transformed and found for themselves a new standing in the church. They show how through the *Ruwandzano rwa madzimai*, (Mothers’ Union), women were able to transform the lives of many people. Ranger and Weller also write of the commitment of the women to prayer, nurturing Christian homes and family life, and to a developed concern for community and national issues (Ranger and Weller 1975:256). It is undeniable that this new social consciousness came about because of Christian teaching. Unfortunately, in some cases this new teaching was misunderstood by some, and was used to add to the already extant repression of women. This situation contributed to the hypothesis of this study that the marginalisation of women was due at least in part to cultural and theological factors. The Christian virtues were taken and used out of context. As a result, Christian virtues such as submission, self-control, and perseverance, were used as tools to repress women even further.

The effect of Christianity and its Western influence has not always been positive for women, not only for women in South-East Zimbabwe, but throughout the country. Historical information on South-East Zimbabwe is very limited because little has

---

been recorded about the area through interviews, and other literature. The purpose of this section was to look at whatever contributions have been made by Christianity and its Western influence and how such influence has affected women. This will be in preparation for the next Chapter on the situation of women in South-East Zimbabwe.

### **3.3. Literature Review on Leadership**

In the Introduction of the first chapter of this study, it was stated that the major concern of the research project has to do with the marginalisation of women in South-East Zimbabwe, demonstrated by their invisibility in areas of leadership in both church and the public sector. This imbalance seems more apparent especially in situations where both male and females are involved. The introduction also mentioned that this study would endeavour to demonstrate the causes for this seeming imbalance.

This Chapter has given the background of the people under study in their relation to Christianity and its western influence. In what follows, background information will be given in relation to leadership and women. This will be through a literature review about leadership.

Much has been written about leadership, both with respect to the styles of leadership as well the qualities of those who are lead. It should be made clear here that the purpose of the present Chapter is not to write another thesis on leadership. Rather, the purpose here is to present a brief background on the characteristics of a leader and leadership. This will serve as a springboard for the discussion on the expectations of a leader in the following Chapters.

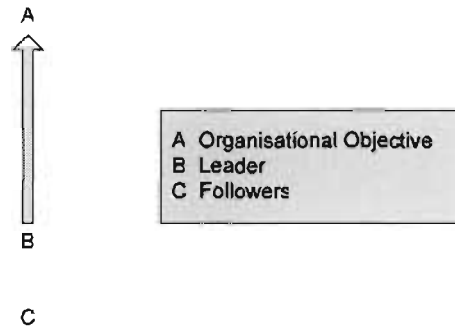
---

### 3.4. The Function of a Leader

The term 'leader' is a functional one, and cannot easily be defined apart from the functionality of a leader. Therefore, to ask the question, "What is a leader?" is to ask, "What does a leader do?" People often speak about good or bad leaders. Defining what a leader is however is not easy. Leaders are influential, encouraging, motivating, managers and much more.

In their discussion of what constitutes a leader, Smith and Cronje suggest that the elements that could be involved in the making of a leader are not only many, but are also complex (Smith and Cronje 1997:277-279). The missionary, Lavern Snider, served for many years as an educational executive in the Free Methodist Church seminary in Japan, and as a leader in the Cross Cultural Church Mission. In seeking to provide a definition of the term, Snider writes that leaders are people who know where they are going. Leaders, who do not know where they are going, seriously affect the people whom they are supposed to lead (Snider 1989:26-27). Leading is more than just doing – it also involves influencing. It is a course of action in directing the behaviour of other people toward achieving their organisational objectives. Leaders are the means through which planned objectives are realised. Edgar Elliston writes that in leading, many a leader and those who are being led interact with each other in their context (Elliston 1992:21-24). In this interaction, a leader influences those whom s/he leads.

As leaders lead, they inspire their followers to action, as well as encouraging them to follow in their journey, thus enabling others to participate in leadership duties for the organisation. This will produce what could be called 'leading in partnership.' This is illustrated in Diagram 3.1. below. In stating this, it is not the intention to evaluate what constitutes a good style of leadership. The discussion that follows will only seek to establish what other literature has to say, before looking at what the people of South-East Zimbabwe think about leadership.



**Diagram 3.1** What other people say about leadership. Source: Author

Diagram 3.1. illustrates that B is not travelling ahead of C, neither is B hiding behind C. This means that the leader is close to the people who are being led. Such a leader will see those who are being led. Likewise, those who are being led will see leader, leading. In other words, those being led and the one leading are moving together on the same pathway. Although their starting points are not the same, they converge on the same road and thus meet the objectives of the organisation.

### 3.5. The Meaning of Leadership

Explaining leadership is also not an easy task. Janvier and Thaba explain leadership as:

Both people and programmes...it is both an art and science...it is personality, beliefs, convictions and people skills (Janvier and Thaba 1997:1-3).

This is closer to the African style of leadership and thus of interest to the present researcher, as this study concerns the African situation. This is not to suggest that other systems are unimportant. To the contrary, people can learn something from others no matter where they come from.

---

Learning takes place in two different ways:

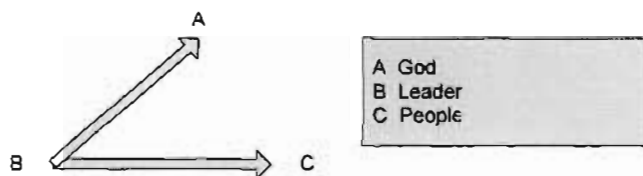
- Learning through comparison
- Learning through contrast

The people within the study area hold what might be called a ‘people-centred philosophy.’ This is very different from what the authors reviewed above are saying. What needs to be examined among the study cohort is how they relate to people in leadership, especially women.

The authors under review understand leadership as involving people as well as involving programmes. In an organisation, leadership has to be exercised among people, with people, for people. Leaders affect the people they lead. The feelings and attitudes of the people being led are as important as those of the leader her/himself. The people and the organisation are important to the leader. The leader is as important to the people as the organisation s/he leads. Therefore, in leadership everybody and everything matters.

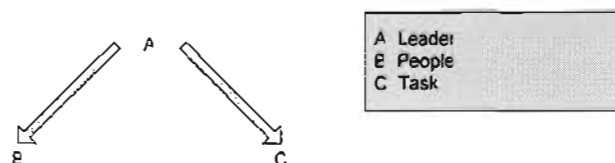
As described in Chapter 1, this study is not only concerned with the Christian church or a particular church denomination, but rather the community of South-East Zimbabwe, made up of Christians from different denominations and non-Christians alike. The discussion of Janvier and Thaba is not only helpful because they claim to present an African-comparable style of leadership, but also because they claim to present a Christian influenced discussion on leadership.

From the Christian point of view, Janvier and Thaba explain the style and understanding of leadership in the three following diagrams.



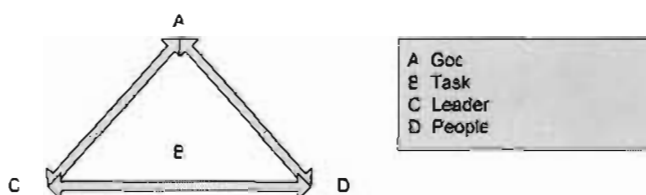
**Diagram 3.2.** Foundational Christian Leadership. Source: Janvier and Thaba 1997:1

B is as responsible to A as s/he is to C.



**Diagram 3.3** Two responsibilities of Christian leadership. Source: Janvier and Thaba 1997:4

The leader has a task to carry out and has people to involve in the task.



**Diagram 3.4.** Relational picture of Christian leadership. Source: Janvier and Thaba 1997:5

Although the intention here is not to make an evaluation of how Janvier and Thaba understand leadership, one cannot help but notice the contrast that exists between the first two diagrams and the last. In the first two, the action seems to centre around the leader, whilst the rest are only recipients. There also seems to be no relationship between A and C in Diagram 3.2 and B and C in Diagram 3.3. In these two diagrams, communication seems to flow through the leader. Such a situation would not be healthy in reality. In Diagram 3.4, communication is circular, and the task is at the centre of everything. No-one would feel left out in this style of leadership. The first two styles of leadership seem to fit those mentioned by Phiri earlier in her

---

discussion of female academics in leadership positions. Phiri asserts that males tend to look at power in a “hierarchical and competitive” way, (Phiri 2003:8), which would be compatible with Diagrams 3.2 and 3.3. Females, on the other hand, who have a feminist understanding of leadership, would look at “power as shared among equals” and thus would be compatible with the relational Diagram 3.4. (Phiri 2003:8) Diagram 3.4 represents a style of leadership that is carried out in communication with all relevant parties. One would hope that women are considered as part of the team. In Diagram 3.2 and 3.3, the communication is much better than that found in Diagram 3.1.

In her 1993 book, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*, Letty Russell posits a style of “leadership in the round” (Russell 1993:46), understood as a system of leadership power sharing. Russell views this system as having its roots in the New Testament, whereby the coming of Jesus and his self-identification with the poor was a way of accepting all people into God’s kingdom. Russell looks at the inclusion of women in the early church as a, “break from the Jewish tradition of the women’s role” (Russell 1993:55-61) that confined the majority of women to the home.

Russell’s views on leadership in the context of female and male partnerships (Russell 1996:201) may be a new concept for communities such as those in South-East Zimbabwe, yet an adaptation of it could provide benefit. The Shangaana saying, *Khingelo linwe alithlakuli mbita* (‘one stone cannot hold a pot’<sup>1</sup>) posits leadership similarly as a shared business.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza also argues that women were involved together with men in church ministry and leadership in the early church. She points out that the problem arises when the bible is read with a patriarchal, androcentric bias. This is further complicated by the use of a language that Schüssler Fiorenza refers to as, “masculine language that functions as a so-called inclusive language in a

---

<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, African mothers set a pot on three stones and made a fire under it.



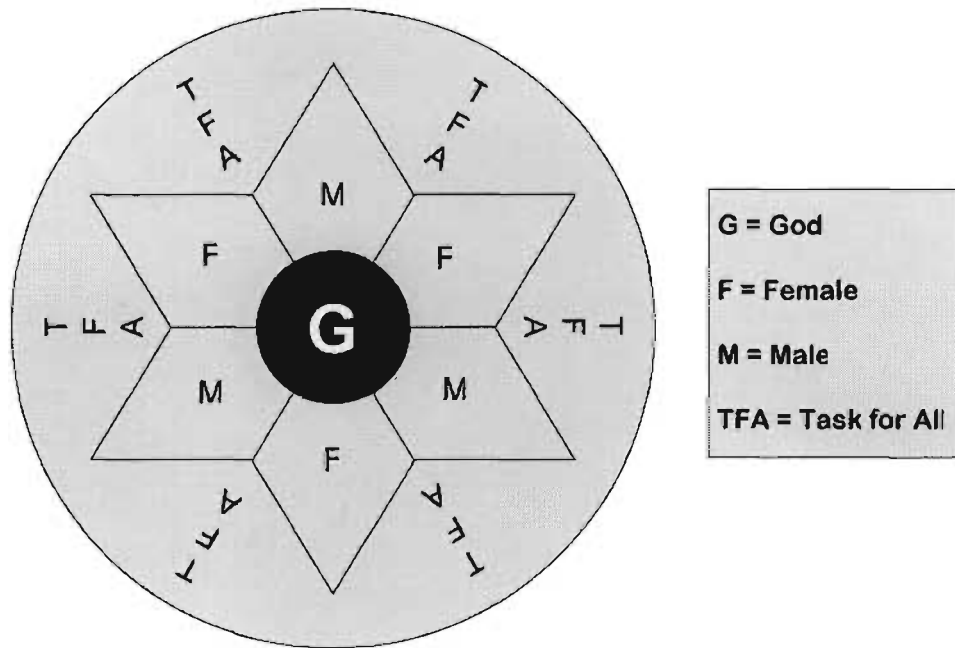
---

patriarchal culture” (Schüssler Fiorenza 1986:423) Because of this, female leaders seem to be buried in male pronouns. As Schüssler Fiorenza can state:

Romans 16 gives us a glimpse of the rich social system mix of early Christian communities, as well as women’s contribution to early Christian life and mission. The significance of women’s leadership in the early Christian missionary movement that emerges from a careful reading of Romans 16, however, is down-played when exegetes argued that the leadership of women like Phoebe, Prisca, or Junia was unofficial... (Schüssler Fiorenza 1990:71).

Lillian Chirairo Dube holds the same opinion, where she views women in the New Testament as being involved more than simply as followers or disciples. For her, women in the New Testament “also became leaders and reformers” (Dube 2000:295). Chirairo speaks about the partnership of Kenny and his wife Agnes, leaders in the Zvikomborero Apostolic Faith Church in Zimbabwe, who worked as a team, guided by their individual spiritual gifts (Dube 2000:299-301). Kenny and Agnes are known among the people of Zimbabwe. Their ministry of leading in partnership can provide a viable and alternate model of leadership. Taking together Russell’s and Kenny and Agnes’s approach towards leadership would answer the concerns that were raised in Chapters 2 and 3 of this study. The application of these systems can take place as a deliberate act by a community that is conscientised and aware of what is happening within its own borders.

Taken together, Russell, Schüssler-Fiorenza and Dube strongly suggest that there are better systems of leadership than the so-called ‘ladder style’ of Christian leadership. In what follows is a sketch is an attempt to illustrate what the present research understands as a biblical and feminist model of leadership that can be both inclusive and accommodating in the same way as that of the Christian faith.



**Diagram 3.5.** Biblical and Feminist model of Leadership. Source: Author

Diagram 3.5 accommodates both male and female. It shows all parties involved in the ministry, with God being at the centre.

Psalm 50:12b states, “For the world is mine and all that is in it.” In as much as God is the Creator, God is also the source and centre of all authority. As Nyambura Njoroge can write, “ministry of the Church is rooted in Jesus (Njoroge 1994:21). God, as creator of all humanity, has a place, plan and purpose for all. This would also suggest that humanity has a responsibility in God’s plan to fulfil God’s purpose. God is the giver of all ability and spiritual gifts; as a result, God requires that these abilities and gifts be used. Every human being is important in God’s world and for God’s mission in the world. The task is one with different facets. Male and female are each given different gifts for the task. Therefore, all should be involved.

---

### 3.6. The Qualities of a Leader

The qualities of leadership mentioned in the literature consulted (Smith and Cronje 1997; Elliston 1992; Snider 1989; Janvier and Thaba 1997; Haubert 1992), include:

- Personal integrity
- Personal competence
- Being exemplary
- Being conceptual
- Having technical ability
- Having strong people skills.

Leadership further requires a person to be:

- Of quality character
- Responsible and decisive
- Visionary
- Courageous
- Of humble spirit
- Possess selfless commitment
- Mature
- Possess passion
- Able to challenge the processes of his/her own leadership abilities and those of the planned objectives of the organisation.
- Willing to look for ways to improve

These qualities of leadership are not limited to people of colour, nationality, social or sexual status. None should be a barrier to leadership for either male or female. This kind of awareness is desired among the people of South-East Zimbabwe. When this

---

takes place, people will be at liberty to speak out and claim what is rightfully theirs. This will include leadership for both women and men who are gifted and/or called to lead.

### **3.7. Becoming a Leader**

Church and culture have a great influence on deciding who should or should not become a leader. In Chapter 1 culture was defined in several ways, including:

- The way that a given society behaves, reasons, and reacts under given situations;
- The characteristics of a given society's way of life, including its beliefs, values, ideas, customs, language and institutions.

People are often unaware of the influence that culture has upon them. They see themselves behaving and acting in a way that they believe is of their own volition. Their culture has become an essential part of them. Culture also influences those whose culture it is. In determining who should be a leader, the cultural values of those who own the power to decide will most likely be the influencing factor.

Who, and how does a person become a leader? Snider has suggested that the preconditions for becoming a leader are determined by the electing body of a particular organisation (1989:26-27). This elective body, whether of believers, or a political structure, is made up of people who are influenced by their culture. The electoral commission or body lays down certain criteria that guide them in deciding the qualifying factors that determine who can become a leader. While this commission or body may look for the qualities similar to those listed above, there will be some unwritten qualities, which will be more highly valued than those that are written down. This is similar to what we have seen earlier.

---

Earlier in the Chapter, reference was made to a group of women involved in a community project. When asked who the leaders were in their project, the women responded that, although the group was seventy percent female and thirty percent male, the chairperson of the project was male. They went on to remark that women and young people did most of the work. The men came to the meetings only long enough to tell the women what to do, as if women were children who could not think for themselves. The men also came to the meetings when project donors visited the project. The women were asked who had chosen the chairperson for the project. They replied that the group had elected the chair. The women were further asked why they had chosen the chairperson from people who did not do any work. The women laughed and said that it would not have been proper for them to choose a chairperson from among women when men were there (Women of the Gardening Project 1997). The women possessed all the facts, but what they did not have was the knowledge that there was nothing improper in electing a leader from people who attend the group's meetings regularly, even if this was to be a woman. Unfortunately, they were unaware that they were being used, and did not fully understand the consequences of electing an inactive leader.

In July 1999, the researcher visited one of the churches in rural South-East Zimbabwe. The pastor of the church had gone to a district meeting of his denomination elsewhere and had not asked anyone to lead the service while he was away. Of the sixty-seven people in the church service, only three were older men. The rest were women and young people. Among the women, three had received Bible School training. Following a time of singing and waiting upon the Spirit, one of the three men went forward to preach. The man could hardly read his bible, because he had received only three years of formal schooling. After the worship service, the researcher asked why one of the Bible School graduates had not preached? Their response was that it would not have been proper for a woman to preach before men. As this was a church situation, one would have thought that the meaning of the term 'proper' would have had a different understanding, unfortunately it was not so. This situation did not require one to become a pastor, but simply to preach to the men and women who were there. The researcher considered this as a confirmation that cultural influence is often stronger than

---

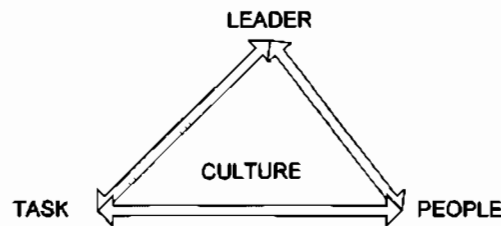
Christian influence. Further, it seemed probable, that people with limited theological training seem to overlook the fact that even those who have received Bible School education have to work through their culture in order to have a contextual understanding of the bible. What seemed to be lacking was an awareness of the influence culture had upon them. It seemed hard for the people to think beyond the cultural norm.

Although qualities such as those discussed above do not include personal factors such as the racial, social or sexual status of a person, in some circles these, together with cultural influences, were considered important when electing leaders. Although the issues were not written down, due to someone possibly challenging them, they nevertheless still operated. In most African cultures, women are not supposed to know more than men do, or to tell them what to do. There was a sense of denial felt among some men and even some women, that women might possess more wisdom than some men do. Some men did not want to entertain the idea that women might be their equals.

This denial can be illustrated by quoting some Zimbabwe women's voices. Prisca Rukweza asserts that although women participated as being equal with men in the liberation struggle for independence, it was still "difficult for them (women) to get into politics" (Rukweza 1995:67). She goes on to say that "the obstacles women have to deal with were male prejudices" (Rukweza 1995:67). As a councillor, Rukweza states that although at council level, there are people who accept women, yet within the villages, people do not find it easy to accept women's leadership. They would not accept either wisdom, or something stated of importance, simply because it emanated from a woman (Rukweza 1995:67). With respect to men's attitudes towards women in politics, Veronica Mawire said that some men could not entertain "the idea of women taking a leadership role" (Mawire 1995:68). All these attitudes come about because of the influence of culture. In Diagram 3.6, an illustration is given, borne out of the field research, of a culturally controlled leadership model. In this model, the relationship between leader, people, and task is

---

influenced by culture that is seemingly the central concern of everyone and everything.



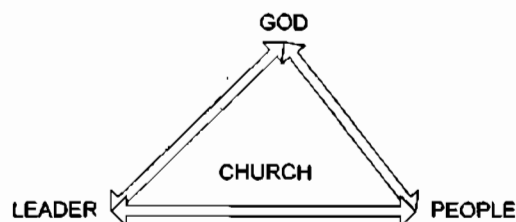
**Diagram 3.6.** Culturally Controlled Leadership. Source: Author

Within the context of church leadership, another dynamic needs consideration. Snider as well as Janvier and Thaba hold that leadership within the church is a matter of divine calling. Men and women are divinely called to serve in whatever capacity God chooses. Snider suggests that the church should confirm this particular calling (Snider 1989:26-28), the idea being that it is not enough for the individual Christian to speak of being called to church leadership. The church should also be able to make that discernment, thus affirming the call before the individual is allowed into leadership by the church. Who however, is the church? Although women make up a greater percentage of the membership of African Churches, in most cases the decision-making body of the church is made up of a few men and no women. In Scripture the church is likened to many different images. The church is variously called, “the community of the redeemed,” “a community of prayer” (Acts 5:5), “the community of faith,” the “Body of Christ” upon which different spiritual gifts are bestowed (1 Cor. 12:27-28). It is called the “Body of which Christ is the Head” (Col. 1:18). Howard Snyder speaks of the church as, “the community of God's people, the steward of God's grace.” Additionally, he describes the church as, “the servant of God” (Snyder 1997:21-95). The church is “God’s messenger on earth.” These images suggest an inclusiveness that should characterise the church of Christ. The level of awareness that church people have of these characteristics and their implications, is however questionable. If people were aware of the implications behind these images, church ministry would be shared among all Christians, according to their Spiritual gifts, regardless of gender.

---

Another problem concerns the theological understanding of women held by some within the church, who still think that women are by definition, weak and inferior. References to the book of Genesis, and the creation story and fall of humankind are used to justify disrespect towards women. Many said, “Women brought sin into the world” (Mpumlwana 1991:375). With this kind of a mindset, it is difficult to accept women into positions of leadership. The challenge would be to conscientise people to the point where they accept that there is much more to learn from the bible and theology, including the inclusion of women into church ministry.

The present researcher finds much agreement with Snider, that the church should assess the calling of God among its people. However, this can only be achieved if the African church puts aside biased interpretations of the bible, lives according to its teachings, and is not influenced by African patriarchal culture. The church would then be the correct body to discern and confirm God’s calling upon a person’s life. In so-doing, self-initiated callings would be prevented. Yet, the problem with the church is what Katherine Haubert calls, “misinterpretation” and “biased interpretations” of the bible (Haubert 1993:11). The system by which the church confirms an individual’s calling can be instrumental if it reflects the unbiased, and correctly interpreted, principles contained within the bible. This would make the church’s responsibility an important one. The church needs therefore to be made aware of the situation of women. This can be illustrated in Diagram 3.7, below.



**Diagram 3.7.** Church Controlled Leadership. Source: Author

In placing the church at the centre, a great deal of responsibility is put upon the church. Jesus gave spiritual authority to his church. In order to exercise this authority responsibly, the church should show love and care towards all its members in the



---

same way as Jesus, the Founder of the church. He loves the church and all its members. Such caring would lead to its members exercising in freedom their God given gifts.

### **3.8. Aspects and Styles of Leadership**

The style and pattern of leadership for Western or Eastern countries is not necessarily the same as that of African countries. It is not the concern of this study to describe other systems of leadership, but rather as mentioned above, to present more generalised of leadership as they relates to the overall discussion. The stated aim is rather to prepare a basis for the discussion on how the people of South-East Zimbabwe understand leadership. Evaluation can only be made when this is adequately understood. A system that might work elsewhere in the world might not necessarily work in South-East Zimbabwe. Context should determine the development of an appropriate style and practice of leadership that is affirming to all. It is important therefore, that all communities guard against those influences that might be debilitating to other people. This is discussed in the following Chapter in conjunction with the responses of the people of South-East Zimbabwe.

Janvier and Thaba state that while the leadership style of Western countries is more, “logical, analytical, technical, controlled, conservative and administrative,” African leadership should be, “less defined, more relaxed about time, more holistic, more sensitive toward people” (Janvier and Thaba 1997:1-2). Unfortunately, in some cases this sensitivity seems not to include women’s concerns, because such cultures tend to be insensitive to their needs. Often, such insensitivity is found entirely acceptable within a culture. Only when public awareness is awakened will there be a desire for transformation and change. Culture, belief systems, and worldviews influence the styles and expectations of a people’s chosen pattern of leadership. The overall cultural context creates an image of leadership for its people.

---

In their discussion of different styles and patterns of leadership, Janvier and Thaba helpfully suggest three images of leadership that correspond to African systems and style of leadership:

1. The powerful big man, the chief...one who is in authority...not afraid to give people under him a tough time.
2. The pastor, humble, *malan*, *baba*, more serving, more loving, nurturing and caring...
3. The independent businessman or trader (Janvier and Thaba 1997:24-30).

In reviewing the pronouns used in the above quotation, one can easily see that leadership in the African context is associated with maleness, even if the qualities mentioned are neither female nor male specific. Note the overt male description, “powerful big man - pastor - *malan* (meaning ‘father’) - *baba* (meaning ‘father’) - businessman...” A woman cannot lead when she is expected to be subservient towards men, especially in such traditional societies as those in Zimbabwe that follow patriarchal systems. As Tichagwa confirms, in such cultural contexts, the bible is intentionally, “misinterpreted...commanding women to be obedient and meek before their husbands” (1998:47), as a means of keeping women silent. It is important to note that the bible was written in the context of an overt patriarchal culture. The system did not involve women on the same level as men, because, for some people, leadership was seen as competition and thus competing with women was not deemed acceptable. In order to avoid such competition, women were deliberately prevented from excelling. Liz Chitiga rightfully asserts that, “men in decision-making positions are hesitant to give women a chance...” (Chitiga 1995:113). In this context, the words of David Scholer are important, where in his inaugural lecture on Galatians 3:28, he refers to a message preached by Luther Lee at the ordination of Antoinette Brown, the first American woman to be ordained by a recognised church denomination. The title of the sermon was significant: “Woman’s Right to Preach the Gospel.” (Scholer 1997:4). Women have rights, including the right to lead if so called and divinely gifted.

---

### **3.9. Conclusion**

Chapter 3 focused on a literature review about the meaning and content of leadership. The Chapter reflected on those qualities that are expected of a leader. A number of leadership styles were also examined, explained and illustrated. In some, statements such as, “he” “father” and “man” were used uncritically in referring to a leader, and this was understood by the researcher as an implication of the preferred gender of the leader. In examining the qualities expected of a leader, nothing was found that justified the limited number of females found in leadership roles, both in the Christian church and the public sector. As stated at the beginning of this Chapter, Chapters 2 and 3 focused on essential background information. The discussion in the next three Chapters will examine the interview responses from the study sample and determine their levels of awareness.

---

## CHAPTER 4

### WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF WOMANHOOD

#### 4. Introduction

As stated in previous chapters, the concern of this study is with the marginalisation of the women of South-East Zimbabwe in both church and the public sector. This has been demonstrated in various ways including the invisibility of women in leadership roles in a society where women make up the majority. Producing awareness of this problem is a key aspect to this study, as it will lead to the liberation of women within their communities.

Chapters 2 and 3 provided background information regarding the history and situations of the people of South-East Zimbabwe. In summary, the information provided consisted of:

1. The geographical, historical, and cultural circumstances;
2. The influence of Christianisation and Western civilisation to the women of South-East Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe in general;
3. Literature review regarding leadership and its requirements.

These three aspects were in preparation for the discussion in the following Chapters. It can be established from the self-composed songs that women were to

---

some degree aware of the situations that were working against them. Investigations are needed however in order to establish what was taking place in present-day South-East Zimbabwe. In this Chapter 4 and the following three, the levels of awareness will be investigated, through interviews, data collection and analysis.

In order to identify these levels of awareness, interviews were conducted among the people of South-East Zimbabwe. These included both female and male, leaders and non-leaders, Christians and non-Christians. The responses given to the interview questions reveal the levels of awareness that the women and men possess with regard to the marginalisation of women.

Following the discussions of the previous Chapters, questions guiding this research have been organised into three sections:

- Section #1 Questions on the general cultural expectations of women in present-day South-East Zimbabwe;
- Section #2 Questions relating to the influence of Christianisation and Western civilisation upon the women of the study area;
- Section #3 Questions related to the expectations of leadership.

Note should be made here as to the classification of groups of people who contributed to the research by agreeing to be interviewed, as well as the kind of information that was obtained from them. They were categorised into three groups as follows:

- 
- Category #1 Person-to-person interviews were conducted.<sup>1</sup> These consisted of key informants. Information obtained comprised of cultural, historical, church involvement, practices and beliefs; education systems and content as it related to women; attitudes regarding schoolgirls circa 1950 and information on leadership and women in the education system.<sup>2</sup> The total number of informants was 14 males and females. The material collected from the informants served as both foundational background information and points of reference for the present study;
  - Category #2 Discussion Groups. Discussions were held with different groups of people at different times. There were ten such discussion groups, eight of which consisted of women and two of men.<sup>3</sup> The Main material collected from these discussions included, being a woman and employed; women's involvement in church and other organisations; being both a woman and a leader over men and women; men and women's involvement in community projects; how men view women as leaders in the church and the public sector. Although many women attended these groups, only 63 participated by responding to the questions and giving information under this category.<sup>4</sup> From a total cohort of 83, 63 were women and 20 were men;
  - Category #3 Individual Interviews. Both written and oral interviews were conducted.<sup>5</sup> From a study cohort of 130 women, 67 took part;<sup>6</sup>
  - Totals. The study cohort for the entire three categories numbers 164.

---

<sup>1</sup> Within the bibliography, these interviews are listed under 'A' Primary Sources.

<sup>2</sup> These fall under Category #3 under 1.1 Study Design.

<sup>3</sup> Within the bibliography, these interviews are listed under 'B' Discussions.

<sup>4</sup> These fall under Category #3 under 1.1 Study Design.

<sup>5</sup> The questions are presented in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

<sup>6</sup> These fall under Category #2 under 1.1 Study Design.

---

#### **4.1. Interviews Concerning Cultural Expectations of Women in Present-day South-East Zimbabwe**

The following pattern was followed throughout with regard to data collection and subsequent analysis:

1. All questions are produced in full in Appendices 1, 2, and 3;
2. All questions were open-ended. Respondents were allowed to give as many or as few answers as they chose;
3. Although respondents were given the same questions, some chose to answer some questions and not others;
4. Questions were given in clusters. The intention behind each cluster of questions has been given;
5. Numbers of people addressed with each question were given at the beginning of each set of cluster questions; sometimes these were given at the beginning of each single question where the numbers change before the end of the cluster question;
6. Due to questions being open ended it was not always possible to record every statement given; as a result responses were categorised according to the way they related to each other and recorded in percentages;
7. In most cases, questions concerning self-identification were given at the beginning of each section in order to ease the interviewees into questions of a personal nature; most of these self-identification questions were not categorised since their purpose was a temporary one;

- 
8. At the end of each major section, respondents were asked to answer questions in an extended way. This form of questioning enabled respondents to offer suggestions on what they would like to see done in order to improve their circumstances. These questions were not categorised, as they were not meant for measurement, but to encourage women to speak about their situations and help raise awareness;
  9. Although factual questions about cultural practices within both the church and community were asked, respondents were asked to explain why things were the way they were. This type of questioning was intended to awaken responses and comments amongst the respondents, which in most cases they would not have thought about before. These responses also guided the researcher in the discovery of other levels of awareness that the respondents had of their experiences of God and self, as well as about cultural and church practices and beliefs;
  10. Most of the awareness measurement questions were summarised by utilising the methodology of a pie diagram comment, while other questions were summarised by comment only;
  11. Identification of levels of awareness were indicated as follows:
    - a. Positive Level Awareness = Where the women or community concerned demonstrated awareness;
    - b. Positive Level Awareness = Where the women or community concerned demonstrated high levels of awareness;
    - c. Negative Level Awareness = Where women or community concerned demonstrated no awareness;



- 
- d. Indefinite Level Awareness = Where the researcher was unable to determine levels of awareness.

12. The following sub-groups were used in categorising the various responses:

- a. Where responses seemed to be influenced by culture, a letter 'C' was added;
- b. Where theological beliefs seemed to be the influencing factor, the letter 'T' was added;
- c. Where the influencing factor was not clear, the letter 'O' was added.

#### **4.2. Analysis of Women's Responses as to the General Cultural Expectations of Women**

Questions under this section were concerned with women, culture and community.<sup>7</sup>

Three objectives were covered:

1. Women were to introduce themselves and feel relaxed; this was to be achieved by asking the women some simple questions on their tribal group and other cultural questions related to their particular ethnic group;
2. Women were asked about the expectations within their culture of the day-to-day life of women;
3. Questions were posed as to women's roles and duties within the home.

---

<sup>7</sup> All questions under this section can be found in full in Appendix 1.

---

The purpose in posing such questions was to gather information about the culture of the people of South-East Zimbabwe, beginning with simple, practical and every day cultural practices.

The three main aims of these questions were to:

1. Understand how women identified themselves;
2. Understand how women comprehended their own cultural identities;
3. Raise the level of women's awareness to their situation.

The field research took place in the period 1997-1999, and again in 2001. The initial research cohort was 150 women. Interviews were spread over differing times, and at different locations. Interviews took various forms in order to accommodate the interviewees. Individual interviews were sometimes conducted orally, while others were in writing. During the group discussion, although it was an open discussion, not everyone felt like giving his or her opinion on every question. For the purposes of data analysis, each response was recorded individually.

#### **4.2.1. Self-Identification of the Interviewees in terms of Tribal Grouping/Division of Labour**

Responding to the first question concerning whether culture determined the division of labour, all the respondents answered culture did determine the division of labour and that for various reasons this was good cultural practice. Reasons for the division of labour given by the respondents are categorised below, according to the way they relate to one another.

The responses, listed as percentages, were as follows:

- 32% of Respondents: Division of labour and responsibilities spread across the various members of the family;
- 36% of Respondents: Division of labour encourages specialisation amongst members of the family;
- 29% of Respondents: Division of labour helps to get work done quickly;
- 3% of Respondents: Division of labour is good because it is a cultural practice.

| <b>Task</b>       | <b>Women</b> | <b>Girls</b> | <b>Men</b> | <b>Boys</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Cooking           | *            | *            |            |             |
| Building houses   |              |              | *          |             |
| Carrying water    | *            | *            |            | *           |
| Fetching firewood | *            | *            |            | *           |
| <b>Task</b>       | <b>Women</b> | <b>Girls</b> | <b>Men</b> | <b>Boys</b> |
| Laundry           | *            | *            |            |             |
| Farming           | *            | *            | *          | *           |
| Care of children  | *            | *            |            | *           |
| Care of the sick  | *            | *            |            |             |

**Table 4.1.** Example of the division of labour in a family in South-East Zimbabwe

---

While this is not a complete list of duties and responsibilities of the members of a family, but serves merely as an example, it does reveal that the women were more willing to engage in discussing such matters than were the men.

The most popular responses given concerned the following:

1. Whether the division of labour encourages specialisation among family members. The results need to be analysed to verify whether this is what is taking place. The respondents seemed to be unaware as to whether it was taking place. Accordingly, the popular response seemed to suggest that it did not encourage specialisation among all members of the family, but possibly only among women.
2. Whether the division of labour spread responsibility to other members of the family. This response also needs to be looked at closely. Respondents claimed that it did not spread responsibilities among all members of the family, but rather loaded further responsibility upon women members of the family. This kind of response would be an indication of the lack of awareness as to what is taking place amongst women.
3. Whether the division of labour helps to get the work done quickly. Often this meant that the work was done quickly by women.
4. Whether the division of labour was a good practice because it was culturally accepted. Although the least popular response, this was the most helpful in terms of the research, as it could be the means to demonstrate some level of awareness. It would be difficult however to determine what the criteria should be.

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + O  | 32% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + O  | 36% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + O  | 29% |
| POSSITIVE AWARENESS + C | 9%  |

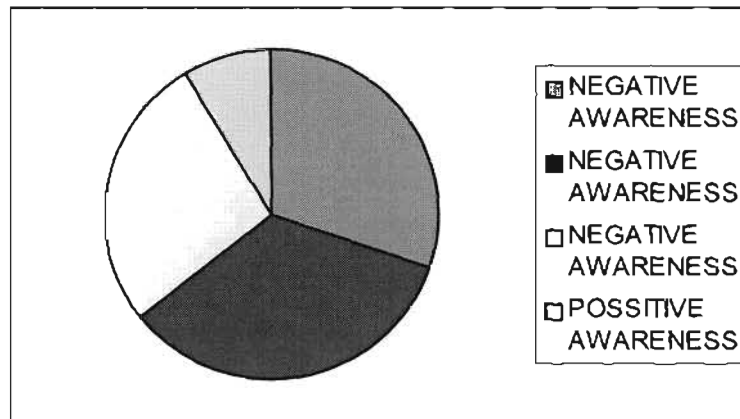


Figure 4.1. Percentage Responses to Division of Labour

The purpose of this exercise was to validate the assumption that the people under study are not aware of the suppression of women. The results contained in Figure 4.1. indicate that this assumption is correct. The division of labour does not spread responsibilities as was reported in the questions above. Rather, the division of labour increases the responsibilities of women and girl children. It does not encourage specialisation for the other members of the family, but rather confines women to certain duties and may even force men to undertake duties they might find uncomfortable. It encourages routine with no possibility of further development for women. It does not allow women who may be gifted in other areas to exercise their latent gifts. Rather, this division of labour theory dictates to the people who they should be from the time they are born, solely because of their biological make-up. The division of labour is not an exclusive practice to South-Eastern Zimbabwe, but is a common phenomenon in other African communities. Although the division of

---

labour spreads responsibilities, it does not spread them evenly. This is evident in the research enumerated in Figure 4.1.

Writing about the situation of rural traditional women in the Congo, Bernadette Mbuy states that once children turn seven, boy children are separated from girl children:

Girls are prepared by mothers to fulfil motherhood roles by associating their daughters...in domestic chores...girl is...found in the kitchen. She is given the responsibilities of taking care of her younger brother or sister while her brothers are left free to go out and join their friends at play...The girl learns that she must live for others, that the kitchen, the house, the children are her expected domain (Mbuy 1998:16-17).

This situation is not exclusive to the Congo, but is a common phenomenon in other African communities, such as those found in South-East Zimbabwe. In the light of the responses indicated in Figure 4.1. more research would need to be undertaken in order to raise women's awareness to what is taking place.

#### **4.2.2. Sex Education and Virginit**

Unlike the previous questions, which were merely preparatory and simple in nature, this question is more involved, and concerns the culture of the people. It relates to the many cultural lessons considered by the Hlengwe people, namely, *Nayo walendlwini* (*lit*: 'customs belonging inside the house or taught from inside the house'). This is an important section of cultural practice for it has to do with the training of women.

These questions were asked in order to establish more information about the culture from the people themselves. Secondly, it was to ascertain what the women thought about this particular cultural practice. Lastly, the questions were intended to provide an opportunity for the women respondents to dialogue with their own cultural expectations of women, thereby being given the opportunity to say what they

---

thought about such cultural practices. By so doing, it was hoped that the women respondents might become more conscious of their situation and subsequently realise the dilemma that women often face in their community.

Of the 130 women questioned, only 115 responded to the question regarding sex education. Some women remained silent because South-East Zimbabweans do not find it easy to speak openly about sexual issues, especially within a group setting where people of different ages are present and when the interviewee is younger than many of those being interviewed. This is not limited to South-East Zimbabwe only. Bernadette Beya writes about the same situation among people in other parts of Africa (*Cf. Beya 1998:17*).

The factual question on culture and sex education lead to a qualitative question that sought to find out from the women what they understood about their cultural practice. Responses for the first part of the question on whether sex education was taught were varied:

- Sex education is taught;
- Sex education is taught but is mostly for girl children rather than boy children;
- Sex education is taught but in private;
- Some families teach sex education but others do not;
- Sex education was taught a long time ago, but not these days.

The second part of the question was a follow-up to the previous one. The question sought to ascertain from the women whether they thought sex education was a

---

good thing or not, it also intended to allow women to give reasons for their answers. Considering this was a cultural practice that most women were familiar with, it was hoped that the question would provide women with the opportunity to take a closer look at their culture and thereby raise their own questions. Further, the women's answers could reveal their level of awareness.

In responding to the question, all respondents said that sex education was a good cultural practice. The reasons given were as follows:

- 41% of Respondents: If young people were given sex education it would reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS;
- 53% of Respondents: When girl children are taught sex education, once married, they become more pleasing to their husbands. This in turn would earn them more respect for their parents;
- 6% of Respondents: Sex education is a good cultural practice if it is taught openly and taught to all boy and girl children. This would limit the number of people infected by HIV/AIDS in society.



|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C  | 53% |
| NO CLEAR INDICATION + O | 41% |
| POSITIVE AWARENESS + C  | 6%  |

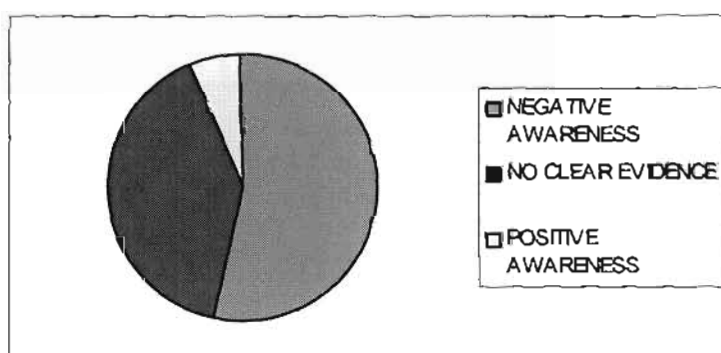


Figure 4.2. Percentage Responses on Reasons for Sex Education

With regard to the question of sex education, one popular response received concluded that, because girl children are taught sex education, once married, they would become more pleasing to their husbands. As a result, they would earn more respect for their parents. This response reveals the lack of awareness that some women have for their own value as people.

Another popular response concluded that if young people were given sex education it would reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. Although based on correct facts, the suppression of women and level of awareness is not clear.

Finally, the least popular response concluded that sex education was a good cultural practice if it were openly taught to both boy and girl children alike. This response demonstrates a level of appreciation for the culture when it is applied indiscriminately. It suggests the existence of a level of awareness of the importance of humankind, both male and female within the cultural practice concerned.

---

The question whether virginity was considered culturally important was also a factual question on the culture of the people. This was to prepare for the question as to whether women thought this was a good practice, and if so, why? The responses were varied, including:

- Culturally there used to be an emphasis on virginity until marriage for both boys and girls, but the emphasis is not as strong these days;
- There is emphasis on virginity until marriage, but that it is for girls only;
- Parents no longer teach their children to keep their virginity until marriage;
- Some families still emphasise virginity for girls, but others have long forgotten about it.

In general, all respondents said that keeping one's virginity until marriage represented a good cultural practice. The reasons given by respondents were as follows:

- 26% of Respondents: The practice would keep young people clean and pure
- 31% of Respondents: The practice would help young people keep away from HIV/AIDS;
- 43% of Respondents: The practice would enable a young woman to keep her virginity until marriage, and thereby give her parents a good reason to be proud of their daughter.

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 43% |
| POSITIVE AWARENESS + O | 31% |
| POSITIVE AWARENESS + O | 26% |

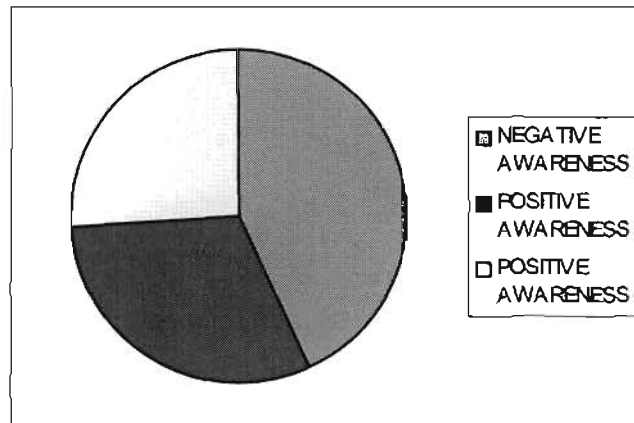


Figure 4.3. Percentage Responses on Why Keeping One's Virginity until Marriage is Good Practice

In general, women said that sex education and the emphasis on virginity until marriage is a good cultural practice. Looking at the most popular response that a for a young woman to keep her virginity until marriage would give a good reason for her parents to be proud of their daughter, seemed to play down the value of humanity for the young woman and favour of that of her parents. The responsibility for sexual purity and control of the spread of HIV/AIDS seemed to fall upon the girl children rather than placing it upon both boys and girl children. From the women's responses, the culture does not seem to have any thought for the girl child or young woman herself. The second popular response, namely that the practice would help keep young people away from HIV/AIDS, and the least popular response, namely, that it was good cultural practice to teach both boy and girl children, thereby keeping them clean and pure, seemed to be in the interest of the young people. This would demonstrate some level of awareness.

---

### 4.2.3. Foods for Different People

The question whether there were any foods that are limited to women or men alone was intended to make the respondents comfortable and relaxed. Women from different backgrounds and generations were laughing together as they considered this question orally. At the same time, the questions were designed to help women view their own culture try to find answers as to why different foods were considered good for one and not another. When this took place, it was an indication that some level of awareness was being realised amongst the women.

Finally, women were asked to make an evaluation of the cultural practice involved in customary food laws, and to give their reasons for their answers. These were as follows:

- 47% of Respondents: The practice was good, not only in earlier times, because then people were able to find other meat; they did not have to eat Hare meat all the time because Hare's are very small animals;
- 20% of Respondents: That it was a bad cultural practice;
- 24% of Respondents: That it is good cultural practice, because it is culture which helps people to know who they are;
- 9% of Respondents: That old people were greedy in that they did not want to share their food with the children.

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| NO CLEAR INDICATION + C | 47% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C  | 24% |
| NO CLEAR INDICATION + O | 20% |
| NO CLEAR INDICATION + O | 9%  |

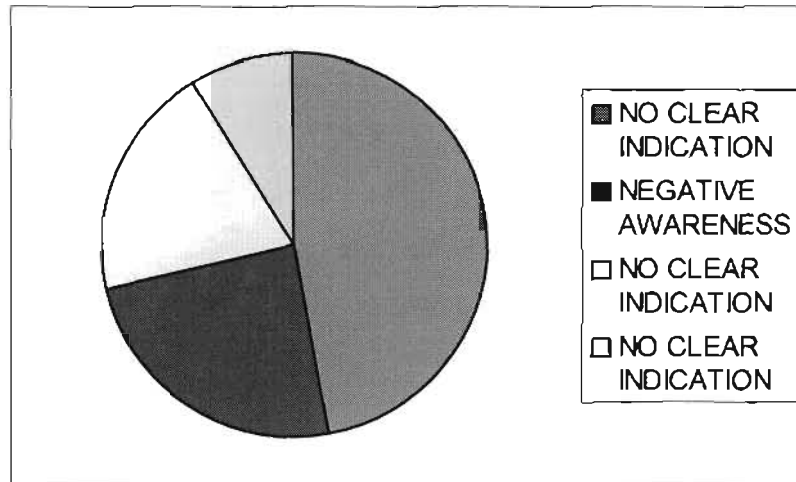


Figure 4.4. Percentage Responses on Evaluation on the Cultural Practice involved in Customary Food Laws

From the responses of the women, two ideas were particularly noted. Firstly, as long as there is other meat available, it is acceptable not to eat meat from small animals. Secondly, as meat is not as accessible today as it used to be, it might be a good thing to allow a person to eat whatever kind of meat he or she would prefer. Whilst some of the respondents expressed a sense of anger, most expressed the idea of giving, sacrifice, acceptance and concern. Sacrifice is one of the characteristics of women, yet as Oduyoye confirms, sacrifice has not only to do with matters of food:

We have learned to vote against the self, always preferring others, loving them more than we love ourselves, doing for them what we decline to do for ourselves, because we consider ourselves unworthy of such attention (Oduyoye 1995:195-197).

---

The practice of women not being allowed to eat chicken is found not only in South-East Zimbabwe but in other parts of Africa as well. Esther Mombo, speaking about the customs among the Luyia society during the pre-Christian period in Kenya, said that women did not eat chicken (2002:63). For a Luyia woman, eating chicken would be taboo. As seen in other parts of Africa, taboos were associated with bearing children. They believed that, if an adult woman consumed chicken, she would neither get married, or have children (Mombo 2002:63). People would thus not like to sacrifice being married and having children simply because of eating chicken. While the women's responses above did not go into detail as to explaining why girl children should not eat chicken, it can be deduced that, since girl children were being prepared for marriage and motherhood, the above reasons would apply. From the experience of the present researcher in South-East Zimbabwe, the prohibition on eating chicken would last until a woman was married and had her first child.

In reviewing the responses, one can see that there is a level of awareness in some women, although not the majority. Looking at the latter responses one can detect some measure of tension. Such tension can be positive, and lead to the search for answers. It is an evidence of some awareness.

71% of the responses appear to be sensitive to culture. Some level of awareness of the suppression of women was present. The most popular response that the practice was good in past times, because people were able to find other meats, hence they did not have to eat Hare meat all the time because Hare's are small creatures, seemed to reveal some awareness in that it acknowledged a need of meat for all people. A tendency to be lenient towards culture seemed however to overshadow such awareness. The second popular response that, it is good, because culture helps people to know who they are, seemed to put more value on culture than the needs of the people. Here there is no evidence of any level of awareness. The third and least popular response seemed to reveal frustrated awareness of the suppression of women.

---

#### 4.2.4. Lobolo

These questions concerned whether within the culture of the people under study the custom of *lobolo* was practiced.<sup>8</sup>

The African cultural practice of *lobolo* is considered important, and is inextricably linked to marriage, growth of family and communities. The practice is related to the *Nayo walendlwin* ('customs or lessons from the house'), which were mentioned earlier in this Chapter. The lessons that are learned in the house are to prepare a young woman for married life. This starts with the husband paying *lobolo* for her. The intention of asking this question was to try to find out more about this important custom. Firstly, it was an attempt to find out how much the women under study understand about the cultural practice of *lobolo*. Secondly, it was posed to ascertain what the women's position and feelings were with respect to *lobolo*, as they were the ones for whom *lobolo* was paid. The responses that the women would give would reveal some level of awareness into their awareness of their situation and culture.<sup>9</sup>

Of the 130 respondents who answered the question on the cultural practice of *lobolo*, all 130 women agreed that *lobolo* was a good cultural practice. Women were asked to explain their answers to the question. As the reasons were varied and different, the responses were categorised according to their relationship to each other and were expressed in percentages:

- 32% of Respondents: *Lobolo* is a good cultural practice because it is a way through which the son-in-law can say "thank you" to the parents of his wife;

---

<sup>8</sup> *Lobolo* is sometimes called the 'bride price.'

<sup>9</sup> Attention is drawn to the fact that *lobolo* is a subject of interest for many people, but what needs to be stated is that this study is not on the topic of *lobolo*.

- 42% of Respondents: *Lobolo* is a good cultural practice, because it gives a sense of worth to the bride;
- 8% of Respondents: *Lobolo* is a good cultural practice because it prevents women from changing their men;
- 18% of Respondents: *Lobolo* is a good practice because it instils dignity towards the husband and his family.

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 42% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 32% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 18% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 8%  |

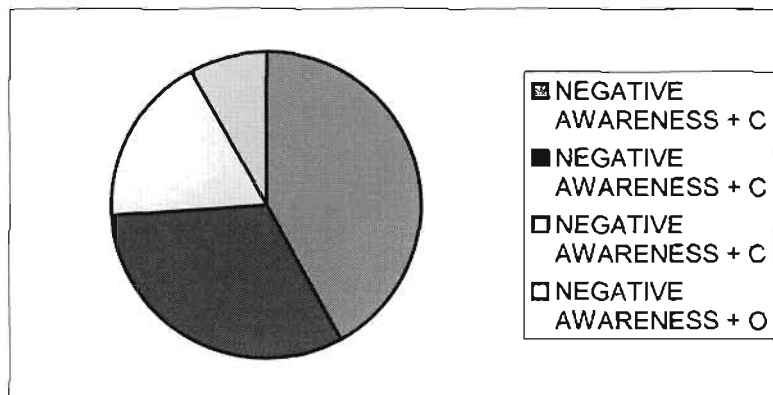


Figure 4.5. Percentage of Responses on Why *Lobolo* is considered a Good Practice

The responses that *lobolo* is a good cultural practice because it gives a sense of worth to the bride, and that it prevents women from changing their men, are worrisome, especially because they come from women. The responses seem to suggest that women do not possess a sense of worth as people; instead, *lobolo* brings



---

worth to women. Marriage should be out of love. If *lobolo* and not love, is the controlling factor then there is a problem. This kind of thinking seems to indicate a suppressed and controlled mind. There does not seem to be an awareness of what such culture is doing to the women of South-East Zimbabwe.

Another popular response considered *lobolo* a good cultural practice because it was a means by which a son-in-law could say 'thank you' to the parents of his wife. While this response was not as questionable as the previous, it still causes concern as to why the 'thank you' should be asked for. If it was an expression of gratitude, why should the parents of the young woman demand it?

The idea that *lobolo* instils dignity towards the husband and his family seems to deviate from the respect found in general African society for human life as a whole. A positive way of looking at *lobolo* within African thinking is to see it as a good deed done by one member of the family that brings honour to the family. Conversely, a wrong deed done by one member of the family might bring dishonour to the rest of the family. One cannot be entirely sure if this is what the women had in mind, or if it was simply a means of living for the happiness of others.

While it may appear as if all the respondents were positive about the cultural practice of *lobolo*, there are a number of questions left unanswered:

- Why should it be the young woman's parents that have to be thanked and not the young woman herself?
- Why should the young woman's worth be discovered or expressed by the giving of property?
- Has the young woman no sense of self worth?
- Why should the young woman relationship be controlled by *lobolo* rather than by love?

- 
- What is the significance of the 'instilling of dignity' to the husband and his family?
  - In the giving of *lobolo* is there a hidden suggestion that the husband has enough money to buy his wife?

In all, one wonders if the responses come from the women themselves or if they the result of patriarchal culture of which they are part. The cultural practice of *lobolo* is not only found among the people of South-East Zimbabwe, but among other African people as well.

Florah, a young woman from the Northern Province of South Africa overheard a conversation between her father and the relatives of her boyfriend Collin, who had come to pay *lobolo* for her. The conversation was as follows:

"We have come to pay a down payment of R100 on your daughter Florah." Florah's father said "...she is worth more...you are getting her at a bargain price. She is the oldest and prettiest...she has been to school and she is a hard worker...she has been well raised and will be a boon to any man" (Mathabane 1994:3-17)

While not every parent thinks and speaks like this about his or her child, there are many parents who want *lobolo* for their daughters, but who would not explain clearly why *lobolo* is necessary in marriage.

In the context of Zimbabwe, research conducted by Herbert Aschwanden among the Karanga people of South-East Masvingo is important to note here. Aschwanden uncovered a Karanga proverb that describes *lobolo* as a way of 'buying the uterus,' and thereby carrying life. He writes:

A girl belongs to her own family...every important decision affecting her is made by her own people...a man (husband) holds a girl's legs, but her family has the head (Aschwanden 1982:158-161).

---

Women are classified as chattels or property, whereby they are owned by another. Someone else makes decisions on their behalf. The responses of women under study affirm that women live their lives only to please others. The concern of this study was to try to determine the levels of women's awareness to situations such as these and to raise awareness where there was none. Emancipation of women begins by women becoming aware of their situation and being willing to work towards liberating themselves.

When God arranged the first marriage between Adam and Eve, we do not hear of any cattle, money or other kinds of possessions given in exchange by Adam for his wife. The idea of exchange or even gift in exchange only came into being much later. Musimbi Kanyoro is correct when she states:

There are some African cultural practices that are not helpful at all. Unfortunately, women are taking part in sustaining these practices (Kanyoro 2001:160).

Some women are made to believe that their value is determined by whether or not *lobolo* is paid for them. Their God-given dignity and humanity has been taken from them. They therefore believe that *lobolo* can add value to them. Kanyoro is correct when she asserts that *lobolo* as a cultural practice is not helpful to women, as it reduces women to become "mere instruments...of culture" (Musimbi 2001:62). Similarly, Olatundun Orebiyi, in her discussion about the worth of a woman as a person, speaks of how women are necessary in order to complement men as they live their lives to the full (2001:79). One wonders if that is what is taking place here.

The second part of the question concerning *lobolo* was split into three parts:

1. Whether the young woman or her mother could decide whether they wanted *lobolo* paid over;
2. Whether *lobolo* was a good cultural practice or not;

---

3. Why *lobolo* was a good or bad cultural practice.

In response to these, further questions were raised with respect to cultural acceptability:

- a) Whether it was correct for a woman to decide whether she wants *lobolo* paid for her;
- b) Whether it was culturally acceptable for a mother to decide about the marriage and the *lobolo* of her daughters;
- c) What women thought about the cultural practice of *lobolo*.

The majority of the respondents confirmed the assumption that the women of the study area have no awareness of their suppression. In addition:

- 97% of Respondents reported:
  - Culturally, it was incorrect for a young woman who was getting married to make the decision whether she wanted *lobolo* paid over for her;
  - The practice of *lobolo* was a cultural expectation;
  - Only the fathers could decide how much they wanted for their daughters *lobolo*;

- Children belong to the father and his family, therefore the mother cannot decide about her children getting married or their *lobolo*;
  - The mother and daughter belong to the father; consequently, they cannot make decisions for themselves. This would be culturally unacceptable.
- 3% of Respondents reported:
    - Mothers can be included in the discussion concerning their daughters marriage and the payment of *lobolo*.

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C         | 97% |
| NO INDICATION OF AWARENESS + O | 3%  |

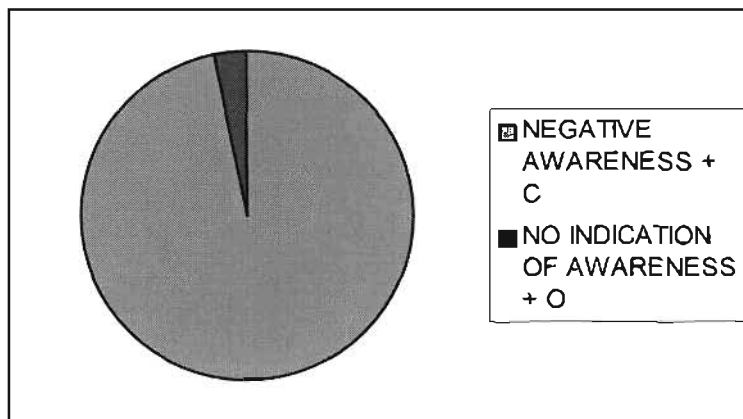


Figure 4.6. Percentage Responses on the Practice of *Lobolo* and Women’s Exclusion from the Decision on this matter

The research response that children are solely the property of the father and therefore excludes the mother, and that both mother and children belong to the father, raises some serious concerns. It is obvious here that culture has taught them this male prerogative and hence they seem not to question it as a cultural practice. It is hard to

---

know whether they are just giving what the culture has taught them, or is this how they feel. If the women are saying this as a matter of conviction, then one may question their level of awareness. This would make it difficult for the women to dialogue with their culture and thereby find answers to why things are the way they are.

#### **4.2.5. Married Women and their Place of Residence**

This question had three parts:

1. Women were asked what the cultural place of residence was for married woman and the expectations placed upon her;
2. What did the women think about this practice;
3. The women were asked to give specific reasons for their answers.

The question was intended to raise a number of issues:

- To make the interviewees relaxed by asking a simple cultural question;
- To provide more information about the cultural expectations placed upon women;
- To establish what the women thought about that particular cultural practice.

In total 130 women were given the opportunity to respond to this question. Through the responses obtained to the final part of this question one could establish the level of awareness that women had of this aspect of their culture.

---

Responses by the women to the questions of place of residence for married woman were such as follows:

- Culturally, a married woman must live with her husband and his family and do most of the household chores;
- The married woman must live with the husband's family if the husband goes away to work and must do most of the housework;
- The married woman must live with her husband and their children if they have any, and would be responsible to do all the housework.

Most of these responses are reflective of rural life in South-East Zimbabwe, except for a few respondents who stated that a married woman should live with her husband and children. These respondents most likely represent the younger generation and working class.

With respect to the reasons offered as to why married woman should do most of the work in a home, the respondents answered as follows:

- 64% of Respondents: The married woman is married to the family, *lobolo* has been paid for her, and thus she should work for them;
- 23% of Respondents: It is a way through which a married woman can say 'thank you' to the husband's family for the gift of her husband;
- 13% of Respondents: The married woman has to do most of the housework because that is the custom and cultural norm. It is a form of the married woman giving respect to her husband's family.

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Negative Awareness + C | 64% |
| Negative Awareness + C | 23% |
| Negative Awareness + C | 13% |

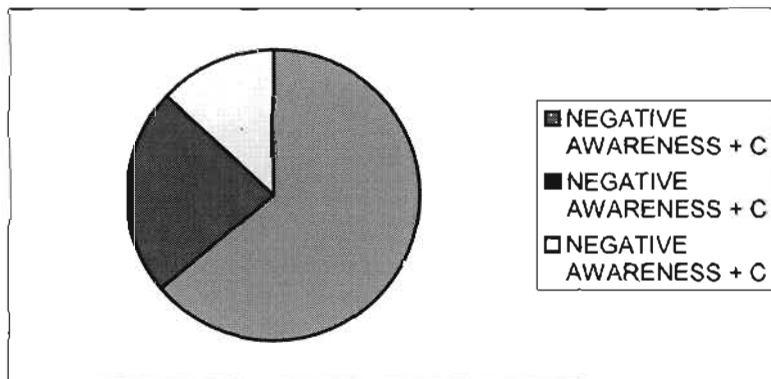


Figure 4.7. Percentage Responses on Reasons Why Married Women should do most of the Work in the Home

The cultural issue of *lobolo* is raised again in this question. The majority of responses were from married women who understood that women should work for their husband's family because *lobolo* had been paid for them. This raises the question covered in the previous discussion. What is the cultural purpose of *lobolo*? Is it to pay for the bride and her labour or is it for other purposes? The second response brought out the idea of gratitude to the parents similar to what has been expressed for *lobolo* in the previous question. The final response was most likely to represent the younger generation of husbands and wives who may live at their place of work.

While the women of South-East Zimbabwe do not seem to say *lobolo* was a means of buying and selling a woman in marriage, the responses given seem to suggest this. Florah, a young woman from the Northern Province of South Africa speaks about the kind of treatment she got from her husband Collin's family, which seems to have been justified by the practice of *lobolo*:



---

I was still the family drudge. Despite nursing an infant and working, I was still expected to clean the whole house alone, do laundry, and cook for everybody. When I complained to Collin, he told me that his parents had a right to expect the woman he had paid *lobolo* for to do all the work around the house because that was her duty. Most African women are such slaves, and they mourn in silence (Mathabane 1994:17)

Florah is not alone in the idea that women are treated as slaves. In her discussion of the worth of women, Orebiyi states that women were, “not created to be servants” (2001:79) which suggests that this took place in Africa.

If the payment of *lobolo* is one of the reasons why married woman do most of the work in the home, it is clear that some women consider *lobolo* as payment for their labour and services. One would hope that the women were conscientised enough that they would understand what implications *lobolo* has upon them

#### **4.2.6. Married Women and Their Rights to Their Own Bodies**

The question on married women and rights to their bodies was in two parts:

1. Would it be culturally permissible for a married woman to refuse sexual relations with her husband when there were significant life risks involved, and why?
2. Could a married woman opt not to have any more babies if it were life threatening, and why?

From previous responses, it has been implied that some husbands felt they owned their wives. This question seeks to examine the limits of such ownership. The previous questions related to culture and women as people, but this question seeks to establish how far culture can go in controlling a human being. The purpose of this question is therefore to find out what rights, if any, do married women have.

---

In their attempt to find answers to this question, it was hoped that the respondents would begin to examine the different cultural practices. This would enable an awakening that may reveal new levels of awareness. In total, 130 women responded to this question.

The responses of women to both parts of the question are stated below. The responses find agreement. The reasons for their answers however did not necessarily agree, so they are categorised according to the way they related to each other and then recorded in percentages.

In responding to the first two parts of the question, the women gave answers such as:

- It would not be culturally acceptable for a woman to refuse to have sex with her husband, even if she found out that he was HIV+;
- It was the prerogative of the husband alone to decide whether his wife should have more children. The woman can ask the husband for his permission not to have more babies, but the decision was for the husband to make.

Reasons given for the above responses were as follows:

- 49% of Respondents: The woman is subject to the authority of her husband;
- 13% of Respondents: A married woman cannot refuse sexual advances from her husband. This would be taken as cause for divorce;
- 38% of Respondents: It does not matter how sick the woman may become, she still cannot decide not to have further children. The husband has to make the decision.

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 49% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 38% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 13% |

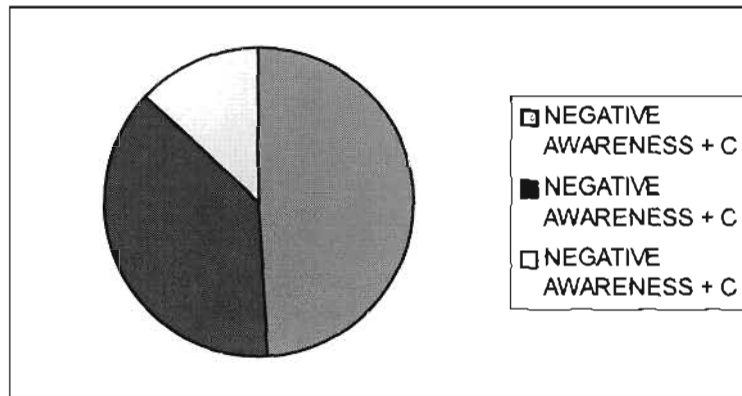


Figure 4.8. Percentage Responses on Determining the Limits of Wives being owned by their Husbands

The idea of women being under the authority of their husbands seemed to be the most common, and generally was not considered a bad thing. The only concern was around the last question, related to matters of health and childbearing. The responses suggest that a woman does not possess control over her own body. From a gendered perspective, this could be regarded as an unfortunate cultural practice.

These responses of the South-East Zimbabwean women are familiar to other African people. On the question of women’s rights, Mercy Itohan Omoigui can state:

She must submit to the men in all things...she is not expected to say “Not tonight, darling.” No! She must liven up and let him enjoy a good game...culture says the woman is a sex-partner, a cook, a home-keeper, a laundry person (2001:113).

While submission is a virtue to be desired, one could regard this kind of submission as a way of self-sacrifice. Farhi Cibalonza, writing about the cultural

---

expectations of women, states that a woman has to deny herself and her own needs in order to please others:

From the first day of her married life the girl will be expected to satisfy the expectations of society in all aspects. One of the ways she could do this was by satisfying the expectation of her husband (Cibalonza1998:39-40).

The women's responses reveal the unfairness of this cultural practice. The women may not be aware of the implications, but they know that this cultural practice does not consider them in the same way as it does men. This affirms the presupposition that some cultural practices are suppressive to women. It was not however established what the women felt about such practices.

The responses to the above questions reveal that cultural demands are adhered to more than the physical and psychological needs of women. Society at large benefits from a woman's labour, however when a choice had to be made, a woman's life is compromised in favour of certain cultural practices. While culture itself is not the enemy, it is nevertheless used as an instrument to oppress women within society. Culture and cultural practices are often used to dehumanise women. Although the responses given report on what culture says, there was no indication that the respondents did not agree with their culture. This suggests a lack of awareness.

#### **4.2.7. Widows: Ownership and Responsibility of Property and Children**

This question was intended to establish the cultural situation of a widow. The question was in two parts. Finally, the women were asked what they thought about the cultural practice. The question sought to provide an opportunity for the women respondents to look for answers from within. It was hoped that this would reveal some level of awareness. Of the 130 women questioned, 129 women responded.

---

All 129 women indicated that the father was the cultural and legal owner of his children. In the event of the death of the father, his brothers would take legal ownership of his children.

The responses were as follows:

- A widow might remarry and leave the family of the first husband; if she did this she could try to take children and property with her, but this would not be culturally allowed, therefore, she could not become the legal owner;
- Culturally, the children, wife and property in the home belong to the father, and following his death to his family;
- The brothers of a woman's husband are her cultural husbands; they would be responsible for all those whom their brother was responsible.

The transfer of family responsibility to a deceased man's brothers was popular. According to this cultural practice, a deceased man's wife, children and property became the property of his brothers. One can therefore make the conclusion that wife and children are considered the same as property.

The responses were as follows:

- 58% of Respondents: The practice is not fair, because children belong to both husband and wife. Both husband and wife may have worked together to acquire the property;

- 15% of Respondents: Ownership and responsibility should be left with the wife, because she is capable. She is the partner of the deceased. She is the biological parent of the children. State laws give her that right;
- 27% of Respondents: The practice is acceptable as long as the widow accepts it. She should not be forced into accepting such these cultural practices.

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| POSITIVE AWARENESS     | 58% |
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + O | 27% |
| POSITIVE (H) AWARENESS | 15% |

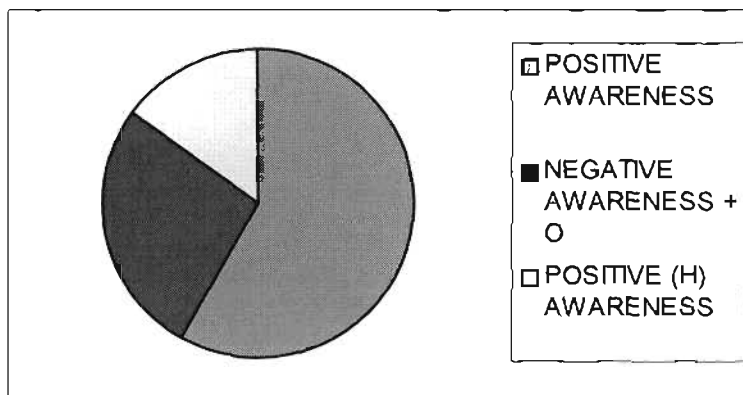


Figure 4.9. Percentage Responses on the Fairness of the Transfer of Responsibility of the Deceased Man to his Brothers

---

The first part of this question seemed obvious to the women respondents. Culturally, the people of South-East Zimbabwe are of a patri-lineal background: the children and all property belong to the father. According to customary law, at the death of the father, all that was his would go to his family by right of inheritance. The women of Mwenezi affirmed what was happening in other parts of the country in this regard. In discussing customary law at the death of the father, Getecha Chipicha remarks that the inheritance of the property, widows and children of deceased persons by relatives was a practice still intact (1995:148). Although the new constitution of Zimbabwe gave the widow rights to her children and the property she owned with her husband before his death, the problem remains that customary law continues to exist alongside the new constitution. A problem therefore exists, especially for rural women, who do not know their rights or who are unable to fight for their rights. Most of the respondents considered the cultural practice as unfair. The fact that women were mothers of children did not seem to be recognised. The husband did not accumulate property by himself, but had accumulated it together with his wife, yet at the point of his death, his wife would be not considered. When a woman dies, her husband would continue as the owner of their children and property, yet when her husband dies, all is taken away from her. For these women this cultural practice was an enemy.

Looking at the responses, one can see an indication of some awareness in the majority of the respondents. They were able to understand those aspects that they considered unfair. It would however take more women and men to change the situation in the area. Those responses that indicated it was acceptable if the wife did not object, did not demonstrate much concern. Much more needs to be done in order to ensure such individuals take responsibility.

#### **4.2.8. A Christian Woman Married to a Non-Christian Husband**

The questions posed on this point sought to establish the awareness that women have as to the authority that culture might have over Christianity. The first part of the

---

question simply sought information. In the second part of the question the women were asked to give reasons for their answers.

Of the 130 women questioned, only 111 responded. The responses included:

- It was culturally acceptable for a married woman to be a Christian, even if the husband was not a Christian, as long as he had given his consent for her to be a Christian;
- Most men believe that going to church makes women better people;
- It was culturally unacceptable for a Christian woman whose husband was not a Christian to separate herself from all non-Christians activities and rituals.

Reasons offered were simply listed, as they belonged to the same category:

- Culturally, the wife was expected to do all that the husband wanted her to do;
- It was a disrespectful for a wife to contradict the will of her husband. The wife belonged to her husband.



---

|                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| NEGATIVE AWARENESS + C | 100% |
|------------------------|------|

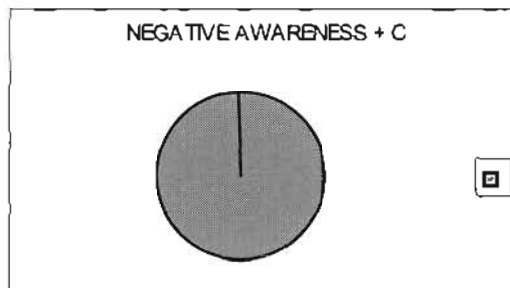


Figure 4.10. Percentage Responses on Determining Awareness of Authority that Culture and Christianity might have against each other

The responses to this question revealed 100% negative awareness on the part of the respondents. They appeared all influenced by culture. The first response that stated it was culturally acceptable for a married woman to be a Christian, even if her husband was not a Christian, on the surface sounds affirming. However, in comparing it with the other responses, the motives become problematic. The response that most men believe that going to church makes women better people, while holding some truth, one wonders going to church of itself makes a person better. If it did, this would not only affect women, but men too! The final response reveals that the motive for allowing a married woman whose husband was not a Christian to become a Christian was not necessarily in consideration of the woman's faith.

This did not only affect Christians. It also concerned married women doing anything outside of their homes. Barbara Victoria, writing about the people of this culture, states that in order for a married woman to be involved outside of the home she first needs to ask her husband whether he would be "willing to accept" his wife as someone involved in the community or outside the home (Victoria 1998:25). What is important here is his willingness. This treats the woman as a minor, or that she does not know what is important. To the researcher, such attitude appears to

---

downplay the humanity and dignity of women. The women did not seem to be aware that culture was placed above Christianity. In some sense, it appears as if the women had been willing to compromise their faith in favour of culture. They were unaware that culture had brainwashed them and was responsible for the suppression of their human rights as women.

#### **4.2.9 Women, Culture, and Community Involvement**

Having focused on culture in relation to the relationship between woman and family, the next question was designed to centre on culture and community. Again, the opening question was intended to be light in nature in order that the respondents would be relaxed as they worked on it. The intention was to find out about the cultural position of women's involvement in the community and the community's expectation of woman. Again, the question hoped to get the women to look at their situations as they sought to answer the question.

Of the 130 women questioned, 119 responded. It would appear that a number of women did not respond due to some families not being involved in community projects. All respondents agreed that their families were involved in some degree in community-based projects.

The following responses were obtained:

- Women work for their families at these work projects because women are more available in the homes than men were;
- Men who work for their families at these work projects do so because the work is usually harder for the women;
- Both men and women do work for their families at these work projects depending on the type of work done for the project.

---

With respect to the community expectation of women, the women gave the following examples:

- Child-bearing;
- Child-care and training;
- House-keeping;
- Cooking and feeding the family;
- Working in the fields;
- Involvement in women's clubs

Societies are made up of communities and communities are made up of families. If families respect women, communities would respect them also. If communities respect women, societies would respect women. There may be families that are considerate of women, but are unwilling to stand up for what they know to be right. It would take only one negative attitude about women and the whole community would be negative. The communities of South-East Zimbabwe remembered well how women were involved in the struggle for liberation. In writing about women's involvement in the liberation war, Hope Chigudu can state:

*There has been a shift from being mothers and mere domestic workers to liberators and political architects...For the first time we saw African women carrying guns (1998:18).*

It should be known by the people of South-East Zimbabwe and other African people that women are mothers, not because they cannot do other things, but

---

because it was one of the responsibilities for which God made them women. In the same way, if women remain in their kitchens they are not accomplishing God's intention for their lives. Women should be involved in their community according to their gifting.

Childbearing and caring, housekeeping and cooking, feeding the family and working in the field, and being involved in women's clubs represent good involvements, but women can accomplish far more. In her responsibility as a mother, she is life giving. She symbolises protection and love. As a mother, she knows what it means to live for others (Oduyoye 1994:174).

It was felt important to emphasise that African women loved their families as well as their communities. Usually women do not complain, even if the community loads them with work. As Mercy Oduyoye has observed, "African women have always been sensitive to the coherence of the communities." Women have, "hidden the violence the system does" to them. What women are concerned with is, "the integrity of family life" (Oduyoye 1995:197). Therefore, the responses to this question were consistent with the sensitivity that women possess towards both the family and community.

The responses indicate that societies expect the strength of women to be limitless. In addition to what culture expects of them in the home, the community also has certain cultural expectations. Generally, society has made women the custodians of culture. Even where some families would be considerate towards women, pressure will come from the community for them to obey culture.

#### **4.2.10. Women's Perceptions of Changed Oppressive Cultural Practices**

This question was a summary question, giving the respondents an opportunity to look back and say what they may not have a chance to earlier. By posing this question, it was hoped that the level of women's awareness would be revealed. Up

---

to this point, the intention of the discussion was based generally on cultural practices and (in some cases) an examination of how women felt about such practices. In this question, the intention was to give the women an opportunity to reflect on their culture; hence, they were asked if they could name some cultural practices that they felt to be oppressive. Of the 130 women questioned, all responded to this question, naming cultural practices that they felt were oppressive and would like to see changed. These were not categorised since it was a reflective summary:

The following responses were obtained:

- Culturally, women could own nothing of value. The women wanted equal ownership with their husbands of all things in the home. Women said that they would like to own their husbands as much as their husbands own them;
- Culturally, women could not do what they wanted to do without the permission of their husbands, no matter how big or how small. Women wanted to speak about what they wanted to do rather than to have to seek the permission of their husbands. Women said that they were adults; therefore, they would like to take responsibility for their own lives;
- Culturally, women were excluded from the decision-making process, even when the decisions affected them. Women would like to see this practice changed. Women would like to be included in the decision-making process;
- Culturally, women were excluded from receiving family inheritances. Women said that they would like to see this practice changed. As members of their family they would like to receive the same as their brothers receive as inheritance;

- 
- Culturally, when a husband dies and leaves behind a wife, she is expected to marry the brother of her deceased husband. Women said that they would like to see this changed, so that a woman becomes free to do what she wants to do;
  - Culturally, a woman who was to be married has no say about whether she would like to have *lobolo* paid for her. The women said that they would like mothers to be included in deciding about their daughter's marriage. As women and mothers they felt they would know better as to what might be a reasonable and fair *lobolo* for their daughters;
  - Women would like to see boy and girl children treated equally in the home.

From these responses and suggestions from women concerning their feelings, desires and aspirations, it can be deduced that the women of South-East Zimbabwe would like to see men and their wives having greater respect for each other.

#### **4.2.11. Conclusion**

Chapter 4 has examined the culture among the people of present-day South-East Zimbabwe. Through the technology of interviews and subsequent response analysis, the Chapter has been able to reveal some levels of awareness that the people under study have towards their relationship to culture. The responses of women revealed that, while culture was a lived reality for all, it operated more against women than men. The discussion has shown that while culture is not a static entity, some aspects have been made constant and changeless in their application to women. It has been argued that, despite the fact that culture itself is not biased, its use has been prejudicial against women. Some cultural practices were even used as an instrument of oppression against women.

---

This research has shown that of the kinds of work that is culturally present in the home, between 90-95% was considered the domain and responsibility of women. Furthermore, it was stressed that, culturally, a woman had no time to sit and rest. In this way, culture becomes a master that shows no mercy. Culturally, a woman's day starts before others get up from their beds and ends when everyone else has gone to bed. This alone challenges the idea that women are the weaker sex. It was therefore argued that no weak person could do as much work and endure as much pressure as women. A married woman was expected to work happily for the family of her husband. It did not matter how big the family was. Failure to do this would be a considered a disgrace to her father's family.

Culturally, before a woman is married she belongs to her father. She is expected to live her life to please him and the family. When a woman gets married, she then belongs to her husband. Her husband becomes her immediate owner. There is no time in a woman's life when she is not owned by someone. She is thus never her own person. Before marriage, she lives to please her father; after marriage, she lives to please her husband. Her life is lived for the benefit of others. According to the responses gained from the interviews, this study has shown that parents teach their daughters how to be good women, so that when they get married, their husbands would be pleased and the parents would be praised. It has been suggested this is the main reason why parents train their girl children.

The discussion has also suggested that, although parents are concerned about training their girl children, this is mainly through informal education. Formal education of girl children is not a big issue for many fathers. Educating a daughter is a luxury. Therefore, the study has confirmed that, since many parents are poor, fewer girl children go to school than boy children beyond the fourth grade. Those parents who send their daughters to tertiary educational establishments are likely to demand the amount of money they used on their education on the day when *lobolo* is to be paid for her.

---

The study has also demonstrated that culturally a woman has no voice on matters of *lobolo*. A young woman belongs to her father, he alone sets the amount he wants for her. It has been concluded that once *lobolo* has been paid, culturally full ownership is transferred to the husband. A married woman cannot refuse her husband sexual relations, even if by so doing, her health is under threat. A married woman is expected to sacrifice her life in favour of cultural demands.

It was also highlighted that daughters do not receive any inheritance following their father's death. This is to ensure that property rights are not transferred to another family when their daughter gets married. Although it is a legally guaranteed right, for a married woman to assume full ownership of everything that she and her husband owned, as well that which her husband owned, culturally, a married woman cannot own anything of value. She can own kitchen utensils and nothing else! The husband's family inherits the rest of the family's property. The husband's brothers become the owners of their late brother's estate. They are expected to assume the responsibility of their brother, including that of his wife and children. In short, this meant that a woman's life is lived for the good of men. Her labour is to the benefit of her male family members. For a married woman, her labour is to the benefit of her husband. In this sense, culture is the enemy of a woman.

In the discussion on culture, it was mentioned that culture, although not genetically transferred, is an important aspect of what it means to be human. Aylward Shorter calls it a "basic human right" (1998:24). To understand the role of culture—as revealed by the interviews—it could be said that culture has two sides. On the one hand it is a blessing, while on the other, culture can be used as an instrument towards the dehumanisation of women. When children are born, they have no culture. They quickly learn the cultural condition into which they are born. A girl child thereby grows up with a low self-image, knowing that she was born to serve. On the other hand, a boy child grows up understanding that he is privileged. As such, children accept their cultural situation as a given. Thus, boy children are thought to be more superior to that of girl children.



---

The Zimbabwe national constitution has opened the door for women to excel. Unfortunately, not all women are aware of this opportunity, and even those who are, continue to allow the oppressive practices of culture to take advantage of them. If women are to be liberated from oppressive cultural practices, women need to take a stand against any kind of oppression. While not all the respondents demonstrated awareness, a small number demonstrated some level of awareness. Finally, as the summary reflection points out, there is evidence that by answering the questions posed some respondents became aware of their cultural situation and resultant bondage.

---

## CHAPTER 5

### WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMANHOOD BY CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN CIVILISATION

#### 5. Introduction

Chapter 3 of this study examined in brief the Christianisation and civilisation of Zimbabwe and South-East Zimbabwe. That was based upon historical background information. This discussion was in preparation for an examination of the contribution that Christianisation and Western Civilisation has made towards the women of present-day South-East Zimbabwe. Chapter 5 is the second of three main chapters that will examine the levels of awareness that the study cohort exhibits. This will be with special reference to the construction of womanhood by Christianity and Western Civilisation. The responses of the women and men members of the study cohort from South-East Zimbabwe will guide the discussion of this chapter.

Unlike previous questions, these questions were meant for a particular group of people. As the questions were interested in establishing the influence of Christianity and Western influence on women, the information was sought from those members of the study cohort who were directly involved in Christianity. In total, 90 women from five different churches in South-East Zimbabwe responded. Of these, 65% came from mainline churches and about 35% from African Initiated churches. About 75% of the women were aged between 25-50 years, and 25% were over 50. In addition, about 60% of the women had between 4-8 years of formal schooling; 30%

---

had over 8 years schooling, and a further 10% had no schooling at all. As Christianity simultaneously came with education and civilisation, questions on this section will cover three particular elements of influence:

- The effects of theological understanding in the church relating to women;
- The effects of an education system relating to women;
- The effects of political and economic systems relating to women.

## **5.1. Analysis of Responses on the Effects of Theological Understanding in the church Relating to Women<sup>1</sup>**

### **5.1.1. Self-identification**

As with the questions in Chapter 4, the first question under this section was intended to give the women under study an opportunity to introduce themselves. In addition, this question was intended to provide the churchwomen with an opportunity to review what life was like before they became Christians—thus examining the past situation in the light of being Christians. As previously, questions were open ended so that women could feel free to express themselves, as they wanted. Some responses were repeated by the majority of respondents and thus were deemed popular responses.

Responses by the women under study to the question of self-identification were not categorised because the purpose of the study was not to investigate one particular church denomination, or individual. Similarly, the purpose was not to

---

<sup>1</sup> All questions are given in full in Appendix II.

---

establish who had been in the church the longest, or which individual had the longest Christian background. The purpose was rather to establish the identity and background of the respondents as a group. This would provide a good background when discussing some different theological understandings of the Christian church.

90 women in total were given the question. All were willing to respond. From the responses to the first two parts of the question it was discovered that the women came from five different church denominations (two of the churches were of mission origin and three were African-initiated churches).

From the responses, it was established that:

- 63% of the women had been Christians for 10 years or more;
- 17% had been Christians 5-9 years;
- 20% had been Christians 2-3 years.
- 80% of the respondents were married;
- 20% had been married, but their husbands had died.
- 75% said that their husbands were Christians;
- 25% said that their husbands were not Christians.

From these results, it was ascertained that most of the study group knew what different beliefs were represented in the Christian church. Not only had the

---

women been in the church, but most of their husbands as well. In addition, some of the women were second or third-generation Christians.

In responding to the question regarding the situation of families in matters of faith and belief:

- 33% said that they did not have any information because their families had been dead for many years;
- 11% said that their family consisted of their children. Some were Christians, while others were not;
- 36% said that their families were Christians;
- 20% said that their families were not Christians.

The question went on to ask what life was like before they were Christians, compared to after they became Christians:

- 30% responded that since becoming Christians, there seemed to be more harmony within their family.
- 70% reported that their families lived as Christians while they were growing up.

Based upon the responses given, it appeared that the majority of the women under study had been Christians most of their lives, and therefore members of a local church denomination.

---

### **5.1.2. Common Understanding of the Doctrine of Creation and Its Implications for Women**

The question had two parts. The first part was to establish what the women under study were taught about creation in their different churches. The second part was intended to establish if the women were aware of the implications of their churches teaching about the doctrine of creation. It should be pointed out here that Christian beliefs must be influenced by the kinds of beliefs that Christians hold. The investigation on what Christians believe about the creation account is important since it will influence the way people think about self and the other.

This question sought to establish if the women under study read or spoke about the creation account in their different churches, and if they did, how they understood this biblical doctrine. The response to these questions would give light to their doctrine of anthropology for women. It is important to note here that the approach to the question was not of a scholarly nature. As mentioned earlier, the women under study were laypersons in the Church and did not have much education. Almost all had no bible training. Although not theologians in the formal (Western sense) they nevertheless possessed a theology of their own. As stated in the research topic, questions were raised in order to assess their level of awareness. Where no awareness existed, the questions were so designed to raise awareness within them.

In total about 90 churchwomen were questioned. In responding to the first part of the question, the women said that it was a common understanding in their churches that man was created first and in God's image. Few however seemed open to the further question of the implications for women of the doctrine of creation, therefore they did not respond to it. The responses to this second part of the question were categorized according to the way they related to each other and were recorded in percentages as follows:

- 
- 55% of Respondents: The account of creation suggests that, although the bible did not say that God created a woman in God's image, the bible did not exclude women from bearing God's image. The creation account in the in the Shona and Shangaan bible states that God created *Munhu* (person). It does not say "man." Men and women are both *vanhu* (persons). The bible says that God created a person in his image;
  - 19% of Respondents: Women were created by God, but indirectly. . Although women are created in God's image, they are not created in the same way as man. God used the rib of a man to create a woman. Although man was created first and in God's image, God loves all of humankind in the same way. The bible says that God loves all the people of the world;
  - 26% of Respondents: Although God created man first and woman last, they all belong to God. Women know that they are not the same as men, but in Christ, all people are the same. Women should humble themselves before men, because they were created differently.

Figure 5.1. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness       | 55% |
| Indefinite Level Awareness + C | 26% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C   | 19% |

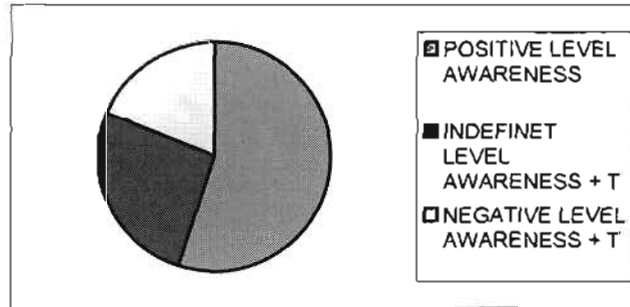


Figure 5.1. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of the Implications of the Common Understanding of the Doctrine of Creation

What emerged from the responses was that, in the traditional teaching of the bible, the noun, “man” in the Genesis account only refers to person of the male sex. In their answers, the respondents appeared take from the bible what seemed clear and easy to understand and left out that which seemed difficult. As the KJV version of Genesis 1:26-28 translates:

Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply.

The idea that could be suggested by these verses seems to be ignored. This may not have been a deliberate choice, as it could be due to a limited understanding of the bible. The popular responses could be considered as coming from those who were aware of what the bible teaches about the situation of women in relation to God’s image.



---

The differentiation between the creation of man in the image of God and that of women seems to be a denial of the presence of the image of God in women. This may not however have been a wilful denial. As mentioned above, what seemed to be a denial might have been created by a different interpretation of the image of God in humanity. Louis Berkhof, in his discussion of the image of God in humankind, suggests that the image of God has to do with the elements of that image in a natural person. These would be those principles such as intellectual powers, natural affections and moral freedom. Berkhof goes on to describe the spiritual and moral elements of the image of God in humankind such as, spirituality, immortality and original righteousness, knowledge and holiness (Berkhof 1958: 204-5). Similarly, Daniel Migliore, speaks of God's image in humankind as the capacity to reason, being able to exercise power and dominion over God's creation, and human freedom (Migliore 1991:123).

The responses received fall far short of these elements and principles, and portray a diminished presence of the image of God in women. Commenting on Genesis 1: 26-28, Migliore states that while, "God created humankind in his own image" this is followed by "male and female He created them." To be human is to live freely and gladly in relationships of mutual respect and love (Migliore 1991:124-125). Migliore goes on to suggest that being created in the image of God means that God and humankind can freely address and respond to one another (Migliore 1991:128). Thus to deny the presence of God's image in women would be to deny the image of God in all humanity. This response could therefore be considered as revealing a general lack of awareness in the teachings of God's image in relation to women.

This study was not intended to become an exegetical study of the bible; therefore, a detailed analysis of the Genesis account is not possible now. However, in reviewing the women's responses above, the women demonstrate a clear need to understand the bible in different ways, especially with respect to the account of creation. Most of them seem happy to take from the account what they understand and are comfortable with and to make it their own. This on its own can be a positive indication. People need to take to heart what they understand and retain that which they are comfortable with. If

---

this however should lead to excluding other possibilities, then it would be of concern. The kind of understanding that was reflected in the response to this question might also be influenced by the women's day-to-day experience.

Another important aspect, which came from the responses, was the idea that God loves both male and female. Yet the idea of equality for both male and female in creation seemed to be in question. This would suggest that to speak of God creating men in his image does not necessarily mean the same as saying women were created in God's image. What leads to speaking this way was a statement such as "man is created in God's image but women were created from man's rib." This suggests a higher ranking for men in the creation order.

African people's strong general belief in God's love for all people also came out strongly in the responses. This affirms the idea that Africans believe that God was the one who made all people. As Oduyoye has observed, "God is a helper of all creation" (2001:44). This "all" includes both male and female. There is no suggestion that the one is more important than the other. As people understand and accept the presence of God's image in both male and female, the humanity of women would be affirmed, hence, the concern for the doctrine of anthropology for women in this study.

### **5.1.3. God's Revelation through Jesus Christ: An Implication for God's Gender**

This question, in bringing into sharp relief God's gender and the implications it has had upon women sought to clarify what seemed to be a common understanding among many Christians. As before, the women under study were asked to give reasons for their answers.

When speaking about God creating humankind in God's image and likeness, the respondent seemed to label God with male features. This is unfortunately the way

---

many people understand the relationship between male and female, and thus tends to guide their understanding of what place women should have before God. The question on God's gender, as with the previous question, was intended for churchwomen, as a follow-up to the question on creation. While the previous question sought to understand how the people under study understood the creation account and how it related to the doctrine of anthropology for women, this question sought to understand what the women understood about God. Their understanding of God affects their awareness of their humanness and the contributions this can make in the community.

In total, 90 churchwomen responded to both parts of the question. All interviewees said that their church people held that God was revealed through Jesus Christ. Explanations given by the women for the positive answer above were categorized and recorded in percentages as shown below:

The responses were as follows:

- 19% of Respondents: This has nothing to do with God's gender. The people do not think of God in gender terms, because God is Spirit;
- What speaks of God's gender was the fact that the bible calls God "Father," hence, God is both Spirit and male;
- 35% of Respondents: The fact that Jesus was male did not mean that God was male. God did not operate with issues of gender. God was gender-neutral;
- 31% of Respondents: Their church people do not think much about God's gender. However, they seem to take it for granted. Because the bible calls God "Father," God, must therefore be male;

- The bible tells us our heavenly father sent Jesus. God must therefore be male. Jesus calls God, “Father,” so again, God must be male;
- 15% of Respondents: God chose to send Jesus who was male. People do not know God’s gender.

Figure 5.2. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness       | 35% |
| Negative Level Awareness + T   | 31% |
| Negative Level Awareness + T   | 19% |
| Indefinite Level Awareness + O | 15% |

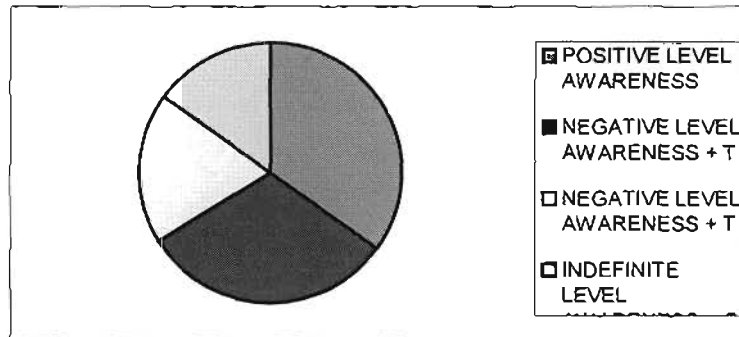


Figure 5.2. Percentage of Responses on the Implications of God’s Gender from the Revelation of Jesus Christ

The responses above, revealed significant differences in women’s theological understanding. They also revealed a lack of awareness of relevant gender issues. The first and most popular response that Church people do not think of God in gender terms reveals that there is little awareness or involvement in debates around gender by the church. The second group of responses revealed the

---

people's commitment towards the bible and understood it literally. As discussed earlier in this Chapter, the women under study had little, if any theological training, hence they tended to read and interpret the bible literally. Because the bible calls God "Father" and calls God "Spirit," this was how some of the women under study understood God. There were also those who liked to think of God as gender-neutral. These did not seem to take the bible literally but still did not seem to concern themselves with exegesis, but rather found themselves a place to rest.

The responses suggest a theological problem that at least in part stems from the reading technology and mode of biblical interpretation employed. This confirms the cry of African women theologians that African women need to engage in the study of the bible for themselves and on their own terms. Kanyoro is correct when she states that few African women and even fewer African ordained Christian clergy, "are comfortable with challenging the text of the bible by subjecting the hermeneutics of critical analysis to the bible text" (Kanyoro 2001:158-180). As a result, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians not only wants women in church leadership, but all women leaders to look seriously at women's issues of women in the light of the teachings of the bible and understand them as women.

While it cannot be denied that the bible is the inspired Word of God, the majority of its text was written by men from a patriarchal tradition. This clearly comes through even a cursory reading its pages. Denise Ackermann is therefore correct when she states that Christian Feminist scholars find themselves in an ambivalent situation. On the one hand, the bible is undoubtedly a male-inspired document that holds patriarchal views; while on the other hand, it serves as an inspired and authoritative text for women trying to liberate themselves from patriarchal views and structures (Ackermann 1998:349-358).

This problem makes the concern of African women theologians most important. Women need to know what God's message as they read the text of the bible for themselves.

---

One wonders if the women of South-East Zimbabwe have read biblical passages as Deuteronomy 32:18:

You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you;  
You forgot the God that gave you birth.

Again in Isaiah 42:14:

For a long time I have held my peace  
I have kept still and restrained myself;  
Now I will cry out like a woman in labour  
I will gasp and pant.

These verses are mentioned because, if taken literally, God should not be thought of as being male at all times. Other similar passages present God and God's activities as female. If a realistic theological understanding is to be attained, interpreters and biblical exegetes should consider these sections as well. However, as mentioned the women under study did not deal with the biblical text at this level. That is why the call of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is of such vital importance.

#### **5.1.4. The Common Understanding that a Minister is a Representative of God: Implications for Women**

This question was set in two parts. In the first part, the question sought to ascertain whether ministers are given the same kind of respect as prophets in the Old Testament. The question also sought to determine whether women ministers are treated in the same way as their male counterparts. The women under study were also given an opportunity to explain their reasons for the responses given. In asking this question, it was hoped that the women under study would look at the situation in their own churches. Their resultant discussion would thus help

---

determine what levels of awareness were present, and whether they had become aware of the situation as it related to women in the church.

Of the 90 churchwomen questioned, 83 responded. Responses were categorized and recorded as percentages as follows:

- 30 % of Respondents: All ministers, male or female, would be perceived as people of God. They should not however be viewed as God's representatives, because they as people they were ritually unclean;
- 33% of Respondents: When people listened to what was being preached, they saw the person preaching as being God's spokesperson;
- 37. % of Respondents: Although some people have little respect for women, people nevertheless respect what women preachers have to say. People believe that God could call both men and women to be ministers, but that women ministers were still women and male ministers were still men. When a woman had finished her sermon, she loses the respect she had as a ministers and again becomes just a woman.

Figure 5.3. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness + C | 37% |
| Positive Level Awareness     | 33% |
| Positive Level Awareness + T | 30% |

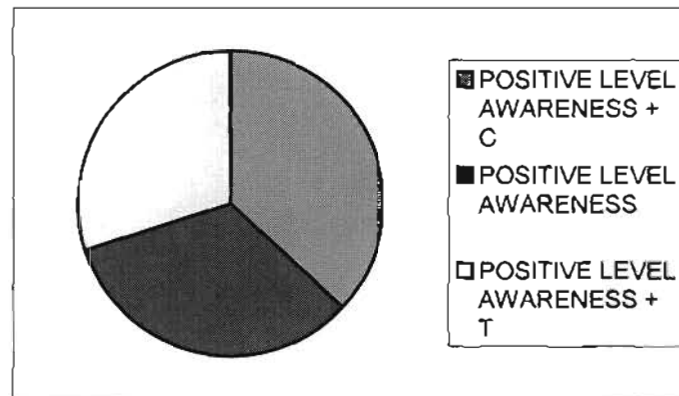


Figure 5.3. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of the Implications of common understanding that a Minister is Representative of God

Of the 90 women questioned, 87 responded. Most of those who responded seemed to avoid the phrase “represent God,” preferring to replace it with the phrase, “people of God” or alternatively, “called of God.” In answering the question, it seemed that both male and female preachers were accepted as being ministers. However, women’s respect as ministers seemed to stop as soon as they had finished preaching. This suggests that a woman minister might not be recognised as a minister at any other time except when she was preaching. In contradistinction, male ministers are considered at all times *Mufundisi*, (“Reverend” in both Shona and Shangaana). One could also question the reputed emphasis on the differences between men and women e.g., women ministers are still women, male ministers are still men.

Whilst men and women are different biologically, they are human beings. As such, women are equal to men in that they each have personalities; are conscious beings; think for themselves as individuals separate from one another, even



---

though culturally women are often limited from exercising such independence. Both males and females can independently make personal decisions, although culture often results in women becoming dependent upon men. In Christ there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28). God's ministry is not determined by gender; rather it is through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. As the Old Testament prophet, Joel can state:

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;

Your sons and daughters shall prophesy...

Even on the male and female slaves I will pour out my Spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

Churchwomen need not be hesitant about the idea of women ministers. The South African Methodist Bishop, Purity Malinga, speaking about the issue of Women in church leadership has said:

Women leadership is still questioned by many Christians....In Christ, racial, social and gender barriers are broken down, male and female are both equal, completely saved by faith through Christ, both given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and both sent out to make disciples of all nations (Malinga 2002:3-4).

One would desire for the women of this study to have the kind of awareness that is demonstrated in Purity Malinga. Jesus said that as God had sent him, even so he, too, was sending those who believed in him. Christians and ministers alike, are all witnesses of the grace of God, and as such are representatives of God in the world.

#### **5.1.5. Jesus' Call/Selection of his Twelve Apostles: An Implication of the Gender of those Who Should Represent God as Pastors**

This question was set in two parts. First, because Jesus called only men to be his apostles, was this an indication that only men could be ministers of the gospel?

---

Second, did people in their churches refer to both *faithful men and women as people of God*? In addition, the respondents were asked to give reasons for their answers.

Of the 90 churchwomen questioned, all chose to respond. The responses were categorized and listed as percentages, as presented below:

- 37% of Respondents: The fact that Jesus chose only men as his first twelve apostles should not be taken as a set precedent for who should be appointed as ministers because God calls whosoever he wills to be a minister;
- God is no respecter of persons. God calls those who obey him, male or female, for in him there is no difference;
- Jesus called twelve male apostles because at that time only males were considered important. Today, all people are considered the same;
- 63% of Respondents: What Jesus did was to set a pattern for his church to follow. To be a minister is for males only;
- *Jesus knew that difficult situations sometimes arise in the church, hence it takes a man to deal with such difficulties;*
- Men are generally considered stronger than women are. To pastor a church is not easy. Jesus set the example, because he knew that men alone can face any circumstance;
- Although there are female ministers today, this was not part of the original plan of God. It is one of the many changes we see in the world today.

Figure 5.4. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness +T + C | 63% |
| Positive Level Awareness        | 37% |

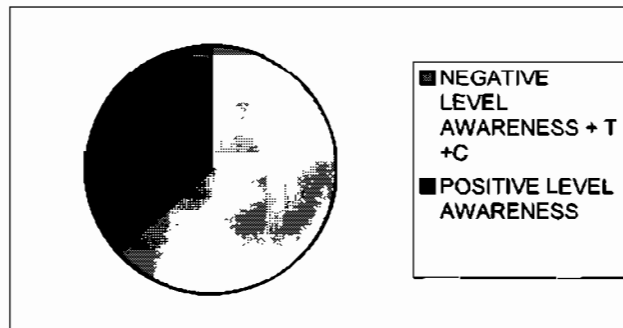


Figure 5.4. Percentage of Responses on the Implications on Jesus' Call / Selection of his Twelve Disciples

The above responses show that, although few, there were those who held that in God's work there is neither male nor female. The majority of people still felt that church leadership was reserved solely for men and not women. Although not stated, the ideas that arose from the discussion on culture are repeated here. A woman was considered weak. While during the discussion on culture, this implied physical strength, here the reference was to mental and emotional strength.

According to Revd Walter Sellew, Bishop of the Free Methodist Church, God is the one who calls, chooses, and ordains. The Holy Spirit gives the necessary power to do his work (Sellew 2003:153). Sellew goes on to assert that during apostolic times not only were there women ministers or preachers, but they were also ordained to a distinct official position in the church (Sellew 2003:153).

---

Another important factor that respondents seemed to overlook was that the twelve male apostles were fainthearted, ineffective followers of Jesus until God's Spirit was given to them at Pentecost. The male apostles of Jesus shut themselves up in an upper room following the ascension of Jesus into heaven until after the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. Peter, the most vocal of the twelve male apostles, was threatened by the words of the young servant girl who spoke the truth. After the death of Jesus Peter retreated to his original work of fishing until Jesus found him again and told him to feed his sheep.

Jesus told his twelve male apostles that they needed to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, because he knew that simply being males would not qualify them to do the work that he was calling them to do. They needed the power from God to be able to face the challenges of the ministry.

Research has constantly shown that in African churches, women's membership is higher numerically than that of men. This was also borne out in many interviews. As Bernadette Mbuy Beya has shown (1998:94), the work of evangelisation within the church is often done by women. Women share their faith with other women, through churchwomen organisations. Therefore, more women would be converted to Christianity. This may account for the reason that there are more female members than male. Women tend to take Jesus' commandment to witness more seriously than men do. Additionally, one would not expect women to fail as pastors of the church of Christ if they had such a calling. Ranger and Weller state that the Methodist Mother's Association, called *Ruwadzano* in Shona, had a passion for evangelism as well as for the improvement of family relationships, especially those between husbands and wives (Ranger and Weller 1975:257). Ranger and Weller go on to assert that women organised revivals and camp meetings, and that in these meetings women did not minister only to females, but they were also able to minister to men as well. Mother's Associations led to the conversion of many people, including some chiefs (Ranger and Weller 1975:258-259). As such, there might not be an obvious justification for accepting women as ministers and preachers on the same status as men. In Micah 6:4, God said to Israel:

---

For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
And redeemed you from the house of slavery;  
And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

Bishop B. T. Roberts was correct when he stated that:

There is nothing in the creation of woman or in her condition under the law which proves that no woman should be ordained as a minister of the Gospel (Roberts 1997:36).

The researcher was proud to belong to a church denomination whose founder holds to and recognises the ordination of women, not as a compromise or special favour for women, but as a right for those who have been called to such ministry. Unfortunately, not everyone in the denomination felt the same way as the founder!

Those who question the right of women to become ministers of the Word based on the Lord's calling of the twelve male apostles should also question the right of any gentile to become a minister of the Word, as the twelve male apostles were all from a Jewish background. The Apostle Paul thus states in his letter to the Galatians that:

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male nor female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28)

Through salvation in Christ Jesus, opportunities are open for all in Christ, regardless of gender and nationality.

#### **5.1.6. The Entry of Sin: An Instrument Used for Women's Accusation**

The story of creation and entry of sin are foundational bible stories, often used to discredit women. The question of the entry of sin into the world was intended to give an opportunity for the women under study to state what they thought about

---

sin and its punishment. This would enable women to be free to express what they wanted to say. In enabling women to speak for themselves, it was hoped that this might be a way to determine the levels of their awareness of oppression.

Of the 90 churchwomen questioned, 87 responded. As with the other questions, this was an open-ended question so that the women could talk freely. The responses are categorised in percentages as below:

- 48% of Respondents: Sin came into the world because of the woman Eve. The snake came to Eve and not to Adam, because as a woman she was weak.
  - The woman was soft and of a simple mind, that is why the devil came to deceive her;
  - Sin came to the world through a woman. A woman is soft, that is why God did not make her the head of the family. She is not confident.
- 52% of Respondents: Sin came into the world through Adam, the first human being
  - Adam obeyed the snake by obeying his wife;
  - Adam was the one to whom God spoke, yet he chose to disobey God;
  - The bible says that sin came into the world, because of one man, Adam.

---

Figure 5.5. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness     | 52% |
| Negative Level Awareness + T | 48% |

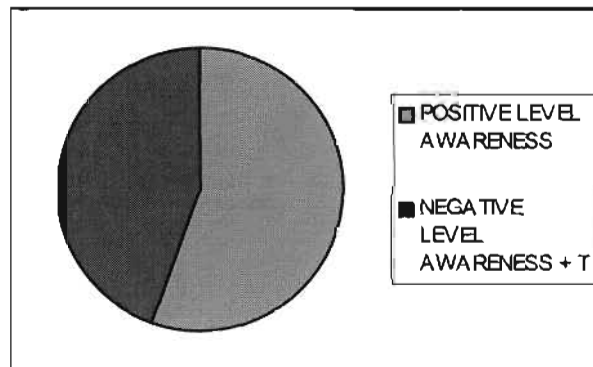


Figure 5.5. Percentage of Responses of Women's Understanding of the Entrance of Sin into the World

Although the responses are supposed to come from the understanding of the women under study, they actually result from what they have been taught. Hence, the theory underlying these responses is not new. In her chapter entitled, "Truly God's Image: Woman as a Person," Susan Rakoczy speaks of, "bad news in the Christian tradition." Rakoczy notes that the church fathers spoke about women as the cause of sin (2003:30). While most of the women under study did no study church history or historical theology, the theory is nevertheless held by many. Tertullian, one of the early church Fathers, is said to have called women the "Devil's Gateway." As with Rakoczy, Katherene Haubert has raised the same concern in her discussion of women in the image of God. Haubert may indeed be correct in holding that this kind of attitude among church people, "has encouraged a negative view of women" (Haubert 1992:17). This was obvious in the responses received to the question posed in the research. This attitude is also used to justify the unfair treatment of women in the church. As Haubert has rightly noted:

---

Woman in Genesis 3 is not the reason for the Fall. She is not the sly, cunning trickster of man. The wilful decision of two free moral agents exercising their liberty independent of each other is the reason for the Fall. Woman is not the gullible culprit any more than man, for sin begins in the hearts of individuals and singularly each person stands before God for his or her deeds. (Haubert 1993:19)

While it is good to look at how sin came into being, people need not be taken so much into the past that they forget the present or look to the future. Those who feel that a woman was responsible for sin need to stop and look at the world today. They need to look at our governments and their structures, what and who they are made up of, and then ask the question, "Who sins against humanity today? Are they men or women? One wonders, if Adam was such a strong and responsible person, why did he accept Eve's word when God had told him at the beginning that he was not to eat of the fruit from the tree. Responsibility does not only accept success and power, it also accepts defeat and weakness. Adam, as the head of humanity, disobeyed God. Therefore, all humanity disobeyed God.

In reviewing the responses as they listed above, one might be convinced that women are weak (as shown in responses of the 48%), others however may not be willing to accept the idea at face value. Although not everyone was consciously aware of the influence that the doctrine and biblical origin of sin had upon the psyche of women, a few respondents possessed some level of awareness. What seemed to be needed was the encouragement to conduct some theological training to understand the situation in a better way.

#### **5.1.7. Males, Females and Gender Equality**

This question was intended to find information from the women under study about how they viewed the question of gender equality in the church. The question also wanted to establish from the women why they thought the situation was the way it was. Again, this was in order to provide an opportunity for women to look at situations and speak about it in an evaluative situation. It was hoped that this



---

would inaugurate a process whereby the women would begin to see and speak about issues they had not thought of or spoken about before. Of the 90 churchwomen questioned, all chose to respond.

The responses of the people were categorised and recorded as percentages as listed below:

- 54.5% of Respondents: Women are equal to men because God created them all. Both male and female are created in the image of God;
- 45.5% of Respondents: Women are not equal with men because women are weak and men are strong;
- Women have simple minds like children but men are technically minded. They are more logical than women. The bible does not treat them as equals. Some women are subject to men.

Figure 5.6. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                                  |       |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Positive Level Awareness         | 54.5% |
| Negative Level Awareness + T + C | 45.5% |

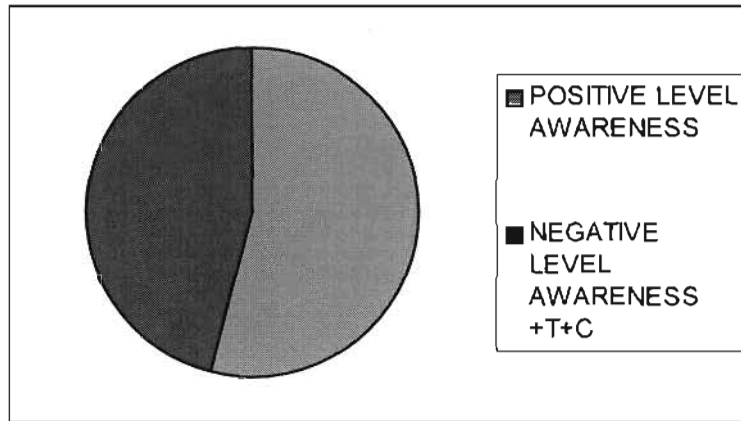


Figure 5.6. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of Gender Equity among their People

While there are still those who seemed to be influenced by popular traditional ideas that women were less capable than men, some nevertheless held that men and women are equal.

Our societies have misled women and men into believing that women are less capable than men are. Recalling her experiences at University Graduate School, Gretchen Gaebelein Hull has written:

Except for my transcript, I became invisible...I was ignored in classroom situations, simply because I was a woman. In the department of philosophy two professors openly announced in their lectures "no women can think" (Hull 1987:34-35).

This was an unfortunate situation. It is important to look at the creation story again. When God created woman, God created a helper suitable for Adam (Gen.2:18). God created both male and female in God's own image gave them both the power to rule over all other creatures (1:26-27). God did not create women without the ability to

---

think and comprehend. God would not have included women as co-rulers over the creatures of the world if woman could not think. Such action would surely be ridiculous of God.

While there are differences between males and females, those differences are positive, not negative. God sought these differences for the good of both male and female. The creator designed people with those differences so that male and female complement each other. The differences do not infringe upon the equality of men and women; they are different, but equal. The differences need not be taken as meaning that women are any less important than men are.

#### **5.1.8. Christianity and Change to the South-East Zimbabwe Culture**

Addressed to 90 churchwomen, the question about Christianity bringing change to the South-East Zimbabwe culture was intended to give the women under study an opportunity to make an evaluation, which under normal circumstances would not have taken place, as evaluations of this nature are ordinarily done by church boards that normally consist of men, not women. Unlike the other questions, this question was not intended to determine levels of awareness; rather it was intended to awaken women's consciousness as they think about their response to the question. As the women under study evaluated the influence of Christianity, it was hoped that they would think about issues they had not considered before. This was a way to awaken their consciousness that would eventually result in their awakening of their minds, so that they could then search for meanings of situations their churches and community have gone through.

All 90 interviewees responded to the question. The responses were not listed in percentages, as the intention was to provide a reflective contribution that could help awaken awareness. Christianity brought some changes to the people's culture. These changes were good for women as well as for the rest of the family. Examples of such changes given were:

- 
- In some churches women were allowed to preach to the congregation;
  - There is less violence against women in the homes because people who were converted to Christianity do not drink beer any more;
  - People respect each other more than they did before they became Christians;
  - There are no polygamous marriages among Christians and less among the non-Christians, because of Christian influence;
  - There are better relationships between members of the family, including husbands and wives.
  - Changes are good for women because those women who feel the call to preach have a way to realise their calling.
  - Although some women still suffer, it is less now than it was in earlier days;
  - The changed brought by Christianity benefited both male and female because of improved relationships within the family;
  - The end of polygamous marriages was identified as one of the main sources of family problems. Its virtual end as a practice, particularly amongst Christians has made happiness in the family possible.

One cannot deny the good that the Christian church has done for the African people. However, there remains more to be done. Looking through the list of examples given by the women, it suggests that although some churches accept women

---

ministers and preachers, there are still some who do not. Looking however at the rest of the responses, Christianity has to be complimented for the influence it has had upon society.

The question asked for changes in culture. Many cultural practices remain which still affect women. Unfortunately, the women under study did not speak about them. This could be an indication that conditions have not changed. What emerged rather, were the changes of cultural practices in family as a whole. The question remains as to whether Christianity has brought change to those cultural practices that affect women, as we have seen in previous discussions. The church has been called to be the light of the world, and to preach the message of forgiveness. The above responses indicate that some churches allowed the ordination of women. The idea of some respondents suggested that the ordination of women was not a practice that was open to all who were divinely called. Rather, it was only done when a church allowed it. It only takes place, in some and not all churches. Protus Kemdirim, speaking about the issue of preventing women from entering the ordained church ministry has remarked that such restriction "is an unwarranted discrimination against women" (Kemdirim 1999:31-37). Refusing to allow women to follow their sense of call and enter the ordained ministry would be to deprive them from being and doing what God intended for them. Women should not be restricted from experiencing a full and conscious involvement in the life of the church.

Nelson Hayashida has correctly suggested that there should not be any distinction in ministry for male or female (Nelson 2002:32). Any church that denies women the right to ordination not only keeps them from exercising their God-given ministry and gifting, but also denies them their human right made possible by God at creation and through salvation in Christ Jesus. It robs the church of being able to experience other kinds of gifts and talents. It denies women the right to become fully human in the way that God intended for them. This kind of attitude understandably raises concern for the doctrine of anthropology for women.

---

### **5.1.9. The Churches Teaching on Liberation for Women**

This question was intended to find information on a number of issues. First, the purpose was to know if the churches had been talking or teaching about Christianity as having liberated women. If they had, this would have been an indication that the church was aware of the fact that liberation for all people was at the heart of the Christian gospel. Second, the question intended to find out if the women were aware of their situation, since awareness was the process toward human liberation. The last part of the question was intended to hear from the women under study what they understood about such liberation. This would inform the researcher where the women were in relation to their awareness of oppression.

Of the 90 churchwomen questioned, only 55 responded. While one cannot say decisively why so few people answered this question, there are two possibilities:

1. The question may not have been clear enough for the respondents.
2. The women had not heard of liberation, and therefore did not know how to discuss the matter.

The responses received were categorised in percentages and listed as listed below:

- 25% of Respondents: The church preaches about having brought liberation, not for women only, but for other people as well. Liberation is seen in the kind of life that people live these days. The relationship and respect that exists between members of the family are some examples;
- 75% of Respondents: The church preaches about women being liberated in that women can preach in some congregations;

- In Christian families, women do not have to share a husband between two or more women;
- Women can participate in some church committees;
- Some women can also be pastors in charge of a church.

Figure 5.7. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Positive Limited Level Awareness + O | 25% |
| Positive Limited Level Awareness + C | 75% |

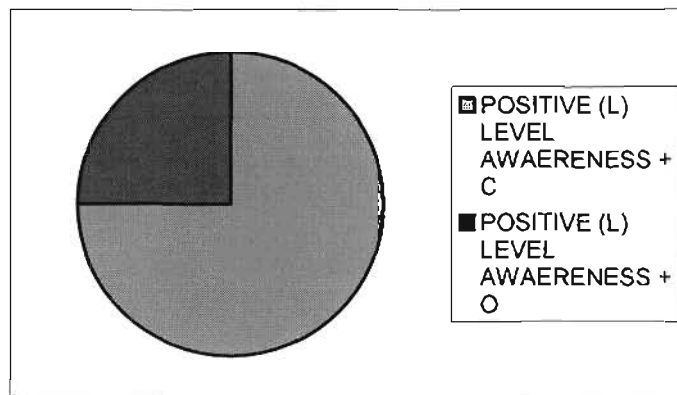


Figure 5.7. Percentage of Responses on the Church and Women’s Awareness of Women’s Need for Liberation

Looking at the number of people who responded to the question and the kind of responses given, one wonders if liberation among the women under study was limited to certain understandings. As in the previous question, it seemed obvious that the idea of women preaching in the church was emerging. This was a positive indication for the churches, although not every church was open to the idea. The fact that only some responded to the question raised the issue that

---

liberation was possibly not discussed in every community. If this was the case, one could question whether this has taken place because of women accepting their dilemma as a given. Looking at the examples given by the respondents, one finds it hard to see the relationship of what has been said here to the constraints of cultural practice as discussed earlier. This made it difficult to ascertain any level of awareness. The reason could be that women do not like to speak about such cultural practices, thereby suggesting that they are not free to speak about or are unaware of the real situations of oppression. This affirms the need for awareness and liberation. Based on this difficulty, whatever awareness might exist would be a limited in extent and guided by limited changes in some cultural and church-based practices.

As argued above, Christianity has given something good to the communities and people need to be grateful. As Ranger has stated, “When chiefs who traditionally could not meet and greet...sat together on the same bench” (1975:259) at worship, this is a great work of God. However, Christianity needs to do more for women. As God’s messenger for change, it is important that it does not look back to past achievements, but to the future and what still needs to be done. This way the Christian church would be able to do more for women. Jesus came to liberate the captives. This was the message he left with his church. This is what the church should be doing. The church should be working towards liberating women from oppressive cultural practices. That is what Jesus did.

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus, the head and founder of the church, said that He had come so that they (his followers) might have life and have it in full (John 10:10b). As it has been argued above, if ministry for women is still qualified by phrases as “in some churches,” “in some congregations,” “in some communities,” etc., then the freedom for women to minister in the church is still reserved for the privileged few. Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few” (Matt. 9:37). Why then, should the church have the authority stop anyone who feels called to the ministry? Some would argue that it is the intended purpose of God. As with men, not all women are called to full-time



---

Christian service. As Christians however, all are called to be ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). As such, it could be against the divine plan of God to draw boundaries concerning how far people's callings should reach. A person's sex need not be a necessary qualification for the divine call to ministry. Speaking about ministry for women, Hull has stated that:

Traditional teaching...squashed the aspirations of many women whose circumstances enabled them to contemplate independent careers including full-time Christian service...they also ignore the fact that not all women are led to marry...they deny that any truly Christian woman could ever have a genuine call to a career not related either to home-making or child-rearing (Hull 1987:106)

That was the reason why the changes referred by the respondents remain focussed on home life. As far as things beyond the home were concerned, changes were only experienced by some and not by all.

Those churches that continue to control the calling of women to church ministry needs to be informed about the capability of some extraordinary talented and gifted women. These include:

- Alice Lenshina Mulenga of Zambia (although outside the area of study) who founded and became a leader of a religious movement;
- The Lumpa Church among the Bemba community;
- Mrs Boammaruri S. Mlotso of Botswana, a Bishop (President) of the St. Faith Holy Church;
- Mrs. Christina Mokotuli Nku of the St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (Onyango 1998).

---

Churches need not fear or be concerned about accepting women with a calling to do the work of the church. Women are capable.

#### **5.1.10. Church: Membership, Leadership, and Preference for Church**

##### **Leadership**

This question sought information about the life and practices of the church. The intention was to collect such data and get the women under study to evaluate the results. This question was a follow up of the previous one. Apart from getting some information from the women, the question was intended to give the women time to review the practices in their different churches, and thereby explain and give reasons for the practices. As in the previous question, such an exercise was done by men and not by women. This was therefore a way to encourage women to speak about what was taking place in their churches. As women speak, levels of awareness might surface.

All 90 interviewees responded to the question. The question was not focused on any individual denomination or organisation. In the first part of the question, all respondents reported that their Churches had more female members than male members. In percentage terms, of the five churches represented, Women consisted 65-70% of the membership, and men 30-35%. From this information, one can conclude that women make up more than 50% of the membership of the churches in the area under study.

Of the five churches represented, only one church ordains women. The total number of active, ordained ministers in all five churches was 31. Of these, only three were women.

In responding to the question, why so few women were ordained ministers, the women gave responses such as:

- 
- Both the bible and culture do not allow women to lead men, although it was done sometimes;
  - Women looked down on themselves, hence they could not be leaders;
  - Women looked down on one another;
  - Women were jealous;
  - Women could not support one another;
  - Women could not be leaders;
  - Women were fearful, they could not lead people;
  - Women were not confident enough to lead;
  - Men do not like to be led by women, because they believe that women are inferior to men.

Given the scarcity of ordained women ministers, it can be said that the women under study were aware of the problem; what was not clear was whether the women recognised it as a problem. If they did see it as a problem, then they were possibly not aware of the actual cause of the problem. As a result, most of the comments put the blame on women themselves. The comments given were very much in agreement with what was discussed above under culture.

The negative statements spoken by women about women must have an origin. One wonders if this was not the result of a lifelong training, which has become an indelible part of the women's thinking. The first response statement affirming that

---

the bible and culture do not allow women to lead men, affirms the thesis of this research. This may be the root cause of the negative response about women leadership. After all, self-confidence is a result of the acceptance of other people. According to the first statement in the responses, women are not accepted as leaders.

In responding to the question as to whether there were duties in their different churches that only males could attend to, the women affirmed this as being so. The responses were categorised according to the way they related to each other, and are listed as below:

- 54% of Respondents: Women are not allowed to preach before the congregation; it is unbiblical;
- Women are not allowed to teach a group that includes men. This was in accordance with the teaching of the bible;
- Women should not lead or chair a meeting where men are included because women should submit to men. Women should therefore remain shy before men;
- Women should not serve communion in the church when men attend; women should also not conduct funeral services; relatives of the deceased may feel that their relative were being despised;
- 46% of Respondents: Although women do not involve themselves in most duties in the church, they are capable of doing them. It was only that they wanted to show respect towards men;
- Women are gifted teachers, because they are patient and wise;
- God calls both men and women to do his work.

Figure 5.8. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness + T + C | 54% |
| Positive Level Awareness + C     | 46% |

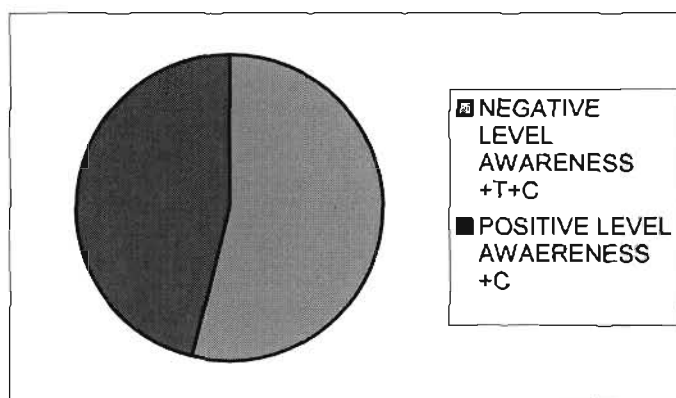


Figure 5.8. Percentage of Responses on Awareness in relation to Duties that were only for Men in their Different Churches and Reasons for that

Most of these responses were similar to what was listed in the first part of the question. The popular responses seem to be influenced by some wrong biblical interpretations and theological beliefs. The use of the term “respect” by the respondents might not necessarily be limited to the normal use of the term. The use of the term seems to include the notion of self-denial. Some of the respondents however were able to perceive the giftedness within women.

Whether women in the church would be more liberated than those outside of the church, made up the last section of this question. The responses to this part of the question were categorised and listed as follows:

- 
- 56% of Respondents: It was not easy to say that women within the church were more liberated than women outside the church because:
    - At home and in the community, women are told that there are things that women should, and should not do. Within the church also women are told what, and what not to do;
    - At home, women are told that they cannot own anything, because the wife belongs to the husband. In the church they are told that they must submit to their husband, as well as give him all that they may have;
    - At home, Women are told that their place is in the kitchen and the fields. In the church, women are told to sit in the pews and listen quietly. Women cannot expect a group of men to listen to them.
  
  - 44% of Respondents: Women in the church are more liberated, because women do not share their husbands between two or three other wives.
    - Some women can chair a meeting that consists of both men and women;
    - Women in the church are more liberated because some women can preach before a group that includes men;
    - Some women are ordained ministers;
    - Other women can teach men.

Figure 5.9. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness     | 56% |
| Positive (L) Level awareness | 44% |

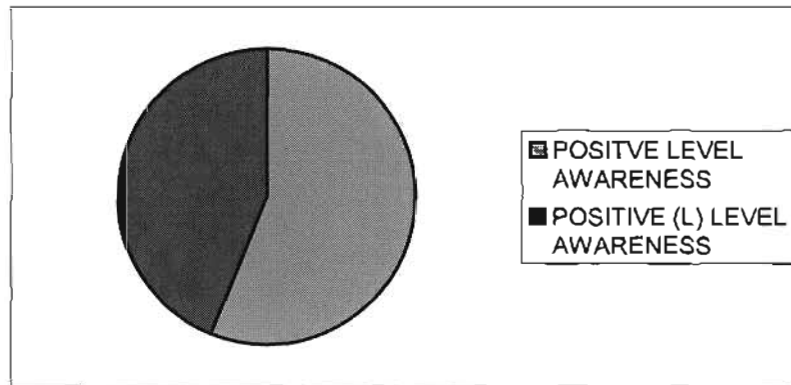


Figure 5.9. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of Liberation for Women in the Church compared to Women outside the Church

According to the responses received, both sections seem to have some level of awareness present. The popular responses revealed some understanding of the situation of women in the church as well as outside of the church. For these respondents, the two situations were no difference and were not good enough. The other responses seem to suggest that the respondents may or may not know the two situations in the same way as the other group. As such, these respondents seem to feel that women in the church are in a better position than those outside of the church.

From what has been stated earlier in this study, it seems correct to assume that there was little understanding as to the true meaning of human liberation. It could be that the women respondents were still oppressed. Some respondents did note however some encouraging changes for those who are Christians, but there remains room for improvement. Another good thing that needs to be mentioned was that a few churches have opened their doors for women to participate in ministry according to

---

the individual's calling. One would not want a situation similar to that which Protus Kemdirim describes, where discrimination against women on the grounds of gender was still evident within the church, and where, "Women do not take part in decision-making and preaching the gospel" (Kemdirim 1999:45). Both men and women are baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Together they pray, partake of Holy Communion, testify to salvation through Jesus Christ, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Such Christians should think that biology is stronger than grace.

From the responses received, one can identify with the words of Laurenti Magesa when he said that it was necessary for women in Africa to question:

Whether their consciousness had been so attacked and co-opted by the dominant male consciousness that they are robbed of the courage and the ability to think an alternative thought as women (Laurenti 1993:192).

Women have accepted their situation to such a point that any improvement was accepted, appreciated and viewed as a privilege, rather than a right. However, this does not make things right. The church as collective individuals needs to have an awareness of what is happening both within and out in the community at large. This would signal the beginning of liberation among its members whose human rights and identity are being seriously maligned.

It is important to compliment those who responded who exhibited such faith in women's ability. There were present women who were confident and unafraid to stand up and exercise their talents and abilities. There was however a need to challenge these women to stand together and to support one another. There was also a need to challenge Christian women to work out what God had worked in them through the Holy Spirit. As Anne Nasimiyu Wasike has described, every Christian is a prophet and therefore needs to play a prophetic role:

Prophetic ministers and prophetic community must engage themselves in a struggle for alternative consciousness in a community of faith...Moses destroyed the mythical



---

legitimacy of Pharaoh's social world and disclosed the alternative religion of the freedom of God...Moses revealed Yahweh as the One Who is Who He is, He... dismantled the politics of oppression and exploitation by countering it with the politics of justice and compassion (1993:179-180).

Queen Esther and Deborah the Judge provide some biblical examples from which women could learn. Women need not accept injustice. They can seek situational change. Women who are fully aware of their situation do not have to accept the suppression of their humanity, no matter where it might come from.

Having looked at the responses, some women were aware of being marginalised and understood that they needed to think more about it. Yet, some women seemed to accept the situation as a given, and were not aware that they needed to be educated so that their minds might be awakened.

#### **5.1.11. The Effects of Christian Influence: Church and Women's Development**

The previous question asked whether the church spoke and taught about Christianity liberating women and whether the women themselves had experienced it. The question was posed in order to ascertain from the women under study whether they could see whether Christianity assisted in their marginalisation. The question asked the women under study to supply examples for their responses. Such illustrations would help to clarify how these women understood liberation and how much awareness women need to have of their situation.

All 90 interviewees responded to the question. As with some previous questions, this was an open-ended question. Women could give as many responses as they wanted.

---

The responses are categorised and grouped according to the way they related to each other and listed in percentages as shown below:

- 33% of Respondents: The Christian influence has liberated women in some ways, but there are still areas where women still feel that the church is still oppressing, instead of liberating them;
- The areas where Christian influence has liberated women are areas where both men and women have been liberated. Practices such as polygamy did not affect women only, but men as well. Bad relationships and domestic violence did not affect women only, but men as well;
- 31% of Respondents: The influence of culture is stronger than Christian influence. The church does not like to work against traditional (cultural) leaders;
- Women are liberated from sin, but they are not liberated from oppressive cultural practices. The church does not want to interfere with culture;
- It seems as if the government is doing more to liberate women than that of the church;
- 36% of Respondents: The represented churches had introduced some development projects;
- The church is encouraging people to continue the government-initiated projects that have already been started.

Figure 5.10. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness | 36% |
| Positive Level Awareness | 33% |
| Positive Level Awareness | 31% |

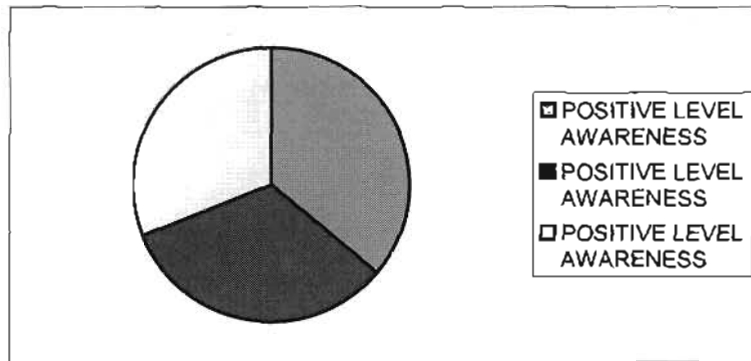


Figure 5.10. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of the Meaning and Nature of Liberation that Might Have Been Experienced by Church Women

The responses in the previous question were similar to what has already been discussed. Although Christianity has brought much good for families, it has brought little to alleviate women's problems. These responses made it plain that cultural suppression was still felt even within the church, some women being aware that things were not good for them. The statement concerning culture being stronger than Christian influence, in the second group of responses, revealed that women were aware of their situation. The comparison made between church and government was not a good one. The last group of responses did suggest that the church was doing something about development for women. However, the illustrations given were not specific enough. They sounded more like self-reliant than personal development. The responses also revealed that women had nothing positive to say about their liberation. It could be possible that the question was not clear enough to them, or that they did not know what liberation was all about or simply that they were avoiding the question in its entirety.

---

The church of Jesus Christ should represent hope for the oppressed, and yet it seems as if the church is either siding with culture, or is merely afraid to speak out against oppressive cultural practices. Culture should not be considered stronger than God's grace. Jesus came to liberate people from all oppressive forces, including oppressive cultural practices. This was the ministry that Jesus left for his church to carry out.

Although the responses were categorised, and the levels of awareness that the respondents had might have been different and limited to some specific situations, yet in general all the women seemed to have some level of awareness of their oppression.

The question raised by Tulapona is one that the church cannot ignore:

What nation can so completely ignore the plight of over fifty percent of its citizens? But the church does it constantly, all the while still believing itself to be Christian and spiritual. Women are being exploited and robbed of their dignity (2002:20).

The church needs to be reminded of God's mission to the world through Jesus Christ. The bible says that when Jesus, the true image of God, came to earth He took upon himself the infirmities and sorrows of the human race (Isa. 53:3-12). His messianic mission was to:

Bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners...to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. (Isa. 61:1c-3).

Christ's messianic mission meets all the needs of the African woman. The poor and broken-hearted are found among those African women who are robbed of their inheritance, because at the death of their husband they are told that women do not own property. The captives were found among African women who are still bound

---

by oppressive cultures. Those who grieve, mourn and despair are also found among the lonely widows and HIV/AIDS orphans of Africa. Shame and disgrace are amongst the most destructive enemies of those whose dignity has been taken away.

Writing about the mission of God through Jesus Christ, Isabel Phiri has suggested the idea of engaging people in their own liberation:

The message and mission of Jesus shows that his aim was to engage people in their own liberation from sin, ignorance, poverty, social injustice and any other form of oppression...this message...is contextual in that it locates itself within the context of the society in which it found itself...liberation for all—how come women in the universal church of Jesus Christ are complaining that they are not enjoying the full liberation that Jesus brought? Where is the problem, and who is causing it? (Phiri 1998:201).

The responses above agreed that the church was dealing with the problem of liberation from sin, but little else. This kind of gospel is grossly incomplete. The church needs to look at itself intently and remind itself of the purpose for its existence, and revisit its commissioning by Jesus Christ. Christian feminists make a strong point, when they call upon the Christian church to:

Open up its structures to unmask the thinking that sets up patriarchal hierarchies and enable the divine plan for full human relationship between women and men to develop (Oduyoye 1995:184).

When, and if this happens, it will produce both development and liberation for women. The Christian church will need to be aware of this need before it can liberate itself and its members from oppression and oppressive systems.

---

### **5.1.12. Church and Cultural Practices from which Churchwomen Still Need Liberation**

A similar question was raised in Chapter 2 where it was noted that women made a number of suggestions in relation to culture. Here the question is raised in order to allow women to speak and make suggestions on what they regard are church and cultural practices which still oppress churchwomen. From the responses, it can be seen that many women are slowly becoming aware of their oppressive situation and the need to do something concrete about it.

As this is a form of evaluation, the responses were not categorised, rather they were listed as reflective contributions. The responses of the 90 women questioned are listed as follows:

- Women should not pastor a church, because they could not do it nor are they courageous enough because it was not biblical. The power and courage to do God's work comes from the Holy Spirit;
- Woman cannot lead men, because it is inconsistent with what is known from the bible and it was confusing. If women should not teach, why do women have the gift of teaching?
- If women are not supposed to be involved in decision-making, why are they given wisdom? Women should be allowed to use their gifts;
- Women should be allowed to exercise their gifts. Women should not be marginalised in the church. They should be allowed to speak as the Spirit leads them;

- 
- Women were not children. They are mature people. They do not need to be told what to do and not to do;
  - Women should vote for women to get on church committees. They should not vote for men;
  - Women in the church should be serious when they speak in church meetings. They should not appear shy.

The responses raise some practices that women feel are not helpful. The rationale behind the practices was challenged as well. The responses convey a sense of frustration among the women questioned, an example being the retort that, "women are not children." The suggestion seems to affect both men and women in the church. The responses clearly indicate that women had some level of awareness of their situation and are willing to be involved in the process of changing it. Looking at the responses one could conclude that the church still has much work to do.

From the responses, it became obvious that women became more relaxed as they continued answering the questions. They thus seemed more open with their feelings than at the beginning. This was a process of liberation. It can be interpreted as an indication of their awareness of the power imbalance in their churches and societies; tiredness of being ignored and not taken seriously in church business, as well as within their communities. It appears that women were tired of hearing messages of liberation being preached in churches when, in actual life, the church was not doing enough to liberate women. This realisation and openness was a good development. In earlier discussions, women seemed more concerned about pleasing other people, but here they begin to think for themselves. This confirms what Phiri has said, concerning the need for African women to answer the call "to arise and love themselves as they love others." Phiri also states that women "are called to climb the cross and be lifted up to view the world with Jesus." Such calling includes maintaining "the victory that has already

---

been won” by Jesus Christ (Phiri 1998:211-212). This awareness is necessary before women can get there.

There are still many lessons that church people need to learn and teach. At the beginning of this chapter, it was mentioned that the Christianisation of Zimbabwe by Western missionaries was multi-faceted. In order to have a more realistic picture of the effect that Christianity and its Western influence had upon women it was important to look at it from all angles. Education was one of the tools the missionaries used to Christianise Africans. At this point in the discussion, we will now turn our focus towards the effect that such education has had upon women.

## **5.2. Analysis of the Responses Regarding Effects of the Education System upon Women**

Education was one of the means by which Christianity was brought to Africa; this includes Zimbabwe and South-East Zimbabwe. A realistic picture regarding the effects of Christian influence would not be possible without looking at the effects of education and its systems. One of the reasons why missionaries used education as one of the ways of evangelisation was that education is power. It not only raised awareness, but it possessed the power to transform and liberate the mind of the learner. Missionaries believed that African cultures were evil, and those who became Christians needed to change. Missionaries believed that if Africans had some education, they could change people. They would be delivered from their cultural and traditional ways, most of which seemed pagan and unchristian to western missionaries. This would be in line with what Daniel Schipani states in his discussion on education for liberation, where he points out that education should assist the learner to move to higher levels (Schipani 1988:16). In this way education would be an instrument to awaken an awareness that would lead to the liberation of the learner.



---

The analysis of the responses from the questions below was intended to find out if and how much awareness education brought to the women under study.

### **5.2.1. Education, Children and Priorities**

The question concerned about how parents value their children, both boy and girl children. The women were asked to share what was culturally accepted in a situation where money is scarce and children need to go to school. As a follow-up, women were also asked to make a value judgement on the cultural practice and to explain why they thought the way they did.

The question was intended to do a number of things:

1. It was intended to allow women to speak about their cultural practice;
2. It allowed women to make evaluations on the practice;
3. It allowed women to explain why they thought the way they did.

As the women considered and shared their responses, it was hoped to determine the levels of their awareness to their situation. Around 130 women responded to the question on the effects of the education system upon women.

The responses were as follows:

- Responding to the first part of the question, about 92% stated that in a situation where a family did not have enough money to send all their children to school, the parents would choose to send their boy children to school. Their girl children would stay at home and do housework with their mothers. This affirmed the presuppositions of the researcher that

---

women were marginalised even in important areas of personal development.

- The rest of the responses, although coming from different sides seemed to be impartial.
- 8% of Respondents suggested that the younger children were more likely to get the chance to go to School because the older children might start working and help the parents with the education of the younger children; only the oldest might attend school if there was sufficient money. When the money ran out the children would have to leave.

Looking at the responses, culturally it seemed that sending a girl child to school was a luxury. This explained the reason why there more educated men than women. If this was a correct, then it set a worrying precedent. The other responses seemed to be guided by the availability of finances without prejudicing a girl child. In responding to the question whether the practice was fair, the popular response pointed out that the practice did not give a good signal to the girl child. There were some responses that seemed to accept the status quo as a given. Still another response affirmed the idea that it was proper to educate the boy children because they would stay at home following their education and work for the family.

Reasons for the above responses were categorised according to the way they related to each other and listed in percentages as shown below:

- 62% of Respondents: The cultural practice was unfair. It suggested that girl children are less important to their parents than boy children are. The practice thus:
  - Makes girl children grow up with a poor self-image;

- 
- Encourages a spirit of jealousy among siblings;
  
  - Girl, rather than boy children take care of their parents.
  
  - 38% of Respondents: The practice was fair because that was what the parents could afford. The practice thus:
    - Was fair, because boy children would stay home following the completion of their education;
  
    - Men would take care of the family, while the young women would get married and leave their parents home.

Looking at the popular responses above one can see a clear shift from where the respondents started; there seemed a greater openness to speak about their own feelings about culture than they did at the beginning.

Figure 5.11. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness     | 62% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 38% |

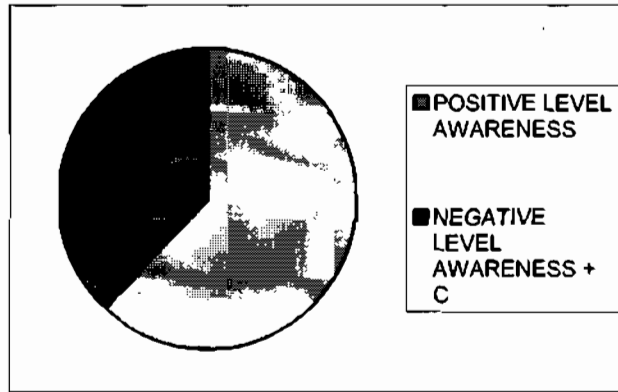


Figure 5.11. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of the Implications of Cultural Education of Children's Priorities

The above responses represent and document everyday life in the rural areas of South-East Zimbabwe. Phiri speaks about this in relation to the societal perceptions of women and the effect upon female academics. In her discussion, she notes that there are still families, mostly in the rural areas, who believe that it is a waste of money to invest in the education of a girl child. This is particularly true where financial burdens are involved (Phiri 2003:418). This is a reality for many families in South-East Zimbabwe.

It is important to acknowledge that the church, through its missionary work, has done more for the education of the people of South-East Zimbabwe than the government. According to Murphree, Christian missions introduced education for the Africans of Zimbabwe circa 1859. This would have been before the settlers took control of the country (Murphree 1975:39). He also alleges that European settlers were against the idea of educating Africans. This was in order to control African people and hinder their entering into a competitive position with white

---

people. Murphree speaks of one European writing in the Rhodesian Herald of June 1912, stating:

I do not consider it right that we should educate the native in any way that will unfit him for service. He is and always will be hewers of wood and a drawer of water for his master (Dorsey 1975:41).

These words angered, frustrated, discouraged, and de-motivated African men. This was the motivating force, which eventually led to the Zimbabwe bush war and the fight for national liberation.

Looking at the responses above, little is different from that discovered with women's education. To understand the spirit of the responses, one simply needs to replace certain words in the quotation, such as, "native" with "woman," "him" with "her", "he" with "she", add the biblical phrase, "hewers of wood, drawer of water" with all that the woman was expected to do. By so doing, a picture is drawn of the way society treats women. The above quote would thus read:

The society does not consider it right that we should educate the "woman" in any way that will unfit "her" for service. "She" is and always will be a "hewer of wood and drawer of water" for "her" master (own version).

It is unclear why 48 interviewees would seem to accept as legitimate the practice of depriving girls of education. Possibly the women had become hopelessly de-motivated. Many have accepted the idea that they are unimportant to humanity (other than for their labour and service). For the sake maintaining the status quo, they go along with the expectation. When white people considered Africans in such a way, they are called racists. It is therefore proper to call the society that harbours similar attitudes against women a "sexist" society.

Reviewing the responses to the first part of the question one can see that some women were aware of what their culture was doing to them. However, some women

---

seemed not to understand what was happening. This reveals some level of awareness amongst these women.

### **5.2.2. The Enrolment of Boy and Girl Children**

This question was intended to ascertain what takes place today. Unfortunately, the records were only accessible to the public only at certain periods, and inaccessible to the researcher.

The second part of the question was intended to show how the women explained their responses. This question sought to uncover how much improvement there had been for those parents who sent their children to school. This was then compared to what had been seen in Chapter 2, under the discussion of the attitude of parents towards educating their children. The main purpose of the first part of this question was to establish what was happening in the area of education and children.

The responses to the first part of the question were as follows:

- More boy and girl children were enrolled in schools;
- There were as many girl children as there were boy children in the lower School grades.

The last part of the question was intended to establish the reasons for the responses from the first part. These may prove helpful in determining the level of awareness that these women might have.

---

Reasons given to the question on the enrolment of children were categorised and listed as shown:

- 15% of Respondents: More boy children than girl children are enrolled in schools, because there are still families who think that if girl children go to school they will get spoiled and might not get married;
- 9% of Respondents: Culturally, there is no point in educating girl children, because they marry and go with that education to benefit another family;
- 54% of Respondents: Most parents do not have a lot of money and hence they cannot afford to educate all their children. Culturally, if a choice has to be made, it is preferable to send boy children to school rather than girl children;
- 22% of Respondents: In the lower grades at School, there are as many girl children as there are boy children. The change takes place as children go to higher School grades, because parents cannot afford to send all their children to school. If they have to choose, parents choose to their send boy children to school and leave their girl children at home.

Figure 5.12. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 54% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 22% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 15% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 9%  |

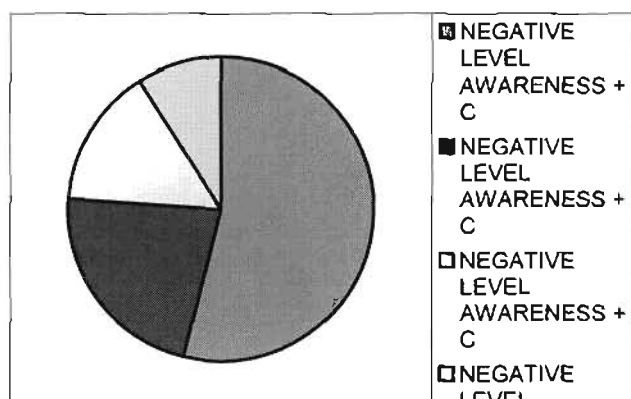


Figure 5.12. Percentage of Responses on Awareness of Factors Influencing the Enrolment of Boy and Girl Children

The responses to the first part of this question are not clearly separated from the responses to the second part. What seems evident however through is there were more boy children than girl children enrolled in schools. According to the responses, the reasons for this were cultural, so they did not necessarily reflect the awareness of the respondents, but rather the awareness of the society. The reasons given included:

- Parents were unable to pay for the education of all their children. According to the responses given this seems to be an acceptable cultural reason.
- Some parents still hold that educating a girl child was not as important as educating a boy child.



---

In Chapter 4, when dealing with background information, women being left out of important programmes of development such as education were indicated. Although situations have changed somewhat, the responses indicated that there was still need for improvement in the area of education for the girl child. Education of children determines what society will be like in the next thirty to fifty years from now. Very few women went to school during the colonial rule. As Dorsey has stated:

In fact, in most of Africa south of the Sahara, the education of girls has lagged considerably behind that of boys. There are a number of factors both cultural and economic that could account for the imbalance of the sexes in secondary schools. The most important factors seem to be parents' attitudes towards the education of girls and the self-image that girls have as a result of cultural conditioning (Dorsey 1975:94-95).

It is believed that parents put more value on the education of their sons because they are deemed the future breadwinners. This was a sentiment echoed by many of the respondents. Similarly, it was recorded that the girl child would get married and their husbands would take care of them.

Grace Manokore reported that during the 1950s when she and her friends walked the two kilometre journey to school each morning, they passed within metres of Chief Chitanga's home. The Hlengwe Chief in the South-East Zimbabwe resented the idea of girl children attending school. Chief Chitanga used to talk about such girl children as those who were going to learn loose moral values. Hence, those families who wanted to be in good standing with the Chief did not send girl children to school (Manokore 1999). These kinds of ideas had an effect on women's education, the consequences of which are still being felt in present day South-East Zimbabwe. At the time of this interview in 1999, the Mwenezi Rural District Council Schools (the area of this study) had 61 secondary and primary schools. Female teachers made up less than 50% of the total number of teaching staff. There were 122 Heads and Deputy School Heads, of which only eight were female (Council School Official 1999). This confirms the fact that men had been the recipients of development through education and not women.

---

To illustrate the issue of enrolment, published figures reveal enrolment movements for the period influenced by Zimbabwe's independence through to the early 1990s. These figures reflect education enrolment for the whole country, and not Mwenzi, South-East Zimbabwe. The researcher was aware that the figures were not specific enough for the area under study. Since however the specific information from the area concerned was inaccessible, the choice was made to include the national figures, as they give a general idea of what was going on.

| <b>Age</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> |
|------------|-------------|---------------|
| 5          | 10.0        | 11.2          |
| 6          | 48.3        | 52.0          |
| 7          | 81.1        | 83.1          |
| 8          | 92.2        | 92.6          |
| 9          | 95.1        | 93.9          |
| 10         | 94.2        | 96.2          |
| 11         | 97.0        | 95.8          |
| 12         | 94.5        | 92.7          |
| 13         | 91.8        | 87.0          |
| 14         | 85.3        | 79.0          |
| 15         | 75.4        | 66.4          |

**TABLE 5.1.** Enrolment ratios among rural children at primary school by age in 1993: Source: Tichagwa 1998:50-52)

---

|             | Form IV |      | Form V |      | Form IV |      |
|-------------|---------|------|--------|------|---------|------|
|             | Girls   | Boys | Girls  | Boys | Girls   | Boys |
| <b>1985</b> | 37.8    | 62.2 | 39.3   | 60.7 | 27.0    | 73.0 |
| <b>1987</b> | 39.0    | 61.0 | 32.5   | 67.5 | 31.3    | 68.7 |
| <b>1989</b> | 38.8    | 61.2 | 30.3   | 69.7 | 29.4    | 70.6 |
| <b>1991</b> | 42.3    | 57.7 | 38.2   | 61.8 | 31.7    | 62.3 |

**TABLE 5.2.** Enrolment In forms IV, V, VI for the years 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991 Source: Tichagwa 1998:52)

---

|  | 1998    |       | 1990    |       | 1991    |       | 1992    |       |
|--|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|  | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males |
| <b>Teachers colleges</b>                                 | 41      | 59    | 44      | 56    | 45      | 55    | 46      | 54    |
| <b>Vocational training centres</b>                       | 1       | 99    | 0.4     | 99.6  | 1       | 99    | 1       | 99    |
| <b>Technical colleges</b>                                | 39      | 61    | 38      | 62    | 30      | 70    | 27      | 73    |
| <b>University of Zimbabwe</b>                            | 24      | 76    | 24      | 76    | 25      | 75    | 26      | 74    |
| <b>The National University of Science and Technology</b> |         |       |         |       | 14      | 86    | 17      | 83    |
| <b>Africa University</b>                                 |         |       |         |       |         |       | 17      | 74    |

**TABLE 5.3.** Enrolment at the Tertiary and Vocational Institutions in the years 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992. Source: Tichagwa 1998:50-52)

---

The figures above reveal that a greater number of men were being empowered through education than women.

The researcher was aware that the figures quoted represent an enrolment over a short period. However, it was thought that the tables could collaborate what had been established from the responses of the women under study.

Table 5.1. gives the enrolment ratios among rural children as a percentage of the total number of male or female children between the ages of 5 and 16 for the year 1993. These ages represent children from grade 1 to form 3 or 4, depending on when a child would have started school. These ages are also be an indication of how the enrolment progressed from the lower grades. According to Table 5.1. the ratio of children for both sexes aged between 5-12, was high. From age 12-16 there is a wider difference between the ratios of boy and girl children (Tichagwa 1998:50). A further aspect that the numbers of School enrolment suggest is the influence of independence and its emphasis on “education for all children,” referring particularly to children aged between 5 and 12.

Table 5.2. records the figures of enrolment of learners in percentages for the period 1985 to 1991. This period would encompass the first 10 years of independence. Enrolment during this period was higher due to the Government’s emphasis on education for all. At this time, primary education was supposed to be free and many “upper-tops” (government sponsored district secondary schools) were opened in many areas. Higher enrolment rates were recorded during this time. The higher enrolment of children in primary schools would feed into secondary schools. Although the information is dated, as this was the best time for enrolment in the State School system, it does provide adequate explanation for the responses received.

Table 5.3. records the figures of enrolment of students into tertiary education. Skills development usually takes place within tertiary education. Leaders in different areas are trained in tertiary institutions. Looking at the percentages of females and males

---

it is hard not to see who was being prepared for future leadership in the country. In teacher's training and technical colleges, the divergence between women and men was wide but not as much as at vocational training centres and universities. A number of important factors created these differences, including, the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), unwanted pregnancies in school, parents and teacher's attitudes to female children (Tichagwa 1998:50-51). These factors were not mentioned in the women's responses.

As seen in the women's responses, the suggestion that at lower School grades the numbers of boy and girl children was equal is a realistic one, especially from the time of Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. Following independence, the Government of Zimbabwe committed itself to the policy of "Education for all." The Education Act was revised in 1996 including within it a non-discriminatory clause. A summary report of a situation analysis of orphans, vulnerable children and adolescents in Zimbabwe stated unequivocally that:

No child in Zimbabwe shall be refused admission to any school on grounds of race, tribe, colour, religion, creed, place of origin or social status of his or her parents  
(Section 4 Para. 2)

Apart from the reference, "his or her parents," the Act did not reveal its position on gender. While it would be wrong to suggest that the Act was gender-negative, the Act certainly lacked gender-sensitivity. This could well be the reason for what we have seen above.

During the period 1980-1997, the Zimbabwe National Population Policy reported that the number of schools and enrolment of children increased. The increase still showed a higher enrolment of boy children than girl children:

Primary school enrolment for females increased from 588,233 in 1980 to 1,231,473 in 1997. Enrolment figures for males for the same period increased from 647,761 to 1,259,888. Transition rates from grade seven to form one show that between 1990 and

---

1996 slightly more boys than girls proceeded to form one...statistics on secondary school enrolment for 1996 show that of the 750,723 pupils enrolled, 46% were females (Zimbabwe National Population Policy October 1998:27).

While the Zimbabwe Government's commitment to "Education for all" was being put in place, a series of successive droughts and economic structural adjustment programmes lead to intense economic on the economy. As a result, The Government assistance in education and other essential programmes was cut, and the responsibility for children's education resolved back to the parents (United Nations 2001:132.).

For rural parents in South-East Zimbabwe, who already were struggling financially due to the famine caused by drought, the only way to survive was to cut down on their children's education. For the traditional parents, this meant reverting to the cultural way of doing things: the girl children remained at home, helping and learning about housework from their mothers, thereby affirming the idea that from a very early age girl children should be trained to be a good wives, mothers and carers of the family.

A report entitled, *Child Care Practices in Zimbabwe*, states that there were more girl children than boy children reported to be at home that should have been in school. It can be argued that this situation would be more likely in rural areas such as South-East Zimbabwe than in the urban areas. It was also reported that more girl children than boy children were involved in raising their siblings (United Nations 2002:100). This information seems to confirm the women's responses.

It was an unfortunate situation that the government could not maintain its policy of "Education for all," and that children were taken out of School because of the financial strain placed upon poor families. It is equally unfortunate that the girl child had to pay for what both the government and parents could not do. The situation of poverty opened the door for parents who may not have been concerned about their daughter's education. Some parents took advantage of their poverty to justify their

---

attitudes towards their girl children. Dorsey has well summarised the attitude of particularly fathers to the education of their daughters:

“Why waste my money educating a girl who is going to work and enrich another man. A woman is a woman, educated or not. She is a better woman when not educated”. “I would never marry an educated woman because she demands too much. This is one reason why my daughters will not go beyond Standard Six”. “My wife never went to school, but she can cook and keep my house clean. This is what all woman should be - good housewives” (Dorsey 1975:95).

It is an unfortunate situation that some men feel that women should simply be “good housewives.” The Zimbabwe National Population Policy, under Gender Issues, states that in 1997, women made up 52% of the population. One fails to see the balance, when comparisons are drawn between of this static and the responses of the women above. The gender problem as revealed in enrolment ratios at secondary School level and above is a matter of concern. Some good things however are taking place in the country. The University of Zimbabwe has introduced the policy of affirmative action giving particular attention to women student enrolment (Zimbabwe Government 1998: 15-27).

### **5.2. 3. School Pass Rates of Boy and Girl Children at Ordinary and Advanced Levels**

As a follow-up to the question on enrolment, it was necessary to gain information about the pass rates for boy and girl children at ordinary and advanced level. The question sought to establish what the women under study had observed about this. This would help give a fuller picture of what the situation was like in present day South-East Zimbabwe.

Although 130 women were interviewed, only 77 responded to the first part of the question (the question on pass rates). The other women did not respond to this, because they did not have enough information to make a realistic comparison. Only



---

those who were directly or indirectly involved in the education system were in a position to answer the question about student pass rates.

The 77 women who answered the first part of the question about the pass rate unanimously agreed that more boy children than girl children passed “O” and “A” examination levels.

All 130 women answered the second part of the question that asked for reasons for their answers. This part of the question was open ended so that each person could proffer as many answers as was necessary.

The women’s reasons for the differences in children’s examination pass rates were categorized and listed in percentages as shown below:

- 28% of Respondents: Girl children could not cope with the pressure of study at this level;
- 11% of Respondents: Girl children have little motivation in education. They begin to look at boy children;
- 11% of Respondents: Girl children lack support from their parents for study at home;
- 16% of Respondents: Girl children are assigned more responsibilities at home than boy children are, to the point that girl children are left with no time to study at home;
- 20% of Respondents: Girl children seem to feel inferior to boy children. Girl children seem to feel that they cannot or should not compete with boy children;

- 14 % of Respondents: Some teachers despise girl children to the point that girl children are uncomfortable in class and begin to develop low self-esteem;
- Some girl children know, because their fathers have told them, that even if they passed their examinations they would not continue, because they have no money for them.

Figure 5.13. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 28% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 20% |
| Positive Level Awareness + C | 16% |
| Positive Level Awareness + C | 14% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 11% |
| Positive Level Awareness + O | 11% |

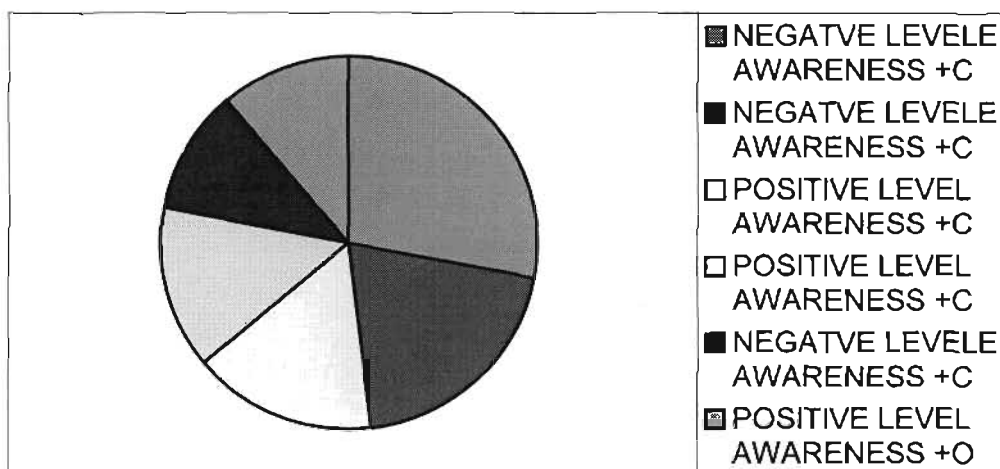


Figure 5.13. Percentage of Responses on Women's Observations on the Children's Pass Rate and Awareness of Factors behind this

---

The most popular responses suggested that girls could not cope with the pressure of study at this level. This kind of response raises questions as to whether women had developed such idea through a process of socialisation. If this was so, the need to raise awareness in these women was paramount. The second popular response, that girls felt inferior to boys seems to suggest that it was a problem amongst girl children themselves. Further questions would therefore need to be asked as to why girl children should feel this way. Such feelings of inferiority are possibly the result of their upbringing in the home.

The responses of the women under study to the above questions affirm the ideas expressed in previous responses. Parents prefer to their send boy children to school and leave their girl children at home. The low self-image of women referred to in the responses was a result of what parents and society thought about women and girl children. The responses also reveal that some women cannot see beyond what society dictates about their status and being. Some girl children had accepted the expectation of society that they were inferior to their male counterparts, and that they must submit to the boy children even in the School classroom. As a result, girl children will fail to work to the best of their ability, out of they fear of competing with boy children. As the responses show, society allows them to believe that boy children are more capable, simply because they are male.

The idea emanating from the responses that some Schoolteachers despise girl children is a strong and destructive tool. This is referred to in an article by Rosemary Gordon entitled, "Girls Cannot Think as Boys Do: Socialising Children through the Zimbabwean School System." Gordon mentions that this attitude, communicated to the pupils by teachers, is dependent on ideologies of gender. Although teachers do not intend harm, their comments create serious problems:

Teachers of both sexes believed that it was their duty to guide pupils towards gender-appropriate behaviours and occupations, and believed too that boys and girls are endowed with different and gender-specific natures, intellectual abilities, aptitudes and potential. Boys are described by teachers of both sexes as more serious about

---

schoolwork, and more intelligent, and better able to grasp difficult concepts when compared to girls. Furthermore, teachers believed that girls are overly pre-occupied with romance and love affairs and are morally weaker than boys. Both male and female teachers as the initiators of sexual activity more often perceive girl pupils with boys and male teachers, than as the victims of sexual harassment and abuse (Gordon 2000:54-55).

While this attitude is acceptable to some people, it remains definitively unjust. Rather than building positive character traits in girl children, it does exactly the opposite.

If it is true that girl children are preoccupied with issues of romance and love, it could be because they have been prepared for such from an early age. No one told the younger girl children that as women they would be good for anything other than being a wife, a mother, and a housekeeper. It is unfortunate that even female teachers fail to recognise what is taking place within societies, such as those of South-East Zimbabwe. Such women were brought up in similar ways. What female teachers are doing is simply perpetuating the cycle of oppression against women.

Anyone who blames girl children for their poor performance rates in school need to understand the circumstances that surround their lives. If girl children feel inferior to boy children in class, it may be because they have had insufficient time to prepare before class due to having to undertake household chores. It is also true that girl children know that they are expected to fail. It is a vicious cycle, for their parents expect them to fail and despise them as a result. This kind of attitude obviously encourages an attitude of complacency in girl children. Numerous examples were given of women who had done well in their studies. It would have helped them immeasurably if they had been encouraged. Female teachers need to remember the frustration that they went through as students and work towards helping the girl child find meaning in life. Female teachers and mothers should not perpetuate any form of oppression.

---

#### **5.2.4. Married Women Continuing Education While Husbands Care for Children**

This question sought to learn from the woman under study what the situation was for married women and education in the present South-East Zimbabwe. Today, opportunities for education seem to be open to many people in the world regardless of age, sex or marital status. Married men leave their families and continue with their education. As with other questions above, this question was open-ended to encourage the interviewees to provide more than one answer.

The women's responses were categorised and listed in percentages as shown below:

- 55% of Respondents: Culturally it was not acceptable for a woman to leave her husband and children and go to school. Culturally, the place of a woman is in the home with her husband and children. The woman should stay at home and care for her children. The husband is not capable of caring for the children without his wife being there;
- 24% of Respondents: It was acceptable for a woman to leave her husband with the children and go to school, because the education of the wife will benefit the whole family;
- Children belong to both the father and mother. Therefore, they should help each other care for the children. Husbands are proud when their wives are educated;
- 21% of Respondents: It would depend on what the husband said. The husband was responsible for both his wife and their children. If he agreed to let his wife go to school, then he would care for the children. If the husband did not allow his wife to go to school, the wife should obey her husband.

Figure 5.14. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 55% |
| Positive Level Awareness + O | 24% |
| Positive Level Awareness + C | 21% |

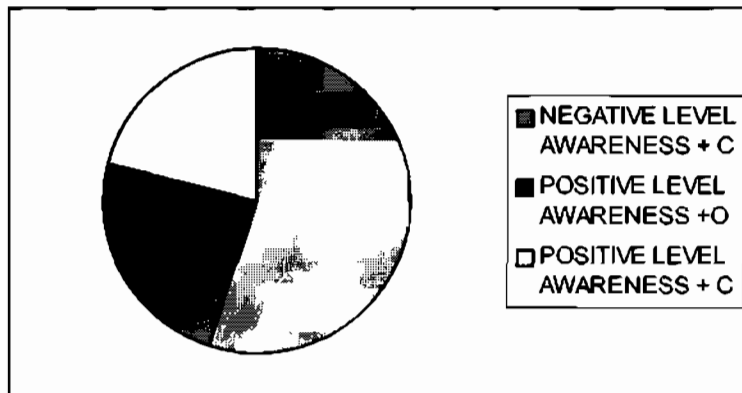


Figure 5.14. Percentage of Responses on Education Situation for Women and What Awareness was there for the Prohibiting Factors

These responses may not represent the thinking of the respondents, but rather that of the community. The question asked what would the cultural response would be in a given situations. The levels of awareness that came from these responses were not necessarily representative only women’s awareness, but also that of the community.

The popular response to this question, that place of the woman was in the home, affirmed that culture was one of the causes of women’s debilitation. The next most popular response suggested that married women could go to school and leave their children with their husbands. The last response seemed to be representative of what was happening on the ground, rather than what the culture dictates. The responses suggest that every family or couple would do what they felt was workable for them. The husband however was responsible for the final ruling.

---

According to the responses received, opportunities for women to further their education were equally available as for girl children. Young girl children are more likely to stay at home while boy children attend school. This takes away the potential for the girl child to receive intellectual development. If the father sent her to school, then it would be for his own benefit because later he could ask more lobolo for her. The responses suggest that if a woman was unable to complete her education before getting married, it would be to her husband's benefit if he allowed her to return to school. He could take pride in having an educated wife, who could bring more money into the home if she were employed. When the researcher taught in high school, a group of teachers were sitting in the staff room during a lunch break. Of the 13 teachers, only three were women. During a discussion on women and education, of the 10 male teachers, only three supported the idea that a wife could receive as much education as her husband. Those who supported the idea of having an educated wife stated that since the cost of living was expensive, if both wife and husband were working and earning money, they could help one another buy the necessary things for the family. Those who were against the idea of having an educated wife said that if women were educated they would become proud and uncontrollable. For some of the men, control was an important issue. This kind of attitude is suggestive of some sense of insecurity. Apart from the middle category of responses, the first and last categories did not have the woman in mind. The positive statements were only for economic reasons, while the negative group thought more about control.

The home and children were always placed at the top of a woman's agenda of responsibilities. It is not the same for the man. It is acceptable for a man to leave his wife and children and find a job elsewhere, or to further his education. This is not a common cultural practice for women. This placed women at a distinct disadvantage. One wonders if this could be society's way of controlling women so that they cannot compete with men. Whether this was the reason behind it or not, the results seem to agree with the views of the researcher. Few women finish their studies once they are married and have a family. Isabel Phiri has shown that some married women who might decline even going outside the country to continue their education, even if they were to receive financial assistance, because

---

they do not feel that they could leave their families (Phiri 2003:422). This comes from an internalised, learned attitude. Women have grown up hearing that a woman should always be at home with the children. To think otherwise, and leave the children with their father in order to further their education would appear to be an “evil” thing to do and makes concerned women feel reluctant to do it.

Because girl children are told, who they should be and what they should do, when they reach womanhood, they fail to live to their lives to the fullest human potential. As has been shown earlier, girl children are controlled as soon as they start to walk. There is no room for a woman’s true being to come out. Many of the women interviewed in South-East Zimbabwe had secondary education, but after they were married and began a family, the thought of going back to school became ridiculous and unthinkable.

#### **5.2.5 The Influence of Education on Culture**

This question sought to establish from the women under study the contribution that western education makes towards culture. The second part of the question asked the women to evaluate their responses. It was hoped that this would give a clearer picture of what education has done for women, as well as give the women under study an opportunity to make value judgements on the influence of western education on culture. Education is a significant instrument of awareness raising that would clarify the way that the women under study viewed education. In making such evaluations, the women would be exercising power to determine what was good and bad for them. Through the resultant process, their level of awareness would be raised, as they thought through the issues, which otherwise would have been determined by men alone.

The question was specifically intended to assist women in their reflections on what has been taking place, encouraging the women to make an evaluation hopefully this



---

would help raise their awareness. As such, the responses were given as contributions:

- 73% of Responses: Appreciation was expressed for the influence of western education. Comments given included:
  - Women (although only a few) can be employed in leadership positions and can lead men, this has been helpful and has improved the women's self-image;
  - Women compete with men more and more for high positions, e.g., in politics and in education;
  - It was good for the nation, because both men and women were beginning to be given recognition.

Although most responses were positive, there were a few negative responses:

- 27% of Responses: Western education had influenced the culture negatively, because the dress code has been affected especially for women. Respondents further alleged that:
  - Western education had caused the breakdown of family unity; As a result, children grow up away from the home. There was no chance for them to learn from their aunts and uncles;
  - There was too much mixing between men and women which encourages immorality;
  - Wives did not respect their husbands as they used to;

- 
- Young people despise cultural rituals. This attitude has caused confusion in the family and the community.

In reviewing the comments of the respondents, it would appear that western education is much appreciated among the people of South-East Zimbabwe. The most popular responses stated that education had positively influenced African culture. Previous discussions have claimed that culture considers women aversely, especially with regard to women leading groups where men are present. A few of the respondents indicated that women were now being employed in positions of leadership as a direct result of the influence of western education on culture. The concern of this study as stated in chapter one is the invisibility of women in leadership roles, this discussion has thus begun to reveal some of the contributing factors to this concern.

Other responses are concerned with the breakdown of societal structures, such as the family. Although this was a sincere concern, one might question if the influence of western education alone was the cause of the problem. One wonders, whether the coming of western civilisation as whole, rather than education alone contributed to this breakdown.

The responses affirm that western education is the gateway to equality, liberating women and men from oppressive cultural practices. While all this might be true, a question still arises as to whether the women under study understood that education could also be used oppressively, in leaving out those with little education, as is the case with many women. While there may not be many educated women in South-East Zimbabwe, there are many women who have received education throughout the country. According to the responses, there were only few women in leadership positions. This makes one wonder if the reason for not having many women leaders goes deeper than education. The response that educated women would compete with men for leadership positions came either from the women themselves, or through the ideological influence of a patriarchal society. In most cases, women do what they do without any idea of

---

competition. The education of women is important is women are to qualify for leadership positions. The liberating role of education was recognised by the past colonial rulers of Zimbabwe:

If the Africans were to be educated at all, they wanted it to be of a practical nature related to agriculture and industry to fit him as a labourer, but not to an extent where he could compete with European. . . early government grants-in-aid were given more from a desire to direct and influence African education along lines least likely to clash with European interests (Dorsey 1975:41).

Zimbabwe's colonial government did not want the Africans to compete with the European settlers; therefore, they did not offer them a comprehensive educational system.

In the same way, patriarchal society does not want women to compete with men for positions of leadership. It therefore does not support women's education. This has already been discussed in Chapter 2. As a result, there are but a few women who can compete with men for positions of leadership. Hlupekile Longwe has a point when she shows that a "lack of formal education has long been the patriarchal 'excuse' for women's lower socio-economic status" (2000:23). This lack of education further legitimises male supremacy.

While it remains true that education is an essential element in the liberation and development of women and men, it can be used negatively to disable people. A potent example of this would be when a child is denied education.

The second category of responses provides examples of people who have bought into the patriarchal system. They were so conditioned that they even denied their own existence without being aware of it. This is not their fault.

What then, can we learn from these responses? Amongst the lessons learned, we can see that:

- 
- Education is not bad, but the way some people appropriate it into their lives might be bad.
  - Education empowers. How, and for what purpose, people use that power is what might be in question. If women were educated, this would enable them to use the power of education.
  - The responses confirmed women's need for empowerment, not only to use the power of education but also to unlock that which is within them through education.
  - Women need to experience education for their own personal development, as well as that of society.

#### **5. 2.6. Improvements that one would like to see Education make on Culture**

As with the previous question, the purpose of this question was as an aide to enjoining a reflective and evaluative discourse amongst the women under study. It was felt that it would be an empowering exercise if the women were not only asked to evaluate but also make suggestions towards improvements they would like to see made by education on their culture. This began a process that brought a degree of awareness, as well as revealing the level of awareness that was already present.

129 women responded to this question. The responses were not categorised because they were taken as suggestions that women would like to see education help to improve. These were as follows:

- Teachers should not take the place of grandmothers in the village, nor should teachers teach what children know from home;

- 
- Teachers should encourage both boy and girl children to excel in their education;
  - Teachers should encourage parents to support children that go to school;
  - Teachers should make children work hard so that they are able to pass their grades;
  - Education should not be mixed with culture; otherwise, education will destroy culture.

From the responses above, it is not clear what improvements to culture education could make. What was plain is the suggestion that culture should be preserved, and that education should go on for its own purposes. In some responses, women seemed to be tired of culture and therefore looked to education as a way out of their dilemma. Alternatively, some responses seemed to suggest, with some degree of resentment, that schoolteachers were enforcing cultural teachings. Something else might be happening here. The question might not have been clear, as the two responses are somewhat incompatible. What does seem clear however is that culture continues influence and even to dominate the educational system. Some women were unhappy with this. In addition, there seemed to be an attitude present among some women that was protective of culture, hence the statement, "education should not destroy culture." What is clear is that women need education for their own empowerment.

Fiona Leach makes the valid statement that a "general education" will provide people with good foundation for their involvement in general life and the "employment market" (Leach 1999:46-49). For education to have a positive affect on women, it has to be an appropriate form of education. Vocational training, which places emphasis on traditional feminine subjects, would only empower women in those roles designated to them by society. Women need an

---

education that has an open curriculum, one that will assist them to discover their own gifts and human potential. This kind of education would have a positive affect. It would empower them to fight for and take control of their lives. This is similar to what Daniel Schipani calls, "Freire's pedagogy and education philosophy," which is centred upon "the human potential for freedom and creativity in the midst of the historical reality of culture and political-economic oppression" (Schipani 1988:13).

It seems obvious that the women under study were looking for a type of education that would conscientise them equip them towards human development. This in turn would lead to freedom and their participation as full members of the community in all systems of life.

As discussed above, Leach suggests that school education has "served to reflect and to re-enforce the male bias that prevails through the labour market, which usually places power in the hands of men" (Leach 1999:46-49). Within the context of this question, it is important to look at the type of educational curriculum that may be in use.

The attitude of teachers in schools plays an important role in the lives of the learners. As mentioned earlier in this discussion, it is not sufficient just to send girl children to school. A caring society should look at the curriculum, including, what Leach has called:

The hidden curriculum of everyday school practice which presents a male-dominated hierarchy of authority and socialises girls into accepting a subordinate adult role (Leach 1999:48).

Women need an education curriculum that will liberate their personhood. The effect of such an educational would then be a positive one.

---

The results of such an education curriculum will manifest themselves in many ways, including women's full involvement in society, including the employment market. Women should be participants in the labour market and in leadership roles in business. The education and employment markets go hand in hand; education prepares people for different kinds of employment, whilst employment and economical viability feed into each other. The economy of a country determines the power of a government's political system. Hence, education, employment, economic and political systems are all inter-related. Women needed to participate in all these if they were to be functional equals with men.

The relationship existing between education, economy and political systems was credited with the establishment of western civilization in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). Hence Dorsey can state:

Educational institutions by "themselves" do not constitute powerful forces in social change unless they are preceded by or associated with other significant changes in the economy of the system of political control...interest in Western education in Africa correlates highly with the introduction of an exchange economy, extension of European political control and the concomitant effect these had on traditional social structures (Dorsey 1975:40).

Dorsey continues:

With the expansion of European settlement and influence it became apparent to the African people that education was the only medium through which the younger generation would be able to understand and cope with the new society that had been introduced to the country. Education provided the main avenue to European-type occupations and ways of living which became increasingly valued among the African people (Dorsey 1975:42).

In referring to the first Free Methodist missionaries to arrive in South-East Zimbabwe, Tillman Houser has said that they were welcomed by the people, because the African people saw missionaries as people who would help their sons

---

learn English, thus giving them a tool to help them find good jobs and earn money to help the family (Houser 1994:34).

Although the responses did not reveal much about the need for a good education, it was nevertheless communicated in the mood of what was said. To refuse women an education would be to refuse them an existence in the industrial world. Women need to participate fully in all that is happening in the world, including the political and financial economy, just as men do. To refuse women education is to refuse them access to the political and financial economy.

As stated in the introduction, this chapter section has reviewed the contribution of Christianity and western modernity in shaping the identity of women. As mentioned before, the discussion of modernity included:

- Christianity;
- Education;
- The political environment;
- The financial economy.

The affect and influence of Christianity and education has been adequately discussed. The focus of this chapter will now turn to the influence of the political and economic systems on women. As before, in order to understand better the effects of the influence of the political and the economic systems on the women of present-day South-East Zimbabwe it will be necessary to follow the responses of the women under study to the interview questions.



---

### **5.3. Analysis of Women's Responses on the Effects of Political and Economic Systems on Women**

#### **5.3.1. Employment Status: Equity for Men and Women in the Work Place**

Following questions on the political and economic system there were a number of things that the researcher needed to establish. The intention was to establish some basic information about the women being interviewed. This was important, as it would influence the way the group would understand the rest of the questions under this section. If the women were employed, they would speak from their experience of employment. If they were unemployed, they might answer the questions differently or might not even answer the questions at all. Hence, the first two parts of the question were for the purposes of identification. The main question asked whether the women under study felt that equity was practiced at their work place. As before, they were asked to explain their answers. Furthermore, the questions were open ended, so that the women would be free to give additional responses.

Of the 130 women interviewed, 128 responded to the first part of the question and 50 women to the second. From those who responded to the question only 40% were employed; the rest were unemployed. Of those employed, some were nurses and nurse assistants; others were teachers in both secondary and primary schools; social workers and pastors of two church congregations.

Responses to the second part of the question were categorised and listed in percentages as shown below:

- 80% of Respondents: Men and women were treated the same if they have the same qualification. Their salaries were the same. However, the attitude towards them, of both male teachers and older schoolboys was one of mistrust;

- 20% of Respondents: Men and women are not treated the same. Although some women were ordained, they were not treated as real pastors. People still think that real pastors should be men.

Figure 5.15. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness + C | 80% |
| Positive Level Awareness + C | 20% |

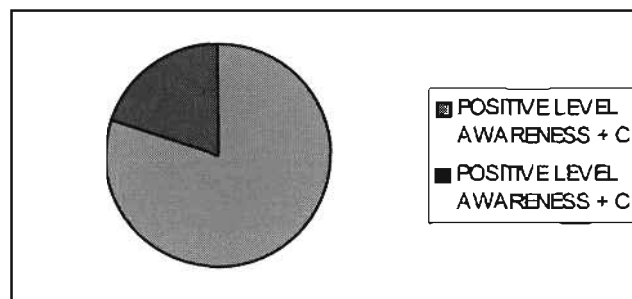


Figure 5.15. Percentage of Responses Determining Awareness on the Employment Status Equity for Men and Women in the Workplace

What was obvious from these responses was that the group represented more than one level of people, namely, the employed and the unemployed. Their situations were clearly different. The experiences of teachers and nurses at their place of work were different from the experiences of women pastors. Disparaging practices amongst teachers and nurses working in Government institutions would not be tolerated. National legislation would be in practice, although the unwritten traditional laws still influence day-to-day life. Women within churches situation still seemed to be controlled culturally. It sounded as if church policy did not necessarily influence the day-to-day life of women. Traditional influences still tended to dominate.

---

The women's responses to this question indicated the existence of two sets of laws. The government of Zimbabwe had introduced constitutional written law in order to liberate the country and its peoples from colonial customary law. Women in the teaching profession seemed to experience this first hand, yet customary law still seemed to be rooted in the lives of ordinary people. This seemed to be the experience of the churchwomen interviewed.

When speaking of two laws, it is important to understand that customary law and written law was binding upon Africans during the period of colonial rule. White settlers applied customary law, because they thought this was what Africans wanted. As a result, "they saw women as minors. This meant that a woman's right to own property and to take matters to court were limited" (Legal Resources Foundation: 2000:6-8). Customary law was particularly in force in the rural areas such as South-East Zimbabwe. Younger learners at school, looking at a female teacher, saw not only a teacher, but also a woman. The article protecting the fundamental rights of workers within the Labour Relations Act (Chap. 28:01) states that there should be no discrimination against any person on the grounds of sex (Rights of Workers 1999:3). Women who were civil employees would thus be protected by the Act, as can be seen in the responses above. The Act however was seen as a privilege to the women under study and not a right. This was an unfortunate situation.

The women's responses suggest that the situation in the church is worse than that in secular society. Female church employees seem to have no protection. The church may ordain women for ministry, because the church constitution allows it, but that does not guarantee acceptance by everyone in the church. Some men felt threatened by the idea of having women ministers (Elliott and Moody 1997:8). While some felt threatened, others thought that it was "ungodly" for a church to ordain women to the ministry (Malinga 2002:3-5). Tichagwa was therefore correct about the existence of two sets of laws operating in parallel with one another:

Customary attitudes and beliefs regarding women's subordinate position persist despite such laws. Patriarchal values have proved too strong to be changed through legal

---

reforms. Prevailing social attitudes continue to cast women in the traditional mould as child-bearers, producers of food and other domestic needs and in servitude to their husbands as heads of household. (1998:47).

This could explain why some people have a problem when they look at a woman teacher or minister, because in their minds they see a homemaker or domestic worker. They will only give the traditional kind of respect for women. This creates a problem, particularly for those who would like to respect women according to the constitutional law, who might feel that it was only a privilege and not a right for women. This affirms the thesis of this study that there are powers that hinder women from exercising their gifts to the fullest. Women need to be aware of this and face it.

The discussion under this question also exposed a lack of awareness in both the church and society. Human dignity goes beyond a salary cheque. The untrusting attitude that male students and other men demonstrate towards female teachers spoke more to their personhood.

### **5.3.2. Promotion: Men and Women Considered as Equals in the Workplace**

This question relating to promotions at work was a follow up to the previous question. The women under study were asked to answer the question and then explain reasons for their answers. The question was intended to give women an opportunity to reflect on the situation at their work place as it related to women. This question might not necessarily clarify the levels of awareness that the woman had, but it would be of help in seeing the situation in which women work, thus revealing something about society in general. As before, the question might open their minds to see things they might have not seen before. This would provide a beginning point of awareness to the situation around them.

Of the 130 women interviewed, only 53 responded to the question. The reason for this was that most women were unemployed. For those who were employed it was at

---

places where this question did not apply. The responses of the 53 women were not classified because they were comments, giving information about their place of work. Most of the responses were in agreement with each other. They were thus dealt with at the same time in clusters. The women's responses were listed as comments and recorded as below:

- With the emphasis on affirmative action, more women than before receive promotions. However, more men are promoted because they have more qualifications than women;
- Many people still have little confidence in women; as a result, few women are promoted;
- Some people still think that positions of authority are for men and not for women; as a result, more men are promoted than women;
- Some women have a low self-image; as a result, people would rather promote men who are more self-confident;
- Women are not serious about work; as a result, women cannot be promoted.

In response to the question, the answers indicated that more men than women were being promoted. Some respondents proffered the idea that men were promoted because they were more qualified than the women were. Although this may have been true, little attention was paid to the reasons why men are better qualified than women. Further discussion with the respondents revealed that from the inception of formal education, more men receive the privilege of education than women do. This, together with other reasons given by the respondents confirmed to the researcher the women's need for conscientisation.

---

From the responses, other matters began to surface. Some respondents were civil servants who had been integrated into the nation's economic system. For these women, theoretically, the doors had been opened for them to improve their positions. In practical terms however, their struggle for equality continued. The lack of confidence in the ability of women to make decisions was a case in point.

The unwritten and written laws therefore continue to operate side by side amongst African communities such as those of South-East Zimbabwe. It is thus of vital importance that women know their rights and resist the oppressive cultural practices that are placed upon them.

Serious problems still continue to thwart attempts at creating a non-sexist Zimbabwean society. Although the Constitution guarantees all Zimbabweans equal rights before the law, and the 14th Constitutional Amendment prohibits discrimination based on gender, it is still unclear if such discrimination is expressly forbidden. In question within the same amendment, are those discriminatory practices sanctioned by "customary law, on gender or other grounds." In addition, the amendment seems to placate customary law by not given enough room for an outright constitutional ban on discrimination. Hence, it states:

Nothing in any law contravened the anti-discrimination provision if the law in question related to the application of African customary law in any case involving Africans or an African and one or more persons who are not Africans where such persons have consented to the application of African customary law in that case (Maboreke 1999:36)..

Further evidence can be seen from the shortened sense of section 23:(5)(a) that reads:

Constitutionally one cannot discriminate on the basis of gender, unless the constitution says one can discriminate (Maboreke 1999:37).

---

Statements like these confuse Zimbabwe's position on gender equity. The Women under study could not establish whether they were treated equally, because although it was written that there should be no gender discrimination there exists no clear prohibition that laws have been contravened. Such silence is a way of affirming discrimination without actually writing it down. Beverly Peters clearly understands this situation well when she writes:

Despite legislation, government reforms remain limited. Article 23 (Section 1 and 2) of the Zimbabwe Bill of Rights, protects individuals against various forms of discriminations, save sexual discrimination. This article also allows for discrimination against women, if it is in the nature of African society to do so (Peters 2000:127).

Unless changes take place in African society, one must continue to question the wisdom of placing the protection of women's rights in the hands of the authorities and institutions of society. African societies need to be conscientised on this issue in order that they may act without impunity.

A further indication of the seeming public appeasement towards customary law is the response that certain positions of authority are to be reserved for men and not women. Likewise, the idea that women possess a low self-image should be explored with dexterity. Such poor self-image is surely not the fault of women, but rather the patriarchal society to which they have been subjected all their lives. Such ideas merely conform to society's expectation of women. As a result, the question as to whether men and women should be considered as equals for the purposes of job promotion and advancement should not be answered with a straight "Yes" or "No." On the surface, the answer would be "Yes," women are treated as equals; but underneath, the answer must be a resolute, "No," women are not treated as equals.

These various responses reveal that there was some awareness of what was going on in the socio-economic arena that does not favour women. What was particularly clear however was a general lack passion to work towards reversing the situation.

---

Having said this, the impression may indeed be false, due to the question not being penetrative enough, or that the interviewees did not think through the issues sufficiently.

### **5.3.3. Women and Ownership of Family, Money and Properties**

This question follows on from the two previous questions. When a person receives no financial benefit and is unemployed in most cases that person is potentially poor. The responses from the above question suggest that a woman's contribution in terms of salary or inheritance are limited because they are neither employed or considered as beneficiaries of their father's estate. This question was raised in order to establish from the women under study whether money obtained as a salary or inheritance, or the owning property in the home would affect them in any way. Its purpose was an attempt to get the women to think about their economic situation in the light of all that might happen in their communities.

130 women responded to this question. As before, it was designed to be open-ended in order to give the women under study as many opportunities as they wanted to answer the question. Answers for the first and second part of the question are listed together; these are classified into four categories according to the way they relate to each other. These were as follows:

- 37% of Respondents: According to culture:
  - The husband is the ultimate owner of family money and property, and the owner of all family members;
  - The husband owns his wife; what belongs to his wife belongs to the husband;



- 
- The husband is the ultimate owner, because the wife cannot do what she wants even with what directly belongs to her, without the permission of her husband.
  
  - 12% of Respondents: According to culture:
    - Both wife and husband are co-owners, because both have contributed in different ways to what the family has;
  
    - Wife and husband belong to each other; what they have belongs to them both.
  
  - 40% of Respondents: According to culture:
    - Married women can own some property, e.g., cooking utensils and personal clothing, some of the produce from the garden or what she may have bought with money earned through her own labour;
  
  - 11% of Respondents: According to culture:
    - Married women can own property, but only movable property, because the home belongs to the husband;
  
    - Houses belong to the husband, not to the wife;
  
    - Legally, a married woman can own property, but culturally she cannot own anything of great value, because a married woman is the property of her husband;
  
    - The husband is the true owner of whatever the wife produces.

- If a woman has daughters who are married, she might have been given a cow called the “mother’s cow” by the family of the groom.

Figure 5.16. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 40% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 37% |
| Positive Level Awareness + C | 12% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 11% |

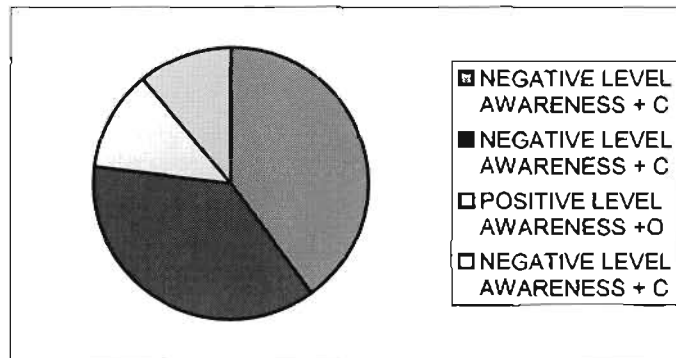


Figure 5.16. Percentage of Responses determining Women’s Awareness on their Economic Situation Based on their Cultural Practices

This question did not ask the respondents to evaluate the practice, but rather to look into the cultural practices with the purpose of interrogating the environment in which the women lived. By so doing, the women under study would have the opportunity to face their own environment, explain reasons for the practice, and thereby become conscientised. Although the question did not ask about culture, the respondents proffered cultural requirements. As in previous questions, the popular response confirmed that the husband was the owner of the family money and property. Women may own some things, but the husband owns most of the

---

valuable items. Although most respondents spoke from the perspective of their culture, a few seemed willing to speak for themselves. Two ideas that came out strongly from these responses were that:

1. Both husband and wife contributed in different ways to the wealth of the family;
2. According to constitutional law a married woman can own property.

Both these responses seem to indicate that the women were speaking for themselves, and therefore reveal a certain level of awareness.

The responses suggest that culturally, women cannot own anything of value. Cultural practices therefore contribute greatly towards the poverty of women. Until such practices are addressed, women will remain the poorest in the community. No matter how hard women work and earn from their labour, they will continue to suffer poverty because the distribution of wealth is unjust. What was encouraging amongst the responses was that some of the women understood that such cultural practices in themselves were unjust. Statements which asserted that wives and husbands belong to one another, and therefore whatever they owned by definition belonged to them both, revealed that women are beginning to see that this cultural practice is specifically designed to operate against women. The identification of awareness or non-awareness does not necessarily reflect the level of awareness among women, but rather it indexes the attitude of society and its cultural influence.

What seemed to come out clearly from these responses was the aspect of control and power. In the July 2000 edition of the magazine, *Speak Out*, the Government of Zimbabwe's six-year plan, supposed to conclude in 2005, was discussed in depth. According to this plan, a number of areas of women's development would be addressed. These included:

---

Women and the economy; education and training of women; women in power and decision-making; and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (Mzondo 2000:12).

Three long years have gone by. If the plan is to succeed, the government has to move swiftly. There are still many women, especially in rural areas such as South-East Zimbabwe, who remain poor, uneducated, and excluded from positions of influence and decision-making. Women's alleviation from poverty will not begin to take place until these issues are addressed, and women are allowed to participate fully in the development of society. Until then, women's concerns will merely be subjects of discussion and nothing of substance will result.

#### **5.3.4. Women and Family Inheritance**

Of these who possess wealth in African societies, many are the beneficiaries of family inheritances. In order to establish the economic position of women, it was thus important to ask a question on inheritance. From the responses received from the women under study, it would be possible to establish the level of women's awareness to the situation.

120 women responded to this question. As before, the question was in two parts. The first part simply sought information. The second asked the women to explain their answers. The question was open-ended and the responses were listed in three categories. They were as follows:

- 50% of Respondents:
  - A father's inheritance is the property of the family;
  - Sons and not daughters are the sole beneficiaries

- 
- What belongs to the fathers belongs to the family
  - Family property should remain in the family;
  - Girls may inherit some of their mother's property, e.g. clothing and kitchen utensils.
- 45% of Respondents:
    - The practice is good because if girl children are given an inheritance it will benefit another family;
    - Inheritances should remain with those who remain in the family.
  - 5% of Respondents:
    - The cultural practice is unjust because sons and daughters are children of the father;
    - In the event of the father's death, all his children should receive an inheritance.

Figure 5.17. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 50% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 45% |
| Positive Level Awareness + O | 5%  |

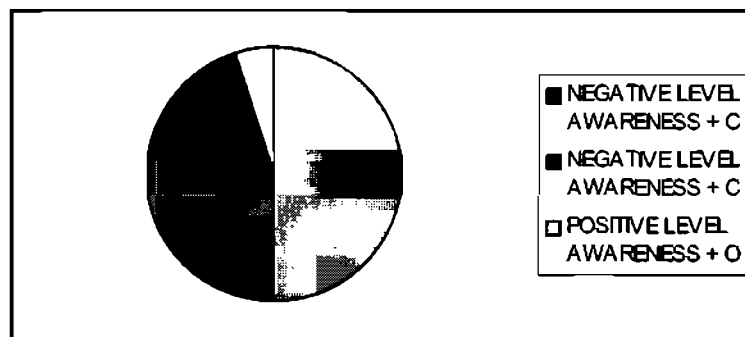


Figure 5.17. Percentage of Responses determining Women's Awareness on What their Culture had destined them for

The popular responses to this question agreed that a father's inheritance was to be given to his sons and not his daughters. The sons were the ones who remained in the home whilst his daughters would live elsewhere when they married. The majority of respondents justified this practice by stating that daughters could not be given an inheritance because when they married they would take the family property to another family. This would not help the family of the deceased. Only few stated that the practice was unfair. These women seemed to be thinking about the situation of women in the society, and thereby were liberated enough to be able to challenge the cultural practice.

Children own nothing when they are born, whether they are male or female. Their parents help their children acquire property and become independent. This is done in different ways:

1. Through education;

---

## 2. Through inheritance.

In the opinion of the researcher, parents teach their sons to be independent and their daughters to be dependent. Giving a child an education and an inheritance will enable independence. When parents abide by the cultural practice that refuses a girl child's right to education and inheritance, actively relegate that child to a life of abject poverty.

The women agreed that inheritance was for sons and that it was a good practice that had been accepted by all as a given. One wonders if these women had not just accepted their situation as dictated to them by society. By so doing, they were accepting that, as women, they could own nothing of value, because they themselves were deemed "property." By so doing, they were promoting the expectations of the society. That was the reason why this study was concerned with raising awareness among the people of South-East Zimbabwe. Mercy Oduyoye is right when she states that, "women abandon themselves to serve others" (Oduyoye 1994:174). Indeed, women swallow their pain in order to protect their loved ones, their family, and their society. The people of South-East Zimbabwe need to be sensitised to this imbalance between men and women

In reviewing the responses, it seemed that the popular responses were in agreement with Faith Marck's assessment that in Africa, "a systematic oppression of the female exists throughout her life" (1995:14). Indeed, the girl child is denied anything that would better her life. Here is what should be understood:

- A woman's father refused her an inheritance;
- Her husband uses her and refuses her a meaningful corporate honour;
- When the husband dies, his relatives want to take away from her all that she, together with her husband, owned.

---

The denial of the right to inheritance through culture thus plays a big part in the situation of poverty amongst African women. This could also explain why some widows are amongst the poorest in a community. What Rudo Kwaramba therefore expressed may therefore be true, that, “[t]he marriage certificate and the wife’s name were just used as a passport to get...” (Kwaramba 1999-2000:13-14) Men have thus systematically dispossessed women in order to get whatever they need. This is clearly demonstrated both in the church and in the political economy. On the one hand, women are given the task to preserve culture; yet on the other, culture, rather than protecting women, exploits them, without mercy.

In this discussion on the theological understanding of the church and women, it has been shown how women make up the highest percentage of the membership of the Christian church in Africa. No one could claim more involvement in church ministry (although ministry without portfolio!) than women. This was clearly shown in Zvobgo’s discussion (Zvobgo 1996:346-353). In women’s political involvement, the Zimbabwean people will remember how women were involved during the liberation struggle. Whilst some women, remained at home, supported those who were fighting by providing food and shelter, others carried guns and fought alongside the men. Women were promised equal opportunities after independence. Ironically, women are still asking, “Mr President, does the government intend to take any measures to set aside a quota of parliamentary seats for women?” (Selina Mumbengegwi 1995:65). Women are liberated sufficiently to continue to raise such questions with the Government of Zimbabwe. This is what is needed for the women of South-East Zimbabwe.

Chapter 2 demonstrated how culture is being used by society to oppress women. In most cases, women are used by the structures of society for the benefit of men. Women everywhere are patiently waiting to see the results of the so-called “platform” created by the Government’s gender policy. As Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda has said, “[w]hen the gender policy starts operating even women at Rural District Council level will be able to voice their concerns about the lack of



---

gender provisions within that level” (Gumbonzvanda 1998:2). Only when this takes place will the women of South-East Zimbabwe benefit.

After evaluating the interview responses above, one wonders whether the policy was in fact written, and if it so, was made available and known to the rural women of areas such as South-East Zimbabwe. The people of South-East Zimbabwe are challenged to affirm the humanity of their children. Girl children are still the daughters of their parents, and they deserved to be loved in the same manner as their sons. Marriage is not a punishment, therefore, it should prevent women from equably sharing in the inheritance from their fathers. Parents should guard against any system that consigns their daughters to a life of poverty. The Zimbabwe Government has done something to alleviate their situation, but much more still needs to be done. The Government needs to take interest in the development of its entire people, regardless of gender.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

This Chapter has made an analysis, through set questions addressed to a group of women from South-East Zimbabwe on the contribution of Christianisation and western civilisation women to the construction of the notion of womanhood. In particular, it included a discussion on:

- The effect of theological understandings of the church upon women;
- The effects of western education upon women
- The effects of political and economic systems upon women.

---

With respect to the effect that theological understandings of the church had upon women, the discussion revealed that the Women's responses were both positive and negative.

The interviews revealed the positive impacts upon women included:

- Conversion to Christianity;
- The discontinuation of such practices as polygamy and beer drinking;

The interviews revealed the negative impacts upon women included:

- The theological doctrine of creation;
- Some passages from the epistles of Paul that denigrate the role of women in the Church;
- Denying women their rightful place in the plan of God;
- Denying the image of God in women
- The negation of the God-given dignity of women
- Denying women the right to exercise their spiritual gifts;
- Denying the work of the Holy Spirit in women;
- Denying the equality of men and women;

- 
- Despising the work of Jesus in making all of humankind one in him.

The heart of Christianity is to liberate and build up the believer. Some of the church's theological understandings and teachings from the bible seem to oppress rather than liberate. They seem more controlling than nurturing. According to some of the responses, some of the churches seem to be more destructive than affirming. The church also seems to harbour oppressive structures rather than standing as a herald of God for the sake of the oppressed.

As revealed in the interviews and confirmed by Elizabeth Mutambara, women are in the majority in our churches, but they were the least represented in the decision-making committees of the church (Mutambara 1994:25-36). All this denial is because they are simply women. Women should be submissive to men. Sadly, the church not only controls women, but oppresses them as well.

In the opinion of the researcher, the Christian church has not only failed to liberate women, but also has failed to protect women from oppressive forces and structures. The effect of the church's theological understanding has been negative towards women, because the church has failed to see women as human beings, but rather as mere "souls without bodies" (Kanyoro 2001:160). Jesus saw people holistically. God created the body, breathed in a living Spirit, and the person became a living soul. God was not only interested in the soul or spirit; God was interested in a complete person. Ministry towards women means ministering to both body and spirit. Liberation for women means liberating both body and spirit, i.e. the woman that was created in God's image.

Concerning the women's responses on the effects of western education and women, the respondents felt that some good has resulted from western education and yet not as much as it could have been. Church mission schools were appreciated for contributing to the education of Zimbabweans even before the Government had it in mind to educate Africans. The women appreciated the policy "Education for all" that came after independence, for this assisted women to learn, even those children

---

whose parents could not afford to pay for their children. However, they seemed to say that school authorities could have done more. Church mission schools seemed more concerned to give girls a rudimentary education in order to satisfy the needs of producing good wives and caring mothers. The concern of such schools for girl children was similar to that of traditional African culture. Families also gave the girl child training meant to prepare them for motherhood and being a good wife. Although not of the same kind, church mission education built upon this family education for girl children. The two systems had the same goals. The Government did no better, for it did not have many schools for African people. Further, school fees were a problem for African parents. Those who were unable to afford school fees concentrated on the education of their sons rather than daughters.

After independence, the situation improved a little, because at primary level education was free. During the early 1990s, things however changed. Due to droughts and the imposition of economic structural adjustment programmes, it became difficult for the government to support the essential programmes of the nation and therefore ceased offering free education for primary school children. As a result, poor parents could no longer continue sending all their children to school. Where a choice had to be made, most parents chose to send their sons to school and to keep their daughters at home. Furthermore, the dropout rate for girl children increased. The pass rate at “O” level for girls was also low. Girl children had many pressures placed upon them, both at home and at school. From the responses, the education for girl children became an education of oppression rather than empowerment. The effects of such education upon women were considered in both the positive and the negative. In other words, the effects of education on women have been beneficial, but it could have done even more.

The Christian influence in Africa, including South-East Zimbabwe, cannot be divorced from education, politics, and the economy.

This factor was discussed in the previous Chapters when dealing with the coming of western missionaries to Mwanzezi. Here it was mentioned how the missionaries had

---

to negotiate with the native commissioner and the chief of the area the terms on which the agreement was reached. Giving education to the young men so that they could find employment were the things that persuaded the chief. The relationship between education and economics is an important one. Likewise, economics is heavily influenced by politics. It was thus important to review the effects of political and economic systems on women.

The women's responses revealed that a political and economic system has left women firmly on the outside. Their lack of proper education, training, and experience has been used as a major reason for women's exclusion. The respondents expressed the desire for more education so that women would be able to participate fully in the economic systems that determine the modern world. Women's poverty was caused by the lack of care and concern that both the government and society has for women. The interviews revealed that women were the neglected and forgotten people in the country's political and economic plans and goals.

Finally, it has to be noted that Christianisation and modernisation has contributed in some positive results to the women under study; the interviews however revealed some negative effects too. Some of the experiences in present day South-East Zimbabwe are because of the effects and influence of Christianisation and Modernisation.

---

## CHAPTER 6

### WOMEN'S AWARENESS OF CULTURE AND CHURCH CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

#### 6. Introduction

In the previous chapters, a lot of information about the people of South-East Zimbabwe and their culture has been uncovered. Most of what has been said came from interviews with the women. Whilst most of the interviewees have so far been female, in this chapter, men will be included. Among the interviewees were a small number of women holding moderate positions of leadership. Then the second group was made up of male leaders from the area. In Chapter 1, reference was made to the Gender and Development (GAD) approach as the chosen theoretical framework for this study. The GAD approach is concerned with the relationship pertaining between men and women. It does not look merely at women's needs, but rather calls for an awareness of transformation in gender relationships. This can only take place as men and women are made to face the issues concerned.

Chapter 1 and the introduction of this chapter are concerned with the marginalisation of women, especially in positions of leadership in both church and the public sector. The purpose of this chapter is to try to establish reasons for this. Building upon what has already been revealed previously; this chapter hopes to expose the factors that hinder women from practicing leadership. In the process of this investigation, it is hoped that levels of awareness among those who are interviewed will be discovered, and for those who might not be aware, that they might be conscientised in such a way that they desire to do more about their situation.

---

The interviewees in this chapter include people who represent those in power who can influence change in the area. The interviewees included men in leadership, because it was needful to hear from male leaders as well as female. In order for transformation to take place, men and women must work together. The inclusion of men in the study may encourage future dialogue between them and their female counterparts about what is taking place in their society.

## **6.1. Interviews on Leadership, Culture, Church, and Women**

### **6.1.1. Analysis of Responses of Questions on Leadership, Culture, Church, and Women<sup>1</sup>**

This analysis was based on the responses of 130 women who were considered representatives of other women in the area of study. As mentioned above, these women included nurses, teachers, homemakers, leaders and non-leaders. The study group included 20 male leaders, made up of 10 church leaders and 10 leaders from the secular world. They comprised of traditional headmen, headmasters, education department officials and a political official from the area of study.

### **6.1.2. Self-identification and People's Expectations of a Leader**

The first part of the question was intended to establish information about the people who were being interviewed since this would be helpful to the analysis. The second part of the question was intended to ascertain how the people defined a leader. As in other questions, the question was open ended. The responses were not categorised with regard to supposed value, but rather to simply list the qualities of a leader that were offered by the study group. The question was not used for measurement

---

<sup>1</sup> All questions in this section can be found in Appendix 3.

---

purposes, but rather for uncovering information that would be helpful in measurement strategies at a later stage in the study. The responses were as follows:

- A leader is one who is respected by the people
- A leader is one who is teachable
- A leader is one who is sensitive to others
- A leader is one who is respectable
- A leader is one who is responsible
- A leader is one who makes himself/herself available
- A leader is one who takes time to listen
- A leader is one who is able to think
- A leader is one who is patient
- A leader is one who loves people
- A leader is one who is concerned about others
- A leader is one who is able to get things done
- A leader is one who is educated.

In reviewing how the people of South-East Zimbabwe define a leader, one cannot find much difference, if any, from the general understanding that was presented in Chapter 2. However, the words may not have been understood in the same way, which may account for the slight differences in expression. From the responses, there seems to be nothing suggested that would hinder a woman from becoming a leader. This however can only be confirmed once the statements have been examined. In the light of what has been established in the previous Chapters, things may be different. The responses that describe an ideal leader as one who is respected, able to think, and is educated, it is most likely that men were the purview of the respondents. Many communities do not respect women; it would therefore be most unlikely that a woman leader would be thought of as being



---

respectable. It was also uncovered that women's ideas and suggestions were played down as not being good enough. On when a man notices such a suggestion and makes it his own, does it become a bright idea. It is thus unlikely that a woman leader would be thought of as a good thinker because in most cases women are not supposed to think! From the earlier discussion in this study, it has been established that not many women have much by way of formal (western) education. If the responses are read and understood in this way, not many women would thereby be included in the list of those who were expected to be leaders. Otherwise, the responses stated no prohibition based on gender.

### **6.1.3. Qualities Expected in Church and Society Leaders by the People of South-East Zimbabwe**

As stated in the previous section, this question was intended to provide personal information about the interviewees and their level of responsibility. In addition, information was sought as to the expectation that the people of South-East Zimbabwe had about leadership. This question sought to establish what qualities and responsibilities were expected for a leader in both the church and society. This question was posed as an instrument to obtain data, rather than as an instrument for measurement, hence the responses were not categorised or tabulated as percentages. The respondents indicated the following qualities or characteristics for the respective positions of leadership held:

- Sunday School Teacher: Loving, able to teach, loves the Lord, love children, understand the bible;
- Teacher in the Bible School: Educated, knows the bible, able to teach, loves the Lord, is a Christian, is respectable;

- 
- Pastor of a church: Concerned for the people, polite, a Christian, knows the bible, able to preach, educated, able to listen, respectable, responsible, available, patient, a man;
  - church Overseer/Bishop: Educated, respectable, knows the bible, able to preach, loves people, responsible, a man who is faithful;
  - Headman (*Sabuku*): A man who is wise, hard-working, trusted, faithful, listens to people, concerned about people;
  - Chief: A man, who is wise, trusted by people, concerned about people, one who understands;
  - Counsellor: A man who always tells the truth, is respected by the people, is concerned about the development of people and the area;
  - President of a country: A man who cares about people, desires the development of the country and people, is trustworthy, a man who possesses wisdom, is educated.

In reviewing the characteristics enumerated for a Sunday School Teacher and Teacher in the Bible School, little difference was identified from that indicated in previous questions. Prohibitions against women taking leadership could only be found by inference and were not formally described.

With respect to the other positions of leadership in both church and Society that are mentioned, the prohibition against women is clearly indicated by the constant reference to male gender being a prerequisite. It thus appears that there was little objection to women becoming Sunday school teachers or church treasurers, but not other positions of responsibility. As seen before, this has nothing to do with the qualities mentioned, but rather is indicative of the powerful influences upon

---

society, such as the unwritten conventions of culture and tradition described in the previous chapter.

#### **6.1.4. Women's Appointment to the Office of Pastor**

This question sought to establish what the people thought in general about a woman pastor. In asking the question in this way, the intention was to give the women a chance to speak out on what they see and hear in their communities. Unlike the previous two questions, this question was used to measure levels of community awareness about women leadership in their community.

Of the 130 women questioned, only 121 responded. The responses were classified and categorised according to the way they relate to each other and listed in percentages as shown below.

- 43% of Responses: Appointing a woman pastor would not be accepted by their people because:
  - The bible says women should not lead men;
  - Women are not confident enough to lead men;
  - Women look down on themselves;
  - Men do not like to be led by women. They will not respect her;
  - Women do not respect each other. She would not be respected;

- 
- Women are too self-conscious; therefore, they cannot be good leaders.
  - 57% of Responses: People would accept appointing a female pastor if she demonstrates ability:
    - If she respected the people and herself;
    - People would accept a female pastor, because women are polite and truthful;
    - Women are kind and patient;
    - People would accept a female pastor, because in Jesus gender is not an issue.

Figure 6.1. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Indefinite Level Awareness     | 57% |
| Negative Level Awareness + C+T | 43% |

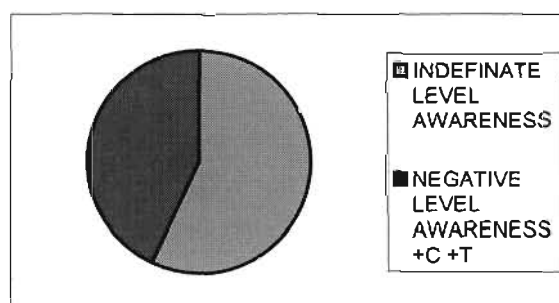


Figure 6.1. Percentage of Responses Determining the Community's Level of Awareness and Reasons why / why not Women should serve as Pastors

The majority of the responses said that a female pastor would be accepted. The criteria that the women gave for choosing a pastor were qualities such as those already discussed. One could therefore assume from these respondents that gender was not an issue. The respondents seemed positive about the capabilities of women. Accordingly, what is needed within the community is the power to bring this into reality. This will be the focus the proceeding chapters.

The other group of responses said that it would not acceptable to have a female pastor. The reasons given were not much different from what was described in previous sections, in that they established the existence of a prejudicial attitude against women's leadership in general. Such attitudes would hinder women from exercising leadership. Again, this study is concerned with targeting such people and attitudes. There is great need to raise awareness amongst these people before there can be a move towards transformation in their community.

From the responses, the researcher was persuaded to conclude that, in general the issue of women not being included in top leadership has nothing to do with

---

women's lack of ability. Rather, it has to do with people's attitude towards women and their interpretation of the bible, as indicated in the first response above. For these women, theological education would help raise awareness.

#### **6.1.5. Women's Response to the Idea of a Female Pastor**

The previous question sought to establish what people in the community thought about women as pastors. This question was directed to the women themselves. The question sought to establish what the women thought about the idea of a woman pastor. As with other questions, this question was used as an instrument to measure levels of awareness. These responses were intended to measure women's awareness, and were categorised according to the way they relate to each other and listed in percentages as below.

- 55% of Responses: Women would be happy to have a female pastor because it would be easier to approach another woman than to approach a man
  - More women are educated these days so women with good education would make good pastors;
  - Women are more responsible people than men;
  - Women are humble and careful;
  - Women are patient and loving so they would be good pastors.
- 45% of Responses: Women would not be happy to have a woman pastor because:

- o Women do not respect other women. They are jealous of each other;
  
- o Women are not good leaders because they are afraid of men. They are not confident.

Figure 6.12. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Positive Level Awareness    | 55% |
| Negative Level Awareness +C | 45% |

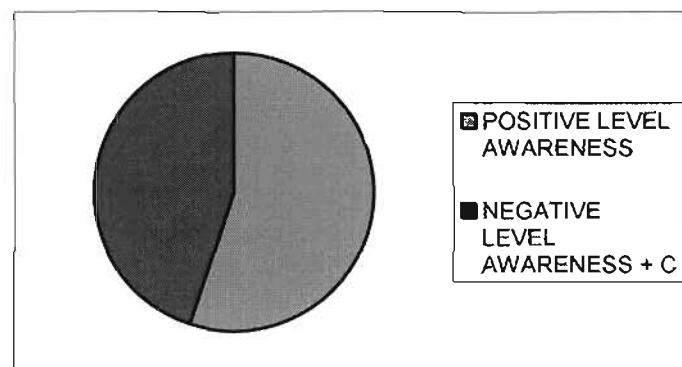


Figure 6.2. Percentage of Responses Determining the Level of Women’s Awareness of Factors why / why not should a Woman take the Responsibility of a Pastor

The majority of the respondents indicated that women would be happy to have a female pastor. Reasons given by the respondents for being in favour of a female pastor were very much in line with those given in regard to the characteristics of a leader in an earlier question. What again needs to be pointed out here is that of education. Education was clearly indicated as being the power by which things take place. The suggestion was thus made, that those who were educated could lead. Before Western civilisation, older women sometimes were found in leadership roles.

---

Since that time, leadership situations have changed. The kinds of situations in which leaders were needed, and where women of today would take up leadership were all influenced by western civilisation. Hence, some level of education is needed. The respondents were clear in this, that women who possess a good level of education would make good pastors. This was an indication that the power of education should never be overemphasised.

Some respondents were not happy with the idea of a female pastor. Again, their reasons were not much different from those established earlier in this study, and seem to be linked to culture. If the researcher's assessment is correct, the concern of this study is confirmed by such responses, in that there is need of raising awareness in order for women to eradicate negative attitudes about themselves.

Women were created for good purposes. Understanding such purposes and fulfilling them is important. In this regard, Eunice Njovana was correct in wanting to be a free woman and respected for who she was, free to determine her own destiny (Njovana 1995:162). This was the kind of self-respect that women should seek. The responses show that the respondents still need to see themselves as God sees them rather than the biased images that they get from the society. The positive attitude that Njovana displays about her own journey towards selfhood and identity, liberated from societal definitions of self is to be commended to all women everywhere.

Education would help if women could read about such women who have led communities. There are sufficient women in leadership roles who could serve as examples for the rest. Awareness would be awakened through the acquisition of new knowledge. The qualities of leadership that were given are demonstrated in many women's lives. An example would be Esther Shumba, an ordained minister of the Free Methodist church. For many years, Shumba served as a leader in both the church and her community. Men and women alike, in church and community loved and respected her. In South-East Zimbabwe, we find women such as Muhlava Chauke, also an ordained minister in the Free Methodist church.



---

Although not a bishop, Muhlava served her church as a church Administrator, representing her denomination at Government and church level, as well as at the national level heads of denomination's meetings. Another example is Mrs. Presca Musoki who headed two high schools consecutively. Musoki did more for the schools than her male predecessors did. These are but a few examples of women from present day South-East Zimbabwe that have excelled in leadership positions and serve as exemplars for the women of this area.

#### **6.1.6. A Daughter's Succession of her Father as Chief**

The office of a chief is one of the highest leadership roles in a community. While it might not be a common practice, a female chief is not entirely a foreign concept in the history of the country as a whole. According to the historical background described earlier in this study, oral history records a number of capable Zimbabwean women. Although strictly not named as a chief, Nehanda was considered more than a chief.

This question was intended to uncover information as to whether the people of the area would be open to a daughter succeeding her father as chief. The question was in two parts. The first part sought the people's response to the suggestion; the second, sought reasons from the study group for their given responses. The responses were as follows:

- 79% of Responses: This was not according to the dictates of culture. Sons can succeed their father as chief, but daughters cannot.
  - People still think that leadership is for men, not women;
  - They believe that women should not lead men;

- Culturally, a chief was expected to be a man, not a woman.
- 21% of Responses: People would accept the daughter of a chief to become a chief. She would however have to work with male advisors.
  - The daughter would be known as the chief, but other people would stand in for her whenever she should address mixed groups of people. She would be chief in name, but working only behind the scenes.

Figure 6.3. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness +C | 78% |
| Positive Level Awareness    | 22% |

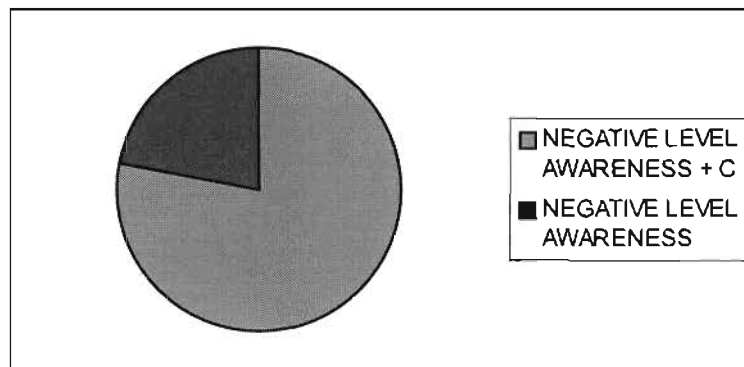


Figure 6.3. Percentage of Responses on Whether a Daughter could Succeed her Father as Chief or not, and People's Awareness of Reasons Why

The majority of the responses reveal that culturally it is not acceptable practice for daughters to succeed their father as chief. The reasons offered are similar to those noted earlier, namely, that such leadership roles should be the sole reserve of men

---

and not women. The second group of responses however seemed open to the idea. This said, they were only responding to the hypothetical and not necessarily, what is happening on the ground. Another thing that was raised by the study group was the suggestion that having a female chief would be a compromise, and that it that could only be accepted under certain conditions, e.g., that as Chief, a woman would need to work behind the scenes. In the researcher's assessment, the majority of people surveyed had accepted the cultural mindset. The second group of responses, although seeming more open, would still feel that regardless of whatever change need to take place, cultural "norms" should not be upset. All the responses therefore affirm the need for raising awareness among the people.

#### **6.1.7. A Woman Elected as State President**

A state president is the head of the country, just as a bishop is the head of a church. In raising this question, the intention was to motivate the women to begin imaging the election of a state president, and thereby noting their reactions. This question would particularly appeal to the promises made to those fighting the bush war during the liberation struggle. It was hoped that as women look at this question they would think of the promises of oneness and mutual trust that were made by the liberation movements. The responses would be used as a determining instrument to measure levels of awareness. The question was also asking what the people would think about the idea of a woman being elected as state president, hence the awareness in discussion would not be that of women but of the society.

Responses were categorised according to the way they related to each other and listed in percentages as below:

- 85% of Responses: Culturally no woman should be elected as State President, because people still believe that women are incapable of holding such a high position.

- 
- People would not vote for a woman. Some people still believe that high positions are reserved for men and not women.
  - Being a President is a big responsibility. A woman is not strong enough for it.
  - 15% of Responses: People can elect a female State President.
    - Some women would do better than men as State Presidents;
    - Women are more God-fearing than men;
    - Some women have better education for the responsibility of being a President than men;
    - Given encouragement and support, women would make better leaders than men.

Figure 6.4. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Negative Level Awareness + C | 85% |
| Positive Level Awareness     | 15% |

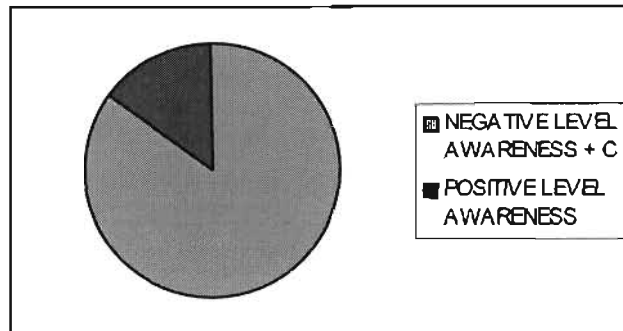


Figure 6.4. Percentage of Responses Determining People's Awareness of Factors whether or not a Woman could take the responsibility of a State President

From the responses, it was clear that culture has a special place in the lives of the community. Culture appears to be a determining factor for what a community does and does not do. Another aspect that the responses revealed was that they did not appear to speak for themselves, but rather for others. This kind of speaking makes one wonder whether the group felt free to speak for themselves. If not, one wonders what they would have said if they could have spoken for themselves. The reason why respondents may have answered in this way could be that they did not like to speak for themselves, but rather as individuals. Such an attitude is not an unusual occurrence amongst Africans.

From the second group of the respondents there were some, although not many who were open in speaking for themselves. These women seemed to have come out of the protective confinement of culture. Indeed, in speaking freely they were purposefully going against their cultural norms. In their responses, it was apparent that they viewed women as being people with potential, hence their statement that some women would be better as state presidents than some men would.

---

The women did not speak with one voice all the time. Some women have found safety within their marginalised state, and as such, perpetuate the oppression of women. On the other hand, there were women who had become aware of their oppressive situations and therefore dared to think for themselves. They were ready to fight on, even though it would be difficult. In a few other areas of the country, women have been elected as Councillors and Head Women. South-East Zimbabwe has neither had a female Kraal Head (*Sabuku*) or Councillor, hence too speak of a female Chief and State President would be unimaginable. The fact that there were no women in such leadership responsibilities does not mean that women were incapable of leading the people. It was rather the accepted practice of that area: In such a society, such responses reveal the hopes of women and not the oppressive realities under which they reluctantly subsist.

Whilst the history of South-East Zimbabwe might have appear to have had many women leaders, the women of South-East Zimbabwe need to look at examples outside of their district, people such as Chido Zarimba. Zarimba lived in the rural area of Nyatsanza in the Mutesa district, an area much like South-East Zimbabwe. Zarimba became Kraal Head following the death of her father. Some protested at her becoming Kraal Head, including that of her own brothers. Nevertheless, Zarimba dared to accept the responsibility and did the job well. Other examples include a number of female MPs in the country. Although not in South-East Zimbabwe, according to Marck and Muzondo (2000:8-9), these include:

- Ms Thokozani Khupe, the Area MP for the Makokoba Constituency in Bulawayo;
- Mrs Trudy Stevenson, MP for Harare North;
- Mrs Evelyn Masaiti, MP for Mutasa (Marck and Muzondo 2000:8-9).

These examples prove that women can make good leaders if only society will allow them to lead.

---

The above responses affirm what has already been said. In general, women have not failed to do what the people of South-East Zimbabwe expect of a leader. Rather, the problem is with people's attitude toward women holding positions of leadership. This confirms the fact that society has to be made aware of its negative attitude against women. To change this attitude the community needs to work together. Communities have made themselves believe that women cannot lead as well as men. The same communities need to open themselves to the idea of women leading, in the same way as the second group of responses. Although few recognised the potential of women to lead, it is evidence of hope for the women of South-East Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, the majority of women still see themselves through cultural lenses. This results in disempowering themselves and one another. Encouragement and support empowers. It is necessary that women do this for themselves and for each other.

This completes the analysis of women's responses.

## **6.2. Men's Views about Women in Leadership**

This question introduces the involvement of male leadership to the interview cycle. The support of male leadership is very important if transformational change is to take place. Without their involvement, such change could be difficult, if not impossible, for male leaders are the ones who hold power. There were two main reasons for interviewing some of the key male leaders in the area:

1. To elicit the interest, support and involvement of male leadership in the needs of women and transformation of society;
2. To assist the researcher what male leaders think about women in leadership.

---

As this study is concerned about the small numbers of female leaders in both the church and public sectors, there is need to be better informed of the reasons why the situation against women prevails. To complete this information, male leaders need to be polled. As a result, male church leaders, as well as some leaders from the public sector were interviewed.

20 male leaders in total were interviewed and all responded. The respondents numbered 10 pastors and 10 leaders from the public sector. These included headmen, school headmasters, education officials and political leaders at the local level. All interviewees were from the area of study.

#### **6.2.1. Leaders, Staff and Organisation Identification**

There were many reasons for asking this question. The question sought to establish who these leaders were in relation to their organisation. Obtaining such information would enable an assessment to be made of what power the organisation owns to effect change. The question also tried to find out how integrated their organisation was in terms of gender sensitivity.

As the intended focus of study was the situation of women in South-East Zimbabwe, rather than within an organisation, it did not seem necessary to separate the responses according to different organisations. The responses were therefore dealt with as one. Further, as the question sought information and not analysis, the responses were not categorised.

What came from the interviews was information about the situation within the education system. It was established that women would serve at the same rank and receive the same salary as men if they hold the same qualifications and service record. There however were fewer women than men employed in such high positions. The reasons given were similar to those established earlier, namely that fewer numbers of girl children attended school and those who did attend



---

concentrated mainly domestic subjects. As a result, women did not have sufficiently high qualifications to satisfy present leadership requirements. Idah Chikuku has confirmed this when she writes that:

Here in Mwenezi (South-East Zimbabwe), we do not have very educated women, but we are told that in other areas women have gone far in school (Chikuku 1995:27).

The other leaders had men on their staff. If women were included, it was as secretaries and cleaning staff. The church leaders had few women serving on decision-making bodies. However, this was not true of all the church denominations represented.

The government should implement, enforce and commit itself to programmes that address the gender imbalances recognised within society. Following the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, Zimbabwe committed itself to address such issues as:

Women and economy, education and training, and participation of women in positions of political power and decision-making as its national priority areas of concern (Tichagwa 1998:79).

This was the kind of action would address the needs that have been exposed in the previous chapters.

### **6.2.2. Male Leaders' View of Female Leadership**

This question was an attempt to poll the individual leaders as to what they thought about women as leaders. Their views on women leadership would shed light on levels of awareness that men have about women. As leaders, their contribution to the discussion would be helpful. Their inputs about leadership would be

---

concerned with daily experience. As in other questions, the responses were classified into two categories. The first category represented the least popular responses, while the second represented the most popular responses. The responses were categorised and listed in percentages as below:

- 25% of Responses: Women are capable of leadership.
  - Women's ability should not be compared with that of men. That would not be unfair.
  - Some women were capable of leadership within the framework of women's capability.
- 75% of Responses: Women are more capable than men are.
  - Some women were just as capable as men;
  - Some women are good administrators, honest and careful.

Figure 6.5. below provides both a tabulation and graphical analysis of the responses as understood by the researcher.

|                              |      |
|------------------------------|------|
| Positive Level Awareness     | 75%  |
| Negative Level Awareness + O | 25 % |

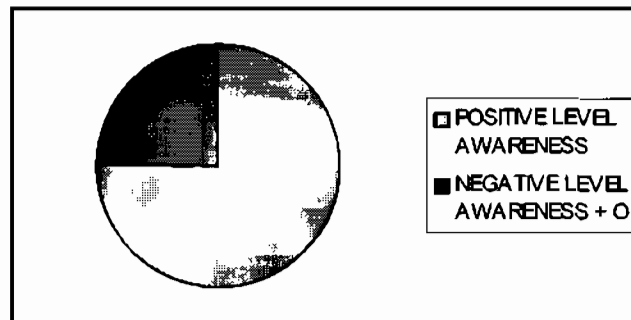


Figure 6.5. Percentage of Responses among the Leaders determining the Level of Awareness of the Women's Marginalisation in Leadership

The responses of male leaders appears positive, however there are some elements, which do raise questions. The first is from the first group of responses. The idea that women's ability should not be compared to that of men, and that women were capable of leadership within the framework of women's capability is suspicious in the very least. What particularly comes to mind suggests a barrier, the nature of which is not specified. The statement seems to suggest a different unit of measurement for women than for men. If this is correct, is that this has kept males and women in two independent spheres, thereby suggesting that women's capability is questionable. This would confirm the marginalisation of women that was suggested earlier in this study. This would imply that the respondents were unaware of the oppression of women.

Responses within the second group seemed to be much more. What however could not be ascertained was whether the leaders really believed what they said, or alternatively, were they simply trying to mollify the researcher? Whatever may be the truth, the responses seemed positive. They gave enough ground to start

---

negotiation. These responses came as an evidence of awareness of that which makes a leader.

It was encouraging to seeing that among the male leaders of the area there were some positive attitudes toward women's ability. If leaders saw possibilities for women to excel, this could signal the beginning of women's liberation. It was important for female and the male leaders in the area to work together towards this realisation, without which the situation of women would not change.

Of the 20 interviews conducted, there were 15 positive responses—enough to start a negotiating table! As Phiri has stated, the best way to solve problems between two parties is through the medium of “negotiations” (Phiri 1998:198). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the experience of Chido Zarimba is something that must be realised, because although there were those who did not want to see her become a *Sabuku* (Kraal-head), there were others who supported her. Some included her late father, who left a will stating that he wanted his daughter to take over his responsibilities. Others included her late father's friends who also wanted to see his wishes carried out.

### **6.2.3. Equality Between Men and Women in the Workplace and Organisation**

This question is similar to one presented to the women, the difference being that is was addressed to male leaders who are heading up organisations. The question was intended to determine how these leaders and their organisations viewed women and men in their organisation. The second part of the question was intended to find out how as leaders would deal with issues of gender equity in their organisation. When male leaders have ideas on how to positively address issues of prejudice against women, a community can be hopeful in realising transformational change.

---

In response to the first part of the question, all twenty leaders said men and women were all treated as equals in their organisations equals. Responding to the second part of the question, various responses were received including:

- Whilst men and women were treated as equals, men were not women, and women were not men. Differences of gender should be maintained
- Men and women were treated as people, but men were treated as men and women as women;
- Women and men were not treated the same, because they were not equals;
- Women do not like to be treated as men and men do not like to be treated as women;
- Women were treated as less important; they were not taken seriously.

Reviewing the responses, two things stood out:

1. Although there was ample evidence that men were willing to accept the equality of women and men, there was need to emphasise the differences;
2. In order to understand what is going on, it is important to have an understanding of some of the phrases used e.g., “women were not men and men were not women” “men were treated as men and women as women.”

What might behind these phrases was key to understanding what the male leaders were trying to say. As some of the interviews were conducted orally, the researcher found it helpful to further probe the interviewees for the purposes of clarity. What the statements seemed to intend was that both men and women were to be treated

---

and respected within the sphere of cultural expectation. It became clear that, while both male and female leaders were to be respected, cultural values must be applied, thereby creating difference. From the responses, there was also an evidenced lack of interest in the question.

The last part of the question sought suggestions from the leaders as to how to solve the problem of treating some people more important than others in an organisation. The responses offered would not only reveal the level of awareness that might be present, but would also show if the leaders were willing and able to deal with such problems seriously. The following responses were noted:

- This was a subject that people did not like to discuss;
- Women should not fight, but rather persuade men to understand;
- Men should listen to what women are saying;
- This was a lesson that should be given to the leaders little by little until they understand; only after the leaders have understood, could they teach the people.

The responses that stated that women do not like to be treated as men, and men do not like to be treated as women, seem very conclusive and closed for discussion. One wonders whether raising awareness with such leaders would be difficult. Awareness would be easily raised with people who are open to new possibilities. Although there were some encouraging responses, there was some negativity particularly around the comment that this was a subject that no one wanted to discuss.

The responses revealed mixed feelings from among the respondents. One wonders if the respondents wanted to answer the questions positively, but for reasons unknown chose to do otherwise. It seemed that some of the interviewees had never been

---

confronted with such questions before. Although the leaders did not seem comfortable answering these questions, one would hope that they would think about the questions and their answers. It is hoped that this would make them think deeper about the subject, thereby raising awareness.

The comment about the differences between men and women was raised repeatedly. The statement is to a certain extent true. These differences were intended by God who created humankind, yet they should not be taken out of proportion. When Paul spoke about the oneness of Christians in Ephesians 3:28, it was not his intention to do away with “maleness and femaleness” (Ahlbrand 2003:24-25). The differences in gender were complementary for the good of the Kingdom of God. It is true that men are not women and women not men, but they are of equal importance in the sight of God.

The researcher concurs with Thoko Ruzvidzo’s definition that equality is the recognition that men and women have “equal rights and equal access to resources and participation in decision-making” (Ruzvidzo 1995:17). Nyambura takes this idea further by speaking of idea equality as the, “partnership of women and men” (Njoroge 2000:65, 67). This was what the women of South-East Zimbabwe need. Men and women were God’s creation. They both have been commissioned by God and given dominion over God’s creation (Brown 1996:23). The response that women should not fight but persuade men to understand, suggested that men still wanted to have the upper hand on women. At this point, women’s liberation was taken as a privilege for women. The respondents had forgotten that women’s liberation was a woman’s right, and not a privilege. They forgot that when fighting for liberation there was no time for persuading. The response that lessons to leaders should be given little by little until they understand also left power with men. Men do not feel the pain, only women. The communities of South-East Zimbabwe need to be reminded of the saying “do to others what you would want them to do to you.” Women are the “other,” hence men should treat women with respect.

---

#### 6.2.4. Advice for Young Women Aspiring for Leadership

The last question given to the male leaders was intended establish what advice they would give to aspiring young women who wanted to become leaders. Included in the responses were:

- Young women need to know that they can become good leaders if they only would come out of their cocoons;
- Women need to have faith in themselves, because they can become good leaders;
- Women need to remain humble and stop fighting with men;
- Young women should be bold and courageous, leadership is a serious matter;
- Young women should be humble and mind their own business;
- Young women should not allow anyone to stand in their way.

Although the responses seem to be generally clear, there were some points that raised some serious issues. Statements such as women need to remain humble and stop fighting with men, as well as, young women should be humble and mind their own business were somewhat troubling. In particular, the references to women being “humble” and that they “should mind their business” were cases in point. One wonders if this was a suggestion that women had other business, other than leading. Part of the problem in understanding what was said may have been created by the question itself. If the question had sought a comparison, in asking what advice would be given to young men aspiring to leadership matters would have been



---

clarified. I do not know if the advice for young men would have been any different to that given to young women.

Although the responses were encouraging, they lacked advice as to how to deal with church and community that is antagonistic towards the leadership of women. Likewise, the advice to be “humble” and “stop fighting with men” can be interpreted in different ways. It could be used to empower or conversely, disempower. Some will no doubt use the biblical term “humble” as a covert excuse to exploit women. From the responses, there could also be a hidden attitude that suggests that some women were not leaders because they were not humble. Thus, it would be their fault. Women do not have what it takes to be leaders simply because they are women. Sadly, the respondents left out the responsibility of the church and community in empowering young women leaders. Both church and community could help eliminate gender discrimination in their areas of influence so that the young women leaders can develop. Through their leadership, church and community should affirm young women. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and by association, the Government of Zimbabwe signed a Declaration on Gender and Development in 1997, committing itself towards:

- The achievement of a target of at least 30% of those in politics and decision-making structures by 2005 should be women;
- The promotion of full access to, and control over, productive resources by women to reduce the level of poverty among women;
- Repeating and/or reforming laws, amending constitutions and changing social practices that still discriminate against women;
- Taking urgent measures to prevent and to deal with the increasing levels of violence against women and children (Pearce 1999:8).

---

In the opinion of the researcher, it is not enough that Governments merely sign resolutions. There is need for follow-up and enforcement to take place afterwards. In order for resolutions such as these to become a reality, leaders in each organisation must work with government and communities so that such policies and resolutions can be implemented. The leaders interviewed for this study should be part of the implementation process. The response of the leaders that “leadership was a serious matter” was true, and is something that they as leaders need to remember.

Male leader’s responses to what they think about women as leaders cannot be answered in one sentence. While the leaders did not say that women should not lead, in all their responses there was no sign of any awareness of the situation or concern about the marginalisation of women. It seemed as if the leaders were happy with maintaining the status quo by saying, “Let nature take its course.” Although among some leaders interviewed some openness to women in leadership was observed, there was no deliberate willingness to speak out and defend the situation of women leaders. What could be said about women as community and civil leaders could be said about women in the ministry. I concur with Judy Brown that it is necessary that those people who accept woman ministers should make it their responsibility to challenge those who do not accept women ministers. If this challenge does not occur, then the “wrongdoing would continue” (Brown 1996:10).

African men should remember what it was like under colonial white rule. The Rhodesian government excluded African people from leadership and all meaningful development programmes. This created enough concern among Africans to engage in the liberation war against the white government. It is therefore necessary to question the sentiment, that women should remain humble and stop fighting with men. Unfortunately, African men cannot see that the oppression of women is much like the oppression of men (and all Africans) under colonial white rule. The situation has become more critical, because even the Christian church does not seem to recognise the dilemma of women. Instead, it remains silent, seemingly

---

collaborating with those systems intent on oppressing women. Brown reminds of us of how the church had to be awakened by the world to the matter of the evil of slavery rather than the church being the one to caution the world about such evils in society (Brown 1996:10). The church, of all organisations, should be the first to speak against the oppression of women. It should advocate for women's liberation because that is the right and just thing to do. In order for the church to do this, its leaders should lead the way. Church leaders in South-East Zimbabwe need to take it upon themselves to preach liberation for all through word and deed, in the same way that Jesus was concerned about all people regardless of their gender or race. The church and its leaders should walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

The concern of this section has been leadership, culture, church and women. The responses of women, as well as some male leaders from the area of under study, have guided the discussion. Analysis of the responses, covering each one of the concerns, reveals that the people of South-East Zimbabwe have certain expectations of a leader. These expectations given in interviews, describe the essential characteristics of a leader, and match to some degree that found in the literature review. The findings however seem to be contradicted by actual practice in who becomes a leader. Responses, such as those that call for respectability, teachability, sensitivity, etc. are qualities that are expected of a leader, and are by definition gender-neutral qualities found in some women as well as in some men.

Writing on the subject of leadership, Roberts has said that women are "more prudent than men." Likewise, women are "more truthful than men," and "more faithful than men" (Roberts 1997:83). Whether we agree with Roberts or not the fact is that both men and women are human beings who possess both strengths and weaknesses. Yet, in what has been seen so far, there are more men in leadership positions than there are women. The concern of this study is to try to establish the reasons why women are not considered the equals of men. Some responses implied that women were not good enough. This amounts to discrimination based on gender. One wonders whether there were some hidden qualities that may not have been spoken, but exist as hidden transcripts. Such an imbalanced system is also found amongst

---

the country's laws. Bafana Khumalo of the South African Gender Commission has said that culture is being used against women (Khumalo 2003:4-5). Earlier in this study, it was demonstrated alongside constitutional law is that of customary law. These customary laws, though unwritten are more forceful and operative, especially the people in the rural areas, than the written constitution of the nation.

In the discussion on cultural expectations of women in Chapter 2, it was pointed out that from the responses of women that their place was in the home. Likewise, they were culturally expected to be entirely subservient towards men. Therefore, to speak about women leadership would amount to cultural defilement. Similarly, in Chapter 3, within the discussion of the churches theological understanding, it was pointed out that for many church people, the bible expressly forbids women to lead men. Hence, some churchwomen state that women should be led by men. Additionally, to accept women in leadership in any organisation, would be unnatural and should be avoided at all costs. Any church that agrees with this thinking actually affirms culture, making the hindrance for women in leadership both cultural and theological.

### **6.3. Summary Analysis**

The concern of this study as stated in Chapter 1 was the invisibility of women in positions of leadership in a society in which women are in the majority. When confronted with questions as to why women should not lead, some people state openly that it is culturally incorrect that women should lead where men are present. Church people would go on to assert that it was neither biblically or culturally correct for women to lead when men are present. Others would say that both culture and the bible prohibit women's leadership in organisations where men are involved. Some would even contend that women are incapable of taking on leadership roles.

Selina Mumbengegwi addressed a question to President Robert Mugabe, asking whether the government had any plans to increase the number of women in

---

parliament. The answer that she received back stated that, “women were their own worst enemies because they did not elect one another to parliament” (Mumbengegwi 1995:65). A subsequent query should have been raised, namely, “Do women really work against each other?” If they did, then why do they work against each other. These are questions that people do not like to face, as the answers often reveal the pervasive extent to which evil is present within society.

According to the responses, a number of women continue to perpetuate oppressive cultural and religious practices. A most recent example was that screened on eTV in South Africa, 21 September 2003 about Amina of Nigeria. Some women spoke out, giving their opinions why Amina should be killed. Similarly, some women spoke out against women in leadership. It is important to follow up on these kinds of responses by women against other women. The present research established that such attitudes held by women against other women since the time they were young people (Wutawunashe 1995:84). They patently lacked awareness of the situation of women. From a young age, women were told that they were not suitable for leadership. Their place was in a home. They were told that they should remain quiet and allow their father, brother or husband to speak for them. In church business meetings, women should also not talk much. They are expected to vote for what men decide without giving their own contributions. Due to their lack of awareness, women do not think about questioning the reasons why it is this way, rather they simply accept the status quo.

Women are also told that it is not necessary that they get much education. Hence, it is implicitly implied that a little education is good enough for them. Women are told that their brothers are more important to the family than they themselves are. This gives understanding to why some women speak as they do. They have suppressed their real self and not allowed it to come out. The analysis thus revealed that some of the interviewees, women included, disagreed on the leadership of women because culture forbade it. Education for conscientisation was necessary for the awakening of their minds. If this assessment is correct, much more needs to be done in order to

---

raise awareness among these women in order for them to contemplate their own liberation.

The assumption of the researcher was that the women were merely reiterating the created self of society. If given their space to rehabilitate their real self, they would inevitably speak differently. The women would not negate the capacity of women to lead, but would recognise such women as Rachel Masimo, an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God Church in Malawi. Masimo earned a degree in theology and began a church congregation in Lilongwe (Phiri 1998:212-217). Women of South-East Zimbabwe need to be informed of women such as Thoko Ruzvidzo, Regional Co-ordinator World University Service, and Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, who was been mentioned several times in this study. When Ruzvidzo was asked about her success, her commitment to the women's empowerment, and how she attained such a senior level of leadership, she could reply:

I then started reading more about what other women were doing...that inspired me to think that if other women can do it, why can I not do it too?...I come from a family that believes in a lot of hard work, but my determination to work harder was inspired by the women who had made it to the top. Listening to the way those women spoke about the issues that affect women, the opportunities for women, and how women should fight for their own emancipation, all this inspired me tremendously (Ruzvidzo 1995:10-11).

This research has revealed that there is still a poor illiteracy rate among women of South-East Zimbabwe. They need to know that women are capable. They need to learn from other women by reading and observing. They need to know that to succeed they need to work hard. Working hard is not foreign to the women of the area under study because they know all too well what hard work is. In order for them to succeed, they need to listen to women who have reached the top of their profession and learn about women's issues, obstacles, and opportunities and how they can fight the enemy of their freedom in order to be liberated. The greatest enemy of liberation is ignorance about the situation around them. That is the reason why they need to be made aware.

---

The women of South-East Zimbabwe can only dare to demand their right to education after they have become aware of the situation of oppression. Education empowers. Sadly, society uses women's lack of education as an excuse to shut them out of leadership and decision-making positions. Education is not a privilege for women, it is a right. As the poem of Shumirai Makasa's states:

Father, let me go to school, too  
Even though I am a girl.  
You never know where fortune lies,  
Children are same everywhere.

Father, let me go to school, too,  
To learn, like the others do.  
A person's livelihood depends on education  
And a girl is a person, too.

Father, let me go to school, too.  
Accept me the way I am.  
You refer to a boy as a child,  
Even me you call a child  
So treat all children the same.

Father, let me go to school, too.  
Without education I am useless.  
Tomorrow you will regret.  
A girl is a person, too.  
Please let me go to school. (Makasa 1995:35)

In the culture of the people of South-East Zimbabwe, children, especially girls, do not reason with their fathers. What the father says is final. If however these women were to rise and become their best selves, they would have to dare reason with their fathers. They need to know that there is nothing wrong in asking for what belongs to

---

them. It is a right of women to develop and become their best self. This will only happen when the case of culture is not demanded from them.

These successful women had a beginning. They dared to be what culture said was only possible for men. They said “no” to the controlling powers. No one should be told that they are incapable of doing anything positive and therefore should remain silent and obedient to the control of culture. These women worked hard to get to where they are today. They said “no” to the oppressive practices of culture. They worked hard to discover who they really were, rather than accept blindly following what they were told to be by society. These women opted to become the today’s woman that Nyasha Utete talks about:

She is the amalgamation of service, hope and skill.

The strength that she instils

Her home and her vocation

She doesn’t idle away time

In summery climes.

Hers is the struggle for strength

To which she goes all lengths

She pounds the grain

In sun and rain;

She works at her desk

In busy conquest.

She is a woman who won’t give in

To pressure, fear of whim.

She doesn't e'er succumb

Though dire misfortunes come.

A woman of today

Who's very self-aware

Debating not for gray

You see it in her air. (Utete 1999:21).



---

The poem ably demonstrates a person who is hard working and capable. The first few stanzas of this poem tell it all. To be a woman does not mean to be weak. Not only women in the public sector fail to understand this message, but Church people to. This is why churchwomen said that they are not being allowed to exercise their gifts to the fullest.

## 6.5. Conclusion

Women are not only in the majority in the church and society but also in their giving towards the church. The study has pointed out that women make up the majority in both church and society as has been mentioned by many writers including Ezra Chitando (1998:73-79). Women do not only give their money but they give of their time and service for the good of the community and the church. Yet, neither the community nor the church considers the value of women, as they should. Elizabeth Mutambara is correct in her opinion that women are not often seen in the “decision-making bodies of the church” (Mutambara 1994: 24-36). This observation was confirmed in the research contained within this Chapter.

Reasons given for the limited involvement of women in leadership included:

- The bible forbids women from leading;
- Culture does not allow women to lead men;
- Women are expected to listen and go along with what is said by men.

The irony of the situation is that the same bible is full of references that are liberative to both men and women. The sense of irony is intensified by the preoccupation of some with Hebrew bible food laws (cf. Lev.11:1-47), and culture, while ignoring other more pressing issues, such as the role and rights of women in the church. Most

---

limit their understanding of women and the bible to such texts as 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 7:1-5; 1 Timothy 2:12. Church people would find it helpful if they read the bible as a whole. Although culture has a place in the interpretation of the bible, culture itself does not interpret the bible. Rather, the bible should interpret the bible. When the bible is correctly understood and interpreted there will be no contradiction.

Women are not forbidden to preach before other women, or lead women's organisations. Although women can preach at midweek meetings in the church to other women, in some churches they are forbidden to preach at Sunday services if there are men present. Reasons for such prohibition could be the pride and insecurity of some churchmen, but it could also be the result of how churchmen interpret the bible. Maybe the issue is not about the capability of women, but rather the small faith of women. James Onyango Awino has explained this point well when he states that women's involvement in the indigenous African churches should be a confirmation that tells society that women are capable. The negative ideas about women are only "imagined unsubstantiated andocentric bias" (Awino 1998:170-175). Writing about the situation of Kenyan women, Awino has said that the idea of a woman being a pastor or president would be like a dream, because some people believe "an African woman [should] be kept in a lonely state, she was a little more than an animal, she was property to be bought and sold" (Awino 1998:172). Even if men in the church might not openly speak in the same way, their attitudes speak volumes, influenced as they seemly are by culture. This is an unfortunate situation, because the church is failing to appreciate what is happening. Women were people just as men. As with men, they are created in God's image. To think of women as being close to animals is ridiculing the Creator in whose image the women are created.

As mentioned earlier, some church people are open to women preaching to other women. They are also open to women taking responsibility in the church, including lay preaching. Unfortunately, they cannot see why women should have to be ordained for ministry. Roberts has suggested that ordination as a right for women enables women to be satisfied within and become involved in church ministry

---

according to their were calling. Indeed as Roberts has pointed out, the great commission of Jesus (Matt. 28: 19-20) necessitates ordination. Therefore, if women are called towards ministry, and seek to respond to the command of Jesus, they need to be ordained. Roberts is therefore correct when he states:

Justice...demands that all barriers placed by men in the way of the elevation of woman to any office in the gift of the church be removed (Roberts 1997:80-81).

The church needs to reread Genesis 1:27 so that they would not fail God by failing to understand the bible. Wilbur O'Donovan has rightly noted that God created human beings of equal importance and value (O'Donovan 1996:80-94). Both male and female are created in God's image. 1 Corinthians 11:1-12 needs to be read carefully with an open mind. In this passage, Paul does not only speak about women covering their heads. In verses 11-12 Paul states:

Nevertheless, in the LORD woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.

With an unbiased reading of the creation story, church people would understand that God created human beings of equal importance and value. As Genesis 1:27 states:

So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

O'Donovan's suggestion that the first human being contained, "all the elements of maleness and femaleness" makes a lot of sense. O'Donovan goes on to point out that, although Eve was a woman, God did not use different material to create her. Rather, God took from Adam the material to make a woman. The history of human science continues to reveal the presence of femaleness in males, as well as the presence of maleness in females (O'Donovan 2000:192). This evidence should be sufficient to convince those who care about women's marginalisation on theological

---

grounds to be open to the rereading of the bible with an open mind. Failure to see this from the bible could be explained as a lack of awareness that can only be corrected by conscientisation through appropriate education.

Jesus, the true image of God, demonstrates qualities that are seen in men as well as women. In itself, this should be enough to show the unity of humankind in terms of the creation narrative. Rather than over emphasizing gender differences and the supposed supremacy of men over women, it accentuates the complementarity of humankind. The human need of salvation and Jesus' mission to serve humanity as seen in the bible, includes both male and female. Likewise, the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is the source of all power for church ministry and leadership, is a promise for all who believe, regardless of gender.

These are clear indications that women and men are equal before God. It is therefore difficult to believe that the bible places women in a subservient role. Those in the church who think that women are less important than men need to read the bible again and interpret it against the life and teachings of Jesus.

Women are created in the image of God. God has given them talents and gifts according to the promise of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The church needs to accept that God calls women and men to ministry. As with men, churchwomen have been endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit. Women need to be given space to exercise their God-given gifts. It is their right before God. A conscientised church needs to hold an unbiased theological understanding about women. As Judy Brown has stated:

A woman is capable of earning a doctoral degree in nuclear physics or biochemistry or philosophy at the most rigorous university in the world...it frequently goes without notice that women are permitted to write the curriculum from which the men teach either at the local church or at the Seminary level. (Brown 1996:8)

---

We need to ask how communities and individuals can perceive how women can be likened to animals. Society should not limit the human potentiality of women. As in Chapter 3, this is little different from the perception of the previous white colonial government.

If the creation story and some of Paul's writings create a problem in the church of today, surely it would not be such a bad idea to listen to the challenge of Christian feminists and consider re-reading the bible in terms of the struggle of women. This study is not advocating the writing of a new bible, but rather is suggesting that the bible be re-read and re-interpreted. Brown is correct when she says that the church should never try to "change or ignore" the teachings of the bible. However, "the church must not fear the re-reading and re-studying of scripture lest yesterday's errors continue into today and tomorrow" (Brown 1996:10). Reading the bible with openness will help Christians correctly understand its message.

Many church people interpret the bible serve and protect their own interests. They hide prejudices, particularly against women behind their interpretation of the bible. Because women have been kept from obtaining a credible theological education, they cannot read and interpret the bible for themselves. Instead, they listen to what men tell them. African women theologians insist on the need for both biblical and cultural hermeneutics. This would provide a tool that would bring light to bible readers. This would reveal new insights and provoke the mind. It would be helpful in promoting spiritual health. This may help the bible reader to understand better why Jesus' ministry was the way it was, and why Jesus did and said what he said.

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians challenge women to stand up and fight their own battles lest they and their daughters perish. Although the fight is not a physical one, wise and capable women should prepare for this battle. Hence, the women of South-East Zimbabwe need to engage with secular educational institutions, as well as centres of theological formation, so that they can begin to read and interpret the bible for themselves. They will then see the involvement of women in both the Hebrew and Christian bible. As women undertake such readings they

---

should investigate women such as Huldah the prophetess (2 Kings 22:14-20), Deborah, a national leader (Judges 4:4-7) and Phoebe, a deacon in Romans 16:1. Junia is also referred to as an apostle in Rom 16:7.<sup>2</sup> Women must conduct their own study of the bible and examine for themselves such passages as Genesis 1 and 2; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Romans 16:1-4, 7; 1 Corinthians 12, and many others. The aforementioned women are not the only leaders that women should be interested in when reading the bible. They should also investigate the lives of Tamar in Genesis 38:6-26, Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-20; the Samaritan woman in John 4, Hagar in Genesis 16:1-16; 21:9-21 and many others.

When women can do their own study they would see for themselves, Jesus' own ministry and observe how he interacted with women, with their culture and with the theological understanding of the day. Writing of the ministry of Jesus, Isabel Phiri has shown clearly that Jesus worked towards liberating people from "sin, ignorance, poverty, social injustice and other forms of oppression" (Phiri 1998:200-201). In all of the struggles for liberation, people need to fight for their own freedom. Jesus was clear in his ministry that he called men and women to be participants in their own liberation (Phiri: 1998:201). It is however not enough that women need to be involved in their own liberation. Learning is a powerful weapon to use in the struggle for freedom. Women need to study towards their own understanding of the bible so that they are no longer dependent on men to tell them what it says about women. In this and the previous discussions, examples of some contemporary women leaders within the church and public sphere were given. These women were empowered through education. Women need to be engaged in both secular and theological education for their empowerment. This study should result in the kind of awareness that might encourage the women to move toward their own liberation.

This chapter has focussed on the analysis of the responses given during the interviews with the people of South-East Zimbabwe. The researcher has asserted that those factors, which prevent women from exercising leadership, have nothing to

---

<sup>2</sup> Although some scholars question whether Junia was female, I agree with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza that there is not enough evidence to deny that Junia was a woman. As Fiorenza has written, "We have no evidence for a male named Junias" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991:68).

---

do with the inability of women; rather it has everything to do with people's prejudices and attitudes against women.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this study confirm that the people of South-East Zimbabwe, although they possess some levels of awareness, need far more in order to work toward their desired liberation. The aim of this study, as stated in Chapter 1, is concerned with an examination of the levels of awareness that the people under study possess, and ascertaining where there is need of increasing such awareness. The study thus seeks to raise awareness where at all possible. The concern of Chapter 7 is to look for possible ways through which the people under study could raise their level of awareness. This would to a process by which they would obtain into their own desired liberation.

---

## CHAPTER 7

### AFRICAN WOMEN'S THEOLOGY AS LIBERATING THEOLOGY FOR THE WOMEN OF SOUTH-EAST ZIMBABWE

#### **7. Introduction**

The concern of this study, as described in the introduction to this study is with the limited number of women in positions of leadership in both the church and public sector. Chapters 2 and 3 have revealed this through a brief historical survey. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 confirmed this through a series interview responses and analysis of the people under study. The concern of this study is not only about the past, but also present South-East Zimbabwe. This is a concern that needs attention. In this chapter 7, the focus will be on the possible ways that can be followed towards the liberation of the women and communities of South-East Zimbabwe.

The title of Chapter 7 suggests that African women's theology if well understood, could serve as a liberating Theology for the marginalised peoples of South-East Zimbabwe. It is important therefore to explicate the nature and focus of such a theology. This will be attempted under two heads:

1. What is African Women's Theology?
2. How can it assist the peoples of South-East Zimbabwe?



---

The intention here is not to deal with every aspect of African women's theology, but rather to touch on those aspects that are applicable to the present study. This chapter will therefore attempt to provide some background information on the formation of African women's theology, its objectives and passions.

African Women's theology came about as the result of a number of consultative meetings held by a few well-placed and concerned African women theologians. The first one of these meetings was held in 1980, under the auspices of the World Council of churches in Genève (Oduyoye 1989:3). One of the memorable things that came out of this meeting was that from the very beginning the theologians who attended wanted to share what they had with other African women.

In the follow-up meeting, consisting of African women with a background in theological formation was held in Ibadan, later in 1980. The papers presented at this consultation, demonstrated concern for women, church and society, including, women and the church; women in the Christian ministry; women's roles in African Traditional Religion (ATR); and new forms of theological education. The keynote address was entitled, "Women Theologians Partners in the Community of Women and Men in Church and Society." (Oduyoye 1989:31-32). From these few topics, the concern of African women's theology is clearly not only for women, but also for the church and society. The objectives of the consultation centred on African development were five-fold:

1. To evaluate the role and contribution of African women theologians in religious institutions, family life and in national development;
2. To analyse the content and present trends of theological education in Africa;
3. To discover ways in which theological education can be used to foster total development in Africa;

- 
4. To discuss the experiences and concerns of churchwomen, with regard to the ordination of women
  5. To recommend specific follow up programmes and projects in the issues. (Oduyoye 1989: 32-33).

These concerns brought women from across Africa to form an association called the Circle of the Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter, the Circle). Women from the Circle met to share not only their personal concerns but also those that affect the Christian church in Africa, including theological formation and religious education. They also shared their socio-political, health and economic concerns as they related to continental Africa. As the women looked at these issues and at their daily experiences in the light of the bible, they saw a need to reach out to their African sisters. What is known as conventional theology today is the study about God and God's activities based on God's revelation of Godself and about God's concerns for the peoples of the world. It was about how God related to creation, and how people experience God in their daily lives. For the women of the Circle, the realities of African women's experience demonstrated in their daily experiences were of the highest importance. This was where faith in God could be expressed. As the women came together and shared their common experiences, they began to reflect on the bible, and develop a theological perspective meaningful to the context of women's oppression in Africa. As Oduyoye has remarked:

Women doing theology are aware that they have to give careful attention to this suggestion that women's worth is located in their being valued for their part in procreation, in their labour and the potential of being exchanged for wealth...Women theologians in Africa take socialisation seriously because it is what enables oppression to become systemic...African women theologians have to deal with...is religious rituals that control women's lives...Religion is a tool for social control...We shall write theology in all the available literary and artistic forms of expression...We shall have the advantage of knowing the methods our brothers have used and the results that emanate from them (Oduyoye 1989:49-51).

---

From this brief background, it can be clearly seen why African women's theology was necessary. It was born to serve the people, the church, and the communities of Africa. The Circle of the Concerned African Women Theologians, realise that there is a need for a new theological model, which although well informed in conventional theology reveals how far short such contemporary western approaches fall in addressing the specific development needs and theologizing of Africa. The involvement of African women in theological formation is vital to this work.

The needs of the women of South-East Zimbabwe, as revealed in the interviews, were all considered in the list of objectives of the Circle. These were concerned with three major facets:

- Women and their families;
- Education and development in Africa;
- Church and women.

The concerns of the women of South-East Zimbabwe were thus the concerns of the initiators of African Women's Theology. The Circle considers part of its responsibility to inspire other women so that together they may be involved in doing theology in partnership with men in the church and in society. African women's theology has valued the idea of such partnerships from the beginning.

African women's theology is concerned with liberation, not of women alone, but all the peoples of Africa. As Oduyoye has rightly stated:

Women's theology in Africa had to be done in the context of Africa's liberation from colonialism, economic exploitation now crystallised in the so-called external debt and racism all of which were based on an ideology that some human beings

---

were not worth much or were even dispensable. In many countries women were the worst affected (Oduyoye 1989:50).

The concern here is not only about women, but also about the unjust practices in society, the most affected being women, hence the focus is unapologetically African women's theology. African women's theology can therefore contribute greatly as a tool of liberation for the women of South-East Zimbabwe as they struggle for freedom.

Reading this in the light of a detailed summary of the marginalisation of the women in the area under study, a well presented and understood African womanist theology could bring hope to the women of South-East Zimbabwe. Not only would they be contributing to this theology, but also this could be the starting point towards developing awareness. Self-realisation is dependent on interaction with other people; it comes about because of an individual's involvement in his/her society and culture.

The question about cultural expectations, as well as expectations of Christian Women in the church, was raised as the women under study tried to understand their place in society<sup>1</sup>. As has been mentioned in previous chapters such change in South-East Zimbabwe can only happen when both men and women deliberately involve themselves in the process.

The present chapters focus is an examination of African Women's Theology. The discussion in this chapter began by offering a summary of the marginalisation of African women in order to consolidate their need for liberation. The discussion then focused on African women's experience as the starting point of African women's theology, followed by a brief reference African women's hermeneutics as important to the process toward resolving the dilemma of African women. Finally, the discussion focused upon Cultural and biblical hermeneutics as a

---

<sup>1</sup> African women's hermeneutics, discussed later in this chapter, is a useful tool in the process towards building women's awareness and reawakening their expectation of societal and theological change.

---

working instrument towards the liberation of the women. This was seen as a possible way to set the stage for the women of South-East Zimbabwe to participate in African women's theology, which would lead toward obtaining their freedom.

From the outset, it was important to point out that just as there are many feminist theologians, there are as many African womanist theologians. The concern of this discussion is with African women's theology from the context of an African Christian perspective. African women's theology considers the bible as the main source of its theology. Further, African women's theology views God as being on the side of women. African women believe that they are created in the image of God and loved by God. They therefore possess a God-given dignity that has been taken away from them by a patriarchal society. It is this dignity, that African women's theology seeks to reclaim.

### **7.1. Women's Need for Liberation**

In the previous chapters of this study and in the analysis of responses from the questions with the men and women of South-East Zimbabwe, incapacitating circumstances for women within society have been identified. The marginalisation and oppression of women were evident in various ways as described before. Education was identified as an important part of personal development. When education is denied, there is little chance of employment. Accordingly, this makes real development difficult as long as the majority of the population (i.e., women) are left out of the mainstream of development opportunities.

Additionally, the situation is made worse for women, in that many Schoolgirls are unable to continue with their education because of poverty and marriage. Early motherhood further complicates the situation. This is the reality for many of the women of South-East Zimbabwe. The patriarchal perception of society that the place of a woman is in the kitchen and producing children is thus fulfilled. Because most

---

women are confined within their kitchens, not many of their voices are being heard outside of their homes. In addressing this issue, Fiona Leach has suggested that millions of women in the world are thereby “missing” (Leach 1998:2-10). They are in the world, but since they are not being heard, they are as good as “missing.” This is no truer than for the women of South-East Zimbabwe.

Following independence, the Government of Zimbabwe has shown interest in addressing the situation of women by finding ways to integrate them back into the mainstream of development. Education was thus identified as being one of the major ways to include women, and thus it declared education was a right for all people (Zimbabwe National Population Policy 1998:30). As has been discussed in an earlier chapter, this need has not been fully addressed, particularly in the rural areas of Zimbabwe, where the situations and circumstances of women and girl children are still acute.

The limited access to education for women and girl children results in their low participation in the formal labour market and the continued monopolisation of men in secure, well-paid and skilled jobs as well as most management and supervisory positions. Limited education for women encourages the patriarchal and traditional belief that men have a larger share in decision-making, while women have a larger share of doing the work. The low level of education and subsequent literacy rate, together with gender discrimination, place the majority of women in a situation where they cannot compete with men for the few jobs that are available. Historically, there have been fewer women enrolled in vocational training programmes, and where present, usually in non-technical areas, such as secretarial studies, dressmaking and cookery.

Soon after independence, the Government of Zimbabwe sought to address issues of gender discrimination in a research project entitled, *Women and Law in Southern Africa*. The ministry of Community Development and Women’s Affairs was to oversee and established to encourage other sectors to improve the situation of women. Its five year plan (1981-1985), together with its policy of “Growth with

---

Equity,” the Government indicated its concern for the advance of women. With the launch of yet another five-year plan for 1986-1990, the government emphasised the need for women’s effective participation in development. (Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project 1991:1-6). Following the 1995 World Conference in Beijing, the Zimbabwe Government agreed to address the twelve concerns raised regarding the situation of women, including them in its six-year plan that concluded in 2005 (Tichagwa 1998: 79). These included:

- Women and the economy;
- Women’s education and training;
- Women in power and decision-making;
- Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. (Kwaramba 2000:12).

Although it is clear that the Government was obviously aware of the plight of women, it needs to do more in order to address the inequalities. In 2000, the following incidence of women in Government was recorded:

- Only 3 out of 20 cabinet ministers in Zimbabwe were women;
- Only 21 out of the 120 members of parliament were women;
- Only 3% of local counsellors were women (Muzondo 2000:12).

The recent appointment of Joyce Mujuru to the office of deputy president brings joy to Zimbabwean women but the women of South-East Zimbabwe would like to see something similar in their area.

---

These paltry statistics reveal that policies alone do not produce the desired results. The Government of Zimbabwe launched its gender policy back in 1997. At that time, the policy itself was not written, and even by the year 2000, it remained unwritten. The issue was still being debated (Muzondo 2000:14). A deliberate joint commitment by civil society and government is needed to implement and enforce the policy of affirmative action. From a Christian perspective, it should be added that in order to realise the desired results, a special deposit of God's grace is required in order to transform hearts, and thereby enable men and women to treat one another with love and respect as individuals made in the image of God.

The interviews revealed conclusively that culture and tradition, as well as a biased interpretation of the bible played an important part in women's subordination. Indeed, in the earlier discussion of culture it was shown that women were confined by culture to the peripheries of their homes. Careful training was given to women at home to prepare them towards the fulfilment of their responsibilities in the home. Getting married and having a home was one of the cultural aspirations of an African woman. The coming of the Christian church to South-East Zimbabwe should have been good news for these women, but the biased interpretation of some passages of the bible has not helped their situation at all, instead, it has only added another layer of oppression to an already oppressive cultural norm that has held women in subjection. Kheti's story contributes a good illustration to this discussion. Kheti said that in her school days at the mission they used to be awakened by a bell. She went on to say it was not different from the way it used to be at home, except for the bell. Proverbs 31:10ff. was used as one of the formulas for the training of girl children. At school, girl children were taught sewing, housekeeping and cooking in addition to other subjects. While there was nothing wrong with women gaining these skills, it was unfortunate that they were taught the same group of skills as were taught in the home. (Kheti 2003). Research has revealed that there are more women than men in the church, yet all the decision-making positions are reserved for men and not women. Very few women's voices are ever heard in the church.



---

The people of South-East Zimbabwe need to look for ways to address the issues of gender discrimination in all areas of life. In both public and church spheres, good constitutions and policies although helpful, cannot bring change of themselves. Welshman Ncube, speaking to a similar issue, suggested that for a constitution to be meaningful, it required:

- i) political reinforcement, ii) cultural reinforcement, iii) institutional reinforcement and,
- (iv) legal reinforcement (Power to the People 1991:9).

To this list, one could also add church and family reinforcement. While the situation of women cannot remain the same, the women of South-East Zimbabwe need to do their part. They need to respond with action to the voice *Talitha Cumi*; they need to shout out that they “have been buried” in their societies. Efforts of the “Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network” and its staff is commendable. Yet other women need to be involved as well (Chigudu 1999:151-158). Suitably disseminated and utilised, the work of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians can be instrumental to the encouragement, inspiration, and empowerment of the women of South-East Zimbabwe.

## **7.2. African Women’s Theology: Hope for the Women of South-East Zimbabwe**

How can African Women’s Theology help the women of South-East Zimbabwe in their struggle for liberation? My reasons for choosing to associate African Women’s Theology with the situation of women in Zimbabwe are that African Women’s Theology represents a reactionary and active force. In this respect, it is similar to other theologies, in that it is “an expression of faith in response to experience” (Oduyoye 2001: 22-23). Said another way, African Women’s Theology is a reaction to the experiences of women in Africa. As Christina Landman has observed, “African Women’s Theology addresses the specific situation of black women in Africa” (Landman 1998:137). This theology listens as women tell their experiences in their homes, in their churches, and in their communities. These experiences are

---

then examined in the light of what is understood by women to be the meaning of Christian faith.

African Women's Theology is an active force because women themselves are involved in working towards the change of their own situation. Women share with each other about their life experiences. They share their stories of pain and suffering, poverty, exploitation, violence and marginalisation. As they examine these experiences in and through the light of Christian faith, women become conscientised and aware of how societies exploit women. As a reaction, African Women's Theology calls for a proclamation of "women's humanity" (Oduyoye 2001:24). As an active force, African Women's Theology engages women for themselves. If the women of South-East Zimbabwe became aware, they could be involved in self-realisation in order to become what they were meant to be.

African Women's Theology is a theology of the people. It is for those who having been robbed of their human identity want to reclaim it. Some of the interviews in this study have shown that women felt that they were oppressed. A good example of this was the women who said, "Women were used for men's glory." The identity of women has been created by society and is reflected in different ways, e.g., myths, folk tales and proverbs (Oduyoye 1995:19-76). Women seek to re-read the bible and try to understand it contextually as women. This was what the women of South-East Zimbabwe need to do. They also revisited African cultural beliefs and practices, rejecting all those elements that were oppressive and reclaiming those that were positive. When conscientised, the women of South-East Zimbabwe would also be able to do this and become aware of their situation.

The situation in which women find themselves has forced them to become dependent. This forced dependence is enabling women to find themselves again as people. Dependence was a debilitating concept. It was a disempowering mechanism, used as a strategy by societies or communities towards the disempowerment of other people. This is what women's theology reacted against.

---

This research has revealed the sense of hopelessness and frustration among the women of South-East Zimbabwe, due to the years of marginalisation and oppression they have had to endure. In his discussion on liberation theology, Rosino Gibellini has spoken about this frustration and sense of moral anger at the poverty and marginalisation of many people in the world (Gibellini 1988:4-19). This frustration and anger displayed in some parts of the interview were justifiable. Women's frustration was because of the situation created historically by society in the name of culture and religion.

As Phiri notes, while African theology is concerned with liberating the discipline of Christian Theology from the restraints of western modes of conventional theology, thereby making it compatible with the African culture and context, it has not taken into consideration the concerns of women (Phiri 1997:68). For this reason, African women's theology is concerned with liberating Christian theology from its Western influence as well as from its male-centeredness.

While African theology is concerned with liberating the interpretation of Christian faith and church worship from its Western influence, African women's theology has sought to do the same in liberating the interpretation of Christian faith and church worship from male domination. Africa, which has perpetuated the patriarchal system throughout its history, has also suffered from colonisation at the hands of Western countries. African women, as well as some male theologians feel that the time has come for the Christian church in Africa to be liberated from the influence of westerners (Mbiti 1998:145). As such, women should also be liberated from oppressive cultural practices and patriarchal systems that are debilitating to women. This would result in all humanity experiencing the dignity that is intrinsically theirs at creation.

It is important to mention that African women's theology is a theology practiced by African women theologians. As African women are the backbone of the family, church and society, African women's theology seeks to serve all. John Pobee writing about African Theology said that it is "an aid to self consciousness" (Pobee

---

and Hallencrentz 1986:64). Although these two theologies are not exactly the same, a similar statement can be made for African women's theology. African women's theology seeks to liberate the African women from having to think and communicate through male concepts in order to communicate to God their Creator. A theology that liberates African women needs not be apologetic for being womanist. African women's theology is not just a theoretical exercise, neither is it concerned with the abstract or offering mere speculation. Rather, it is a life experience for women. The women of South-East Zimbabwe need the same kind of self-awareness that African women's theology is trying to raise.

African women's theology takes place at all times and in all situations. This can be helpful because most of the women under study do not have a high level of education that ordinarily would have prevented them from participating or benefiting from such an instrument. As Oduyoye has pointed out:

Theological insights of African Christians include lyrics that Africans sang to interpret biblical events...It is oral theology...it is used in Sunday School lessons and in preaching...may also be found in sculpture and drama...the bible being its first source (Oduyoye 1986:45-50).

Women's daily experiences, examined in light of the teachings of the bible as understood by women, become the contents of African Women's Theology. What the women of this study need in order to benefit from the passion of African women's theology is knowledge of such an instrument being in existence for them.

The fact that African women's theology looks at the practical life of people as its starting point should not be taken as minimising its contribution towards African the discipline of theology. African women's theology ventures into areas that have either been ignored or misunderstood. African women's theology adds to the discipline of theology as whole and takes its place with all other theologies. As Oduyoye states, "African women theologians see themselves as part of a global movement aimed at enhancing life" (Oduyoye 1998:364). As a theology that is

---

concerned with the situation of women, African women's theology, although different, is nevertheless similar in nature to other women theologies in the world. Hence, white feminists and African-American womanists share a common concern to emancipate women from their imprisonment within society. This is also a concern for African women's theology. Their starting point is their experience as women in their own context. Woman's experience in their context is what makes the difference. All are concerned with issues of oppression, domination and marginalisation in their own context. As such, these women can learn from one another.

Transformational change within a society can only take place when the people in that society are committed to change. African women's theology is committed to empowering all women so that they can face the world and be able to stand their ground as fully human. This need was revealed in the interviews conducted for this study. As Christina Landman can confirm:

*African Women's Theology seeks the empowerment of women against women – unfriendly social, economic and political systems (Landman 1998:140).*

Added to this list should be that of religious systems. Education becomes a key to obtaining the awareness that leads to the desired liberation.

Speaking about African theology, Oduyoye has said:

*African theologians seek for a word from God that would liberate the minds of Africans and set their feet on the path of recovering the dignity of humanity in Africa! (1998:362).*

The same can be said for African women. From the analysis of responses in Chapter 3, it was shown how the women of South-East Zimbabwe need to be liberated in their minds so that they may begin to see new possibilities for themselves rather than living their lives in the box in which society has placed them. African women

---

theologians are reclaiming for the women of Africa the dignity that is theirs. This dignity of women should be seen across all aspects of women's life, namely, the sociological, economical, political and religious spheres.

One of the desirable qualities of African women's theology is that of its considerate approach. All members of society are important. It does not draw only from a particular class of people, but from the academics as well as the non-academics. It listens to religious circles as well as cultural ones. As in the African theology, doing African women's theology is different from conventional methods of doing theology, yet it is empowering to both the discipline of theology and to women themselves. This seems to be the main need for the women of South-East Zimbabwe. Its point of reference is the bible. African women theologians see the bible, when interpreted without bias, as carrying the power to liberate all people from situations that are oppressive. As Denise Ackermann has said, God is the one who liberated those who are poor and oppressed. (Ackermann 1998:355). Being poor, marginalised and oppressed, African women see God as being on their side. As Oduyoye notes, "Theologies of liberation in Africa include the liberation of African culture and the liberation of Africans from cultures that are debilitating" (Oduyoye 1998:367). From the interviews in Chapters 3, it was shown that some cultural practices were being used as instruments to oppress women in South-East Zimbabwe. African women's theology dialogues with African culture in order to identify those elements that are liberative or oppressive.

The fieldwork research revealed that culture and the bible are constantly used as an excuse to marginalise the women of South-East Zimbabwe. They live as second-class citizens in their own homes, communities, churches and societies. If the bible and culture are used as instruments of oppression, African women's theology can also be used as an instrument toward the liberation of the women of South-East Zimbabwe.

---

### **7.2.1. African Women's Experiences as Starting Point towards Self**

#### **Realisation**

As has been mentioned, the concern of African women's theology is not different from the concerns of other women's theologies elsewhere in the world. All women's theologies are liberation theologies. They look forward to a day when women of their context can be liberated from the oppression they find themselves within their context because of being born women. What really is different among women's theologies is their point of contextual departure, namely, women's experience of life in a particular context.

The womanist theology of the African-American women starts from the experience of African-American women, descendants of slaves and members of a minority race. Denise Ackermann, although a white South African, has written about "a history of slavery, racism, dislocation and struggle for liberation" (Ackermann 1998:354). Likewise, Diana Hayes explains womanist experience as being the "mule" of the world. For her, womanist experience is the "triple oppression of race, class and gender" (Hayes 1993:325-329). The experiences of oppression of African-American women therefore create a starting point for womanist theology. These are experiences that neither a black African woman living in Africa or a white American woman living in North America can identify. In the same way, the feminist theology of white American women starts from the life experience of white American women living in America in the context of patriarchy.

In the similar fashion, African women's theology begins from the life experience of African women in the African context. Such life experience would include life experience as a slave in one's own country. The dehumanisation suffered by African people during the colonial era retains its effects even today. Most African women have very limited or no rights at all. In some situations, women do not even have the right to their own bodies, resulting in the contracting contagious and incurable diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Most African women are poor, their poverty being

---

forced on them by the systems of their societies. Women sometimes suffer displacement from home and property or separation from their children and family members because of African civil wars. They are told what they can and cannot own. They are oppressed, de-humanised and marginalised in both their churches and their communities, often in the name of Christian teaching or culture. They are not given the opportunity to make decisions, even those that directly affect them. These realities have been revealed in the previous discussions of this study. They are familiar experiences of the women in South-East Zimbabwe.

Oduyoye would call the life experience of African women in Africa, “poverty, wars that cause famine and displacement of people, and the international debt that has turned Africans into slaves on their own continent” (Oduyoye 1998:362). In African women’s theology, these and other life experiences are viewed in the light of the teachings of the bible and the Christian faith.

Although African women’s theology begins with life experience, education also plays an important role. Education has empowered African women theologians to conceptualise life experience and give it a language for communication. Speaking to this idea Landman has said:

Women’s theology acknowledges an integration of mind and body, of philosophical thinking and experience, of academia and activism. Their theology is not dependent on the philosophical meta-language of traditional theologies, but on the language of storytelling, stories which testify to hope as well as to anger, to laughter and sorrow alike, to liberation and to oppression (Landman 1998:138).

African women theologians consider storytelling and listening as an important component in doing theology. All women have a story to tell and each story contributes in its own way. Through the field research, women told many stories. Women tell stories about how they experience culture, the church, education, national politics and economic life. Not only should women be listened to and have an opportunity to tell their stories, women should also listen to other people’s stories,



---

and to the bible. The women of South-East Zimbabwe love and respect the bible but many of them cannot read the bible for themselves. They rely upon others to read and explain it to them. This is not enough. They need to read the bible and search for its meaning for themselves. Women need to hear God's word for them. Therefore, in order for them to find out what God says about women they need a special tool, namely, African women's hermeneutics.

### **7.2.2 Cultural and African Women's Hermeneutics: A Process Towards the Realisation of Women's Dilemma**

Hermeneutics has to do with interpretation. More often, the term is associated with biblical or textual interpretation. When doing exercises in hermeneutics, many questions are raised before an answer can be arrived at. For instance, when one tries to understand the situation of the women of Africa, it is important to understand the culture of the people, because in Africa culture affects all of life including religion. Musimbi Kanyoro has a point that, "all questions regarding the welfare and status of women in Africa were explained within the framework of culture" (Kanyoro 2001:164). In other words, the "do's" and "don'ts" of an African woman can only be explained within the context of African culture. Cultural hermeneutics is therefore an important exercise, as is gender sensitivity, for it, analyses culture and raises questions about the culture with special focus on male-female relationships. In cultural hermeneutics, stories and experiences are very important.

Whereas African women's hermeneutics places the life experiences of women as its starting point, they are not its ending point. For the women of South-East Zimbabwe this could be a starting point in the realisation of their situation. For African women's hermeneutics, the ending point is found in the bible and Jesus who is seen as the one who always affirmed the humanity of women and upheld those who were oppressed and dehumanised. Therefore, any attitude that manifests itself in opposition of the full humanity of women can be considered as foreign to God. On the other hand, whatever attitude affirms the humanity of women can be considered

---

as of the Divine (Reuther 1983:115). What was said here is true for all humanity. God the Creator affirms all humanity. Consequently, all human beings should affirm one another.

Similar to African women's hermeneutics is the work of Letty Russell. Russell holds the bible as scripture and as God's liberating word. It is through the word of the bible that women can understand about the possibility of liberation (Ackermann 1998:352). African women's hermeneutics led women theologians into looking at the stories of women in the bible – stories that men did not say much about. They were overlooked, considered unimportant, or presented negatively. In these stories, African women hermeneuts re-read and understand them in the light of the contextual culture of the day. Oduyoye understands this concern as accepting the responsibility that all of humanity is made in God's image.

*Women re-read and re-interpret the lives and actions of the women which men's theology either ignores or demonises, by researching into the cultures that were contemporary to the biblical writings or into the myths of other people. The violent men of the bible whose actions are glossed over when their violence is against women, are called up for re-examination, and the courageous and compassionate women whose lives are glossed over are re-called to be role models (Oduyoye 1998:366).*

The advent of African women's theology marks a re-awakening for African women as well as the willingness to share the responsibility of those who are created in God's image. In this way, women and men share in the interpretation of the Christian faith, which is a responsibility of all who love God. It would be a failure on the part of women, equally created in the image of God, to leave it to men alone to interpret the bible as they pleased. The women of South-East Zimbabwe believe that they too are created in God's image, and as such, have a responsibility, as do all other peoples.

The women under study raised questions as they considered issues of interpretation. In the context of this study the important questions for African women theologians are:

- 
- How should God's work and leading be understood?
  - What does it mean to be human?
  - How can people come to an agreement about the meaning of humanity?"
  - Should men alone determine God's will and word for all people?
  - Should a male insight in matters of faith be the unconditionally final word from God?
  - Should a male understanding of true humanity be taken unconditionally as God's word and will?

Relevant answers to these questions and the reality of life and experience have to be examined in the light of the life of Jesus and the bible as interpreted and understood by the Christians regardless of their gender. As women raise these questions, they become aware of their situation, and thereby move closer towards seeking solutions.

In the words of Dora Mbuwayesango, this should be the "challenging task" (Mbuwayesango 2001:65) of biblical interpretation that women should become involved in. When this is done, both the women and the world would hear God's word for and about women. Consequently, the message of the bible would have relevance not for only men, but for women as well. The bible will be understood as God's word to both men and women, not only through application, but directly. To quote Nyambura Njoroge, "enough is enough...we must...arise and discover the truth for ourselves" (Njoroge 2001:215).

---

### **7.2.2. Gender Sensitive Cultural and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Working Instrument towards the Liberation of Women**

Throughout history, the bible has been used by patriarchal systems as an excuse for the systematic oppression of women. On the other hand, liberation theologies including women's theologies, have considered the bible to be the foundation for the liberation of all humankind. While texts such as the creation story and some of the writings of Paul (e.g., 1 Tim.2: 11-14) were used to support the marginalisation of women, African women theologians see some of Paul's writings (e.g. Gal.3:28) as an affirmation of the unity and equality of humanity in Christ. The problem at hand is the seemingly double messages created by society and the church's interpretation of the bible. This is the reason why some feminist theologians such as Schüssler Fiorenza and others have suggested the need to re-interpret certain texts of the bible. For them, "the bible is not a neutral book but a political weapon against women's struggles for liberation" (Ackermann 1998:351-352). These feelings were evoked by the biased and culturally influenced interpretations mentioned earlier in this study. The misinterpretation of the bible is also the reason why feminist theologians such as Schüssler Fiorenza view the bible with suspicion. The feeling of this stream of feminists is that others people bring women down in their fight for liberation by using the bible. They see the bible as a male-centred and a patriarchal book (Ackermann 1998:351-352). This is a very unfortunate situation.

When it comes to biblical hermeneutics, many elements affect the understanding of the text. There is much merit in the proposal of Bernard Lategan, where he suggests a schema consisting of three elements, namely, source, message and recipient (Lategan 1995:21-24). Each person has his or her own historical and cultural context as well as background. While both the author and the receiver have his or her own cultural context and background, they each work on the same message. In the case of the bible, the situation concerns the origins of the bible. Second, there is the question of how the text is preserved and mediated through history. Third, there was the question of how the text was understood and received by the people. This

---

confirms what Oduyoye has said about a gendered cultural hermeneutics helping African women to see the bible through the eyes of African women. As women read the bible, they will find from it that which is helpful (Oduyoye: 2001: 11).

People in the rural area, especially those with no theological training, do not think in this way. This kind of thinking would be understood by the people as denying the authority of the bible. Generally, the bible is understood as the word of God. How this word comes to people, is a question that people do not like to raise or deal with. Generally, the bible is understood as purposefully written for the work for which it is used today. As such, some people assume that the bible came from above, or that God dictated its words from heaven (Wessels 1998: 261).

Joanne Bloch has pointed out that God did not drop the bible as a book from heaven, but rather worked through people to write and interpret its words. While those who wrote the bible were inspired by the Spirit of God, as human beings they worked from, and within, the framework of their customs, cultures and traditions (Bloch 2001:24-25). It is important for those who read and interpret the text to be aware of these possibilities, because the reader is not necessarily always aware of what the author originally intended to communicate. The reader's understanding may likely be influenced by his or her experience, cultural context, and background.

The Circle of the Concerned African Women theologians, in doing African Women's Theology, focus on three areas:

1. The relationship of men and women in the African culture in relation to the roles and images of women;
2. The relationship between African culture and Christianity;
3. The reading of the bible as an African woman would read it (Phiri 1997:68-71).

---

The reason why culture keeps coming to the foreground is its influence on people. Cultures are like the lenses of a pair of sunglasses—through their shadow people see other people and they read the bible. What they see and read is obviously influenced by culture. Samson Sibanda, pastor of the Assemblies of God in South-East Zimbabwe stated that culture is often used to reinforce patriarchal practices, which subjugate women and promote inequality (Sibanda 2003). Consequently, the study of culture and biblical hermeneutics is important.

This study has shown that culture and some church people's patriarchal understanding of the bible doctrine of creation of humanity are the two main instruments used to promote the oppression of women. This makes the study of cultural and biblical hermeneutics very necessary if the subject of the oppression of is to be addressed seriously. It is necessary to investigate how the bible and culture should be understood. The analysis of this research has shown how women were excluded from family inheritance, property ownership, leadership positions, both in the church and in the community; and decision-making responsibilities both in the church and in the community. It has also been shown how women were excluded from some aspects of meaningful personal development such as higher level and technical education and many other privileges. The hindrance from all this could be traced to either cultural or biblical prohibitions upon women.

The fieldwork for this research has revealed that culturally caring for the sick is left to women. Women are therefore vulnerable to contracting sicknesses, including HIV/AIDS. South-East Zimbabwe women, as with many other women in the world, suffer exploitation and abuse. Musimbi Kanyoro calls this situation "global gender injustice" (Kanyoro 1997:1-2).

Due to industrialisation, African culture is in a state of degeneration. Yet, when it comes to situations that help women to develop, systems place women firmly on the outside, and in the name of culture and bible teaching. As noted from the fieldwork research of this study, culture and the bible are consistently used to keep development open for men to excel, but closed tight for women. This is true in all

---

aspects of life including, religion, African politics, economics, and social life. Women's involvement in politics, economics, religion and social life are controlled lest they defy the culture (Njoroge 2001:159-164).

The Christian church has been called by God to liberate the captives regardless of the nature of the captivity. It is called to continue the good works that were instituted by Jesus (Eph. 2:10). If the church is to carry out the mission of Jesus, it has to stand by those who are oppressed, regardless of who the oppressor may be. Jesus came to liberate the oppressed. Jewish understanding of the law would have allowed them to stone to death the woman who was caught in adultery, leaving behind the man with whom she committed the sin. Jesus liberated the woman (John 8:3). The same culture would have condemned Jesus' act of taking time to listen to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7-26) but Jesus cut across that culture in order to liberate the woman. Jesus revised the law of divorce that allowed men to treat women as objects of sexual pleasure (Matt. 5:30-32). In doing all this, Jesus restored dignity to women. In the same way, the church is called to liberate those who are oppressed.

Ironically, the church seems to be a captive of culture. The bible, as word of God, which is supposed to be the source of liberation for all humanity, is used rather as an instrument of oppression against women. Women in the church were no freer than in society. The church seems to collude with culture, even with the oppressive aspects of culture. In general, African Christians respect the teachings of the bible, as they understand them. They would not choose to do the contrary if they thought the bible said something else. As Kanyoro has written:

It is important to understand how the bible is understood in order to locate the accountability of the church in regards to gender issues in church and in society. Cultural hermeneutics seeks to find ways to raise questions of accountability of the society and the church to women and the accountability of women in taking responsibility for their lives (Kanyoro 2001:164).

---

The concern in this study goes beyond just finding out where the responsibility lies. Rather it tries to see what can be done to address the situation of oppression. In the early chapters of this investigation, culture and its impact upon people was discussed within its own context. The discussion looked at how culture affects the way people see and understand one another. We also saw how people often misinterpret other people, simply because of differences in culture. In understanding and communicating among people, it is important to try to understand not only the meanings of the words, but also the meanings of experience among different cultures. As Africans therefore, it is important to read the bible and the experiences in the bible, through the lens of African culture and African-ness. This substantiates the need for cultural and biblical Hermeneutics. In doing such hermeneutical investigations, one must not forget the life experience of Jesus Christ, who is the perfect image of God, both in spiritual and practical life. According to the bible, not only does God love people, love is one of God's qualities. God is love (1 John 4:16).

### **7.3. Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to show how African women's theology can assist the women of South-East Zimbabwe become more aware of the possibilities that are there for them in the midst of all other hindrances. It has been the concern of the chapter to challenge these women by showing them that they were not alone in the situation. They should therefore take courage, stand up and struggle with their sisters toward their liberation. Both the literature study and field research in South-East Zimbabwe speak with one voice, namely, that women are oppressed and robbed of their God-given human dignity each day in their homes, churches and societies. As we have seen in the discussions above, African women's theology, by its very nature, has proved to be a good instrument toward the liberation of women. African women's theology focuses on the innate humanity of women. It emphasises, without compromise, that women are human beings, created in God's image. In African women's theology, women's oppression is investigated through the means



---

of a gender analysis. In doing this, the hope is to find out how societies are formed, hold power over one another and impose that power over women.

For African women's theology, experience is the starting point. All theology is done from and out of a given context. The context of African women's theology is women's experiences. The chapter looked at these experiences both in the church and in the community. Since the concern was liberation of the women of Africa, it was necessary to consider the interjection of culture and biblical hermeneutics. Discussion focused upon understanding and awareness raising of those who oppress women and who should carry the responsibility for women's liberation. The question of bible interpretation was also raised and analysed.

Finally, it was shown that it is not enough to raise questions of responsibility, accountability, interpretation and oppression and leave it to resolve itself, because this simply would not take place. It is necessary to find ways to extricate women. The discussion in the next chapter will look at possible ways to assist the people of South-East Zimbabwe towards self-help. The situation of the women of South-East Zimbabwe is not a problem of women alone. Rather it is a problem of women and men together. It is a problem of the church and community and of society as a whole. Women and men need to reach a solution to the dilemma of the women of South-East Zimbabwe. The next chapter will concern itself with helpful strategies in this regard and suggest a way forward.

---

## CHAPTER 8

### EMPOWERMENT AS A POSSIBLE SOLUTION FOR WOMEN'S DILEMMA

#### 8. Introduction

The concern of this study has been the marginalisation and disempowerment of the women of South-East Zimbabwe. The questions, responses and analysis confirm that the marginalisation, poverty and oppression of women are intensified by a limited awareness of the situation by most people within the community. Chapter 5 discussed women's theologies and hermeneutics, and thereby opened the door to possibilities for the liberation of the women of South-East Zimbabwe. The possibility of liberation however is not enough. The marginalisation, poverty and oppression of women affect all the people of South-East Zimbabwe. Solutions to these situations can only be achieved through the united efforts of all the people concerned.

Assisting people become aware of their problems and needs, or conversely, helping them see the possibilities for liberation is however not enough to deliver them from their difficult situations. This is why the last chapter concluded with the suggestion of women's empowerment. As from Chapter 4, this study has revealed the need for women to obtain intellectual, economic, political, and emotional power. In order for women to extricate themselves from their situations of difficulty, it is necessary that they be empowered in these areas. Because it is not possible to focus on everything in one chapter, the focal point of this discussion will be mainly concerned with the intellectual needs of women.

---

The title of this thesis suggests that awareness is a process toward liberation. Such awareness is the result of conscientisation that comes through education. Hence, the subject of empowerment through education will dominate this present discussion.

The situation of women reviewed was in previous chapters focuses on the idea of empowerment for the people of South-East Zimbabwe. The discussion in this chapter will make suggestions as to what women can do in order to work towards their own liberation. These suggestions will be guided by what are felt to be the shortcomings identified in the responses of women thus far analysed.

As mentioned before, a meaningful change in this area of study would only happen when both men and women become involved in working towards transformational change. The marginalisation of women is not the problem of women alone, but affects men, church and society in general. The empowerment of women is the empowerment of the church and society. As has already been discussed, women have been disempowered. In order for this situation to change those who maintain power must work towards the empowerment of women.

Following suggestions on what women can do towards their own empowerment, the discussion will turn to the means by which the church can be empowered so that it in turn may empower the women of the church. Through discussions thus far, we have identified some areas in which the church has failed with respect to women. Part of that assignment was to train and accommodate women so that they can collaborate with men in the ministry of the church. This is why the church needs to be empowered. Finally, suggestions were made as to how society in general can be empowered so that it in turn may empower women. The discussion is shaped in this way so that church people as well as non-church people are brought into the discussion on empowerment from two different levels.

Women are deliberately left out of development. Second, the situation of the women in South-East Zimbabwe is a problem for both men and women in the

---

church and in the larger community. All members of the community need therefore to work towards finding solutions to the situation. Following this thinking, empowering the church and the community as a way of empowering women seems to be a path that needs to be followed in order that a workable way forward is found. Women have been disempowered therefore someone needs to empower women again. The church can do this, yet one cannot expect a church that has been unconcerned about women for most of its history to begin empowering women. In order that this should happen, the church needs first to be empowered. Not only has the church failed women, but society also has failed to concern itself with the needs of women. It is necessary therefore to empower society so that the women within society can in turn be empowered. This way of empowering is consistent with the approach posited throughout this study, in that every area of society must be aware of the situation and be involved in one way or another. In order for this empowerment to take place, women need to be personally involved.

### **8.1. Empowerment of Women by Women Taking the Initiative**

Katarin Tomasevski has suggested that empowerment is a human right:

[f]or women the process of empowerment entails breaking away from the cycle of learned and taught submission to discrimination, carried on from one generation of women to the next (Tomasevski 1995:24-30).

Tomasevski therefore suggests that empowerment means breaking away from culture. What Tomasevski means by culture does not necessarily mean understanding culture in an inclusive sense, but rather those aspects of culture that are responsible for the disempowerment of women. This can only take place as the women become aware of their situation and accept responsibility to be involved in the process of changing it. Daniels Schipani brought this point out in his important book *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*. In his exposition of John 8:32, Schipani interacts with the writings of Paulo Freire and

---

James Michael Lee with respect to conscientisation, liberation and creativity (1988:9-30). His discussion seems to agree with Tomasevski, in that there is need for, “breaking away from the cycle of learned and taught...from one generation...to the next.” For Schipani, education creates conscientisation and conscientisation implants knowledge. As new knowledge is acted upon the “breaking away” from oppressive nodes of culture takes place, resulting in transformation. “Breaking away” is therefore the act of the one who needs liberation. While this highlights the important role of education in the process of empowerment, it also relies upon women taking responsibility if they are to be liberated.

Many claims have been made about women’s unfitness for leadership. Most have to do with how the bible is interpreted. When women are educated, and become aware of their situation, they will be able “to reflect on themselves and the world around them in relating to God” (Kendirim 1999:41). Women would then begin to understand human origins based on their own study of the bible. This means that women need to be involved in theological education as well. Kendirim suggests a number of barriers to women’s involvement in theological education, including, the negative attitudes toward women, the patriarchal systems within Christianity, the biblical imperative against women preaching and teaching. In South-East Zimbabwe, there are women who have undertaken theological education together with their husbands, but the church has not opened its door for them to minister. Women must not be stopped from taking theological education, so that they are prepared when finally the doors are opened.

The women of South-East Zimbabwe should understand these truths if they were to study the bible for themselves. This would raise their level of awareness. Any practice that is against development should be rejected as being destructive. Longwe is correct that these have to be seen as not being good before God and humanity (Longwe 1998:25). Such awareness can only be obtained by a process of conscientisation that comes through education.

---

It is important for women to understand the creation accounts in this way. If within creation there was the implicit subordination of women, God would not have called the creation work “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Subordination contradicts the freedom to which Jesus has called people. Within human relationships that which is “good” includes, mutual respect, complementarity of spirit, and understanding. Women need to be involved in theological education so that they may study the bible for themselves and thereby understand these truths about themselves. Haubert has made this point well:

Men and women are persons related as partners in life. Hence neither men nor women by nature are born to command or obey; both are born to command in some circumstances, to obey in others. And the more personal the relationship between them, the less there is of either; the less personal the relationship between them, the more there is of both. (Haubert 1992:13).

Haubert thus expresses what can only be observed and expressed by a woman who has become aware, and her awareness has led to the liberation of the self. As a Christian and Evangelical, the researcher believes in the teachings of the bible on creation. God is the creator of all humanity. God created both women and men in God’s own image. The researcher accepts that the life given to all humanity is a gift from God. The Apostle Paul can thus state in Ephesians 4:4-7:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

Both men and women receive gifts as God chooses. This idea dispels the theory of assigning roles to people by other people. This emphasizes the oneness and equality for humanity in God’s design and plan. God has a special plan and place for both men and women. It is true that all are “worthy of respect” (Oduyoye 2001:40). Women and men are equal in God’s plan.

---

The beginning of empowerment is the correct knowledge of oneself – a true sense of ‘good news’ to those women who are made to feel that their lives are of no value. This is awareness in a true sense. Women do not need to compromise about who they are. Rather they should affirm themselves and one another. God wants women to be. Therefore, women should live their lives to the fullest, resisting all forms of oppression and dehumanisation. This would be liberation. Women should take seriously, whatever responsibility is given to them without compromise. Liz Chitiga speaks about attitudes being a problem for the few women in decision-making positions. Such attitudes have two sides, namely, attitudes from within, and attitudes from without. Mention has already been made about attitudes from the outside, but what Chitiga means here has to do with attitudes that women have about themselves. If women look down upon themselves, no one will look up to them. Women need not expect men to treat them as if they are weak and incapable, and thus do their work for them. Chitiga gives a good example of herself at work. She said she never sat down at work and never made an excuse that she was a woman (Chitiga 1995:113).

Women should not be lazy. They should apply themselves if given the chance to do so. Education would empower them. It would help them discover themselves and build their confidence. If male church leaders fail to recognise committed women who are called by God and spiritually gifted, then churchwomen should recognise them and speak out. If fathers in their homes marginalise female children in favour of male children, then mothers should speak out. If husbands abuse their wives, then their wives should not remain silent. If national leaders despise women and marginalise them, women should collectively speak out with one voice. Women should affirm themselves. The saying that “women must respond to God with their own voices” (Oduyoye 1995:189) is a challenge that women must hear. Whatever talents or gifts that women possess, God intended for them to be used in God’s world for the benefit of all who live in the world. What is hidden cannot benefit anyone – it will remain hidden.

---

A cultural practice that gives no room for women's development is not worth preserving. Women need education so that they can learn to analyse culture and choose what is good and helpful from what is destructive to their humanity. Women who nurse cultural practises that were disaffirming are compromising God's purpose for humanity. The women of South-East Zimbabwe have been silent for too long. The time has come for these women to stand up and actively resist the enemy of freedom and development for both women and girl children. Active resistance means that women should not just sit and expect men to change their situation. This would never happen; women themselves should be involved in the churches, communities, and societies. Hluphekile Longwe rightly states that if women will not be involved in programmes for their own development and social change, men would involve themselves and take advantage, making the situation even more difficult for women (Longwe 1998:22-23).

Women need to come out of from amidst their dilemma. For this to happen, women need to become empowered. It is therefore necessary to discuss the ways in which women can become empowered.

## **8.2. Empowerment of Women by Empowering the Church**

At the beginning of this chapter, it was indicated that there is a need for all the people in South-East Zimbabwe to become involved in working out a solution to the situation regarding the marginalization and oppression of women. The suggestion was made that the people of South-East Zimbabwe need to be empowered. The discussion has centred on how women can live their lives if that they can realise their full potential as human being created in God's image. In order to understand this, we need to continue looking at how the church itself should be empowered so that it will be able to empower women. It needs to be emphasised that awareness is foundational, and that the church must be made aware of the situation that it is in. This is why church leaders were interviewed in chapter 3, in order to increase their level of awareness about the state of the church.



---

In Chapter 1 the term “empowerment” was explained. In building upon this, it needs to be emphasised that empowerment of the church is to enable or capacitate the church to be and to do what it did not do before. The emphasis of this study is about what the church did not do to empower and allow women to exercise their gifts in the church. This would mean that the church should finally become involved in its mission by realising and carrying out its intended duties, part of which is to empower its members. Empowerment for the church would happen when the church itself is conscientised and consequently become aware of the situation of women and is willing to stand up to take responsibility, reclaiming what is rightfully its own. This would mean that the church would take its place in the world and be a word spoken to the world. When the church does this, it will become empowered.

The relationship between the church and its members is like that of a chicken and an egg. There would be no chicken if there were no egg; consequently, there would be no church if there were no members. In our discussion, this would mean that to have an empowered church (the body) requires it to have empowered members. The act of empowering the church is therefore a deliberate act made by the members who make up the church. For the church to be empowered it is crucial that it comes to a correct knowledge of itself and of its divine purpose. The church must become conscious of itself. It is made up of people, both men and women. This should mean that men and women should make a deliberate act to live together as members of one body. It is in the world, so that it may become the “light in the world.” What makes the church light in the world is how differently its members live out their lives both in relationship to God and with one another. The time has come when the church must “openly challenge the structures that hinder women from attaining the dignity that was theirs equal to men, at creation” (Mwaura 1998:29). Being able to challenge what is not good is one of the actions that will make the church different from the world. This is what it means to be light in the darkness.

The church should come to terms with its God-given relationship to the world. However difficult this may be. The church should study the bible together with the purpose of letting its message speak so that they can know and understand its

---

mission in the world and how that mission should be carried out. The church is the Body of Christ made up of many members, both male and female. The church should make an examination of the divine mystery that is the relationship between Jesus and the church. It is a community of believers in the world, and that community is both male and female. The church should also examine Jesus' teaching about how life should be in the community of believers. The church as a body should also be active. Anything that is alive should be active. The church of Christ has been given life in the Son. Jesus Christ is its life therefore none of its members should be stationary.

Another image of the church that is helpful in this discussion is that of the church being God's messenger. From the explanation of the church given above, this would mean that all members of the church are God's messengers. The term "messenger" means "someone who is sent by another" or "one who is an agent of another," such as an envoy or an ambassador. In 2 Corinthians 5:20 and Ephesians 6:20 Paul uses the term in reference to himself as well as that of his companions. The church speaks often of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:16-20. In it, Jesus sent the apostles to go and minister to the world. In John 17:8 and 20:21, Jesus said that just as the Father had sent him, he was also sending his apostles. Even though the apostles made up the nucleus of the Christian church, the Great Commission was not for them alone. Rather, it was for the whole church of Christ. In his high priestly prayer recorded in John 17:20, Jesus said to God that he was not praying for the apostles alone but also for those who would believe in Jesus through the message of the apostles. Today's church is the result of the apostles' message. Consequently, both the blessings and the commission of the apostles are for the Christian church of today. This makes every member of the church important not only to God but to other members of the church, and for the sake of the message itself. The church should deliberately study the bible together in order to discover these truths

If the Christian church is God's messenger, the church should recognise itself as such. The Christian church needs to know that, although it is in the world, it is

---

not of the world (John 17:14-18). The church should not be silent in fear of becoming different from the world. The church should be different. It was created to be different. The church should not put itself under any obligation to collaborate with the world in poor treatment of human beings, regardless of gender or race. Rather, the church should stand up against such inhumanities. The church in South-East Zimbabwe should not be identified with what Olga Tulapona describes as the fear of rocking the boat:

The church aims to be as quiet as possible, not to rock the boat, not to displease the powers that be, not to call attention to itself, and above all, not to change anything (Tulapona 2002:16).

A church that lives in this kind of fear becomes a slave to fear. Such a church cannot empower its members. The church of Jesus should be a slave to anyone. It is the responsibility of the church and its members to work towards the empowerment of every member, so that together they may be emancipated from every kind of slavery.

As God's messenger, God has equipped the equipped every member of the church (male and female) for service. Ephesians 4:13 reveals how God has given spiritual gifts to each believer to complete the Christian church, so that Christ can be seen through it. All these blessings, the church of Christ will realise as they study and analyse the teachings of Jesus. It is from this knowledge and understanding of self and the teachings of Christ will empower the church, so that it in turn will empower women.

John MacArthur mentions that the church as the Body of Christ must "manifest all the glory and attributes of God" (MacArthur 1996:125). The Christian church as the messenger of God to the world should manifest God's character so that the world may know God. Jesus told his disciples that if they loved one another the world would know that they belonged to him (John 13:34, 35). God loves all people of the world just as they are. Jesus spent time teaching not only men but women as well.

---

The church as God's messengers should love in the same way. Howard Snyder suggests that the Christian church is God's witness (Snyder 1997:105). Witnessing is not only through word of mouth, but also through a life lived. Snyder has rightfully called the church "the steward of God's grace" (Snyder 1997:59-60). As God's messenger, the church should be the instrument through which God channels blessings. As 1 Peter 3:10 can state:

It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing.

This will be discovered by a church that studies the life of Jesus together with an intention to follow in his steps. That will empower the church so that it can empower women.

Below in Figure 8.1 is an illustration of how the relationship between God, God's messenger - the church (made up of women and men), and the world (made up of women and men) should look.

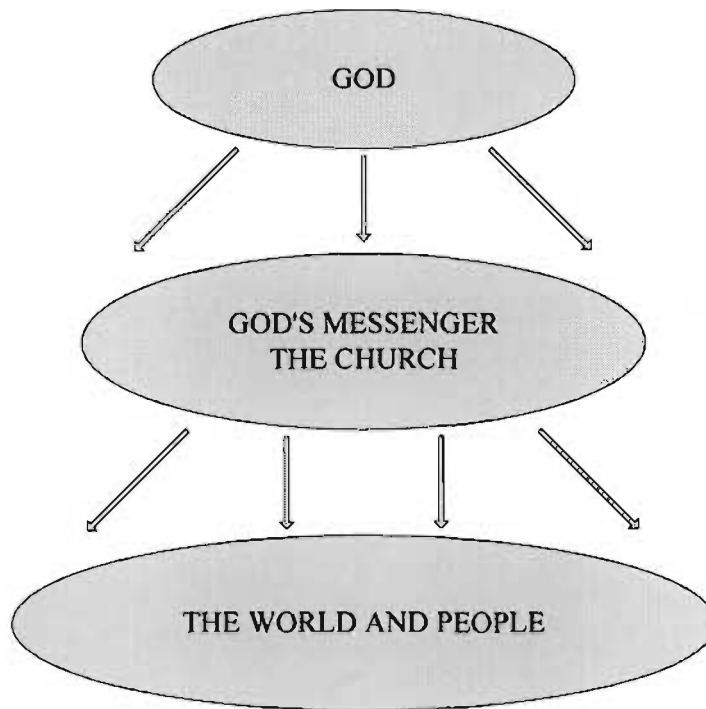


Diagram 8.1. Relationship Between God, the Church and the World. Source: Author.

The church should not be seen as a collaborator with cultures that are oppressive. The Christian church, as God's messenger, is called from the world to do good works and to continue that which was started by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:10). If the church is to be a true messenger of God, it should be prepared to stand by those who were oppressed regardless of who the oppressor may be. Jesus came to liberate the oppressed. The Christian church should exist to liberate those who are oppressed. That is what Jesus came to do.

Mercy Itohan Omoigui has shown that the Christian church needs to adopt the New Testament practice of doing things the Jesus way, as its normal mode of life. The church should not go along with those cultural or traditional expectations that are oppressive in nature. There is a need for church leaders and people to change their views of women and embrace the attitude of Jesus which he had toward the women with whom he came into contact (Omoigui 2001:122). In church circles, many people use the writings of Paul as an excuse for women's exclusion from leadership and their subordination under men. When people say it is not biblical for women to

---

lead men, they refer to some of Paul's writings and to the creation story in Genesis. Although this study does not intend to offer a closely argued analysis of the biblical text, it should still be questioned if Paul is being understood correctly. It is time for the church of Jesus Christ to a fresh look at Paul's teaching about women and the church.

Paul is often remembered for calling for the submission of women before men, and the silence of women in the assembly, and prohibiting women to lead and teach men. The same Paul wrote that Christians are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus:

For in Christ you are all children of God through faith...As many of you who as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26-28).

In this Galatians passage, Paul is speaking about the unity that Christians (the church) have in Christ. A better understanding of Paul for the church would be that, in Christ, the racial, social and gender differences are an advantage rather than disadvantage. They are meant to complement rather than contravene. The church needs to revisit passages such as Romans 16 where Paul affirms women, and in 1 Corinthians where he speaks about gifts of the Spirit given to both men and women. The promise of the Spirit was not to men alone, but to all who believe.

The Christian church cannot deny that there are more women, than men in the church. We have made mention of this throughout this study. The church that is empowered will see to it that the majority of its members are involved and that their participation is felt. Consequently, the church will realise its full life, which will flow out to others. The church needs to know that the empowerment of women is to help women live the life that God has intended for them. It is true that the church's mandate to empower women and the poor came from Jesus. It was Jesus' will that

---

all humanity should live their lives to the fullest (Mutambaran 1994:26). This takes place as the Spirit gives power to the church to make it happen.

The church should deliberately design strategies to empower women. This could be done through various different ways, including education, both formal and non-formal, as an instrument for empowerment. The Christian church within its different denominations, has many who can read and write. If the church could organise adult education classes, this could be a way to help otherwise illiterate women read the bible for themselves. The Zimbabwe Government is committed to adult education and has shown willingness to work with churches in such programmes. Bible studies could be organised where men and women come together in small groups, and where women are encouraged to lead the discussion. This would encourage and affirm women who aspire to leadership, and who dare to take on what society would otherwise call “a man’s job.” A church that is ready to take its responsibility is one that is determined to take its stand in protecting women from structures that would otherwise oppress them. It would encourage women who have a divine calling to leadership and the gifts for ministry in the church to go forward and fulfil their calling. It would also create an environment for women to feel comfortable enough to speak out when they have something to say to the church, encouraging them to be involved in the decision making of the church.

A viable means towards women empowerment is as Hlupekile Longwe has written, to “suggest a sequence of collective actions as a means of ending discriminatory practices and overcoming patriarchal opposition” (2000:25). One example would be for a church to recommend that women with the necessary calling from God be sent for theological training for church leadership.

The fieldwork for this research has confirmed the discovery that Mutambara made twenty years ago. The researcher’s fieldwork is in agreement with Mutambara that women are amongst the poorest of the poor due to the systems and structures that deliberately exclude them from development. As a result, they end up being “economically dependent on men” (Mutambara 1994:28). Hence, although certain

---

situations have changed in the country since liberation, the condition of women has seen very little transformational change. The church could address this situation by initiating projects where women do things for themselves and in their own names. The fieldwork research has revealed that while some women do such things, the proceeds are often in the name of their husband or male guardian. The church needs to design a system that protects women and allows them to benefit from such projects.

Mabel Katahweire has said that the church should be “an inclusive community that would formally and informally recognise the vital ministry of women and take affirmative actions of their own to empower women” (Katahweire 2002:12). The church in South-East Zimbabwe could be God’s messenger to liberate women not only spiritually, but also economically and emotionally.

The church can also organise and co-ordinate workshops. Some women from women’s organisations could be invited to address the women in the church. Subjects could be taught, such as planning and management, human and women’s rights, and bible studies where women are equipped to interpret the bible. Those who desire to pursue theological education should be encouraged to do so. Topics such as these, if correctly addressed by the correct people, would bring good results to the lives of many women. The subjects of discussion will touch all parts of human life, the spiritual and the physical.

While there may be churches in the country that have done much to assist women, the field research revealed that there are very few churches running meaningful projects for the development of women in the church in the area of education. The few, who agreed that there was something being done, were referring to what used to take place under missionary tutelage. The church needs to do far more if it is to create an enabling environment for the empowerment of women. As seen in the question analysis in Chapter 3, the research revealed that more men than women possess high school education. Due to the limited education of women, the chances for leadership were mainly limited to men. If the church is to help in the



---

empowerment of women, it is important that it not only look at child education, but at adult education as well. The church could also start adult literacy classes. This would help the women to read about what other women may be doing in other places. They could also read about their rights in society as well as in the church.

For women to take up leadership responsibilities, they need to have some education about how to access information. The church needs to recommend, send, and try to help those who do not have the necessary financial means at their disposal by raising support for them so that they can attend theological schools and thereby learn to study and interpret the bible correctly. This would make it easier for them to be accepted as leaders. The church needs to work together with the government in constitutional workshops. The church should help people to understand better the constitution and their rights. The church needs to examine its own commitment to bringing healing to the nations. The church's life and ministry should not contradict its proclamation.

If the church of South-East Zimbabwe is serious about women's empowerment, it should learn from such women as Olga Tulapona, and thereby:

- Speak openly and publicly against abuses, wrongs and injustices in the society...people should be made to feel that this is the church that cares;
- Encourage women to study for development, even theology! It should offer study bursaries;
- Establish various fund-generating schemes for women;
- Conduct classes and seminars to inform women of their legal rights. Help some Christian women to study law and set up a Christian Law Society to defend women;

- 
- Support women individually by taking action to right a wrong whenever it is committed (Tulapona 2002:21).

The church should also take Mercy Itohan Omoigui's words seriously, when she makes the following challenge:

The church of the 3rd millennium must be the voice of the voiceless, because the Jubilee code of Leviticus 25 does not speak of constructing a millennium dome; it speaks of establishing social equality, restoring the rights of the poor (of which the women constitute a larger part) and setting free those who have been stripped of their human dignity" (2001:123).

The majority of women have been robbed of their rights and are poor. Women have no freedom; their human dignity has been taken away. For such as these, the church should champion their cause. When the church can do this, it will be empowered enough to empower women.

### **8.3. Empowerment of Women by Empowering Societies**

For empowerment to take place, the subjects that need empowering have to be aware of the following:

- Who they are;
- Their situation;
- Their purpose in life;
- Their strengths;
- Their weaknesses.

---

In this discussion, the subject needing empowerment is society. Society should know itself. In trying to understand what society is, Marvin Mayer thinks of society as “a social organisation made up of a group of people who share a geographical area and culture” (Mayer 1988:39). As such, society is related to the community, the church, the family, and to the individual. A society is made up of communities, which are themselves made up of families. In turn, families are made up of individuals. As a result, one can never have the one without the other.

Mary Ellen Goodman has said that a “society is a cluster of positioned individuals” (Goodman 1967:59) coloured by the individuals who make it up. Calhoun, Light and Keller would say that individuals are influenced by the societies of which they are part (Calhoun *et. al.* 1994:3-4). While society, community, family and the individual are not the same thing, they are nevertheless interrelated. They influence each other. Sithembiso Nyoni is correct in her assessment that individuals are an integral part of a family, and as such should be a part of the implementation of the “Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women” (Kwinjeh 1999:15).

Because society, communities and individuals are interrelated, they are responsible to one another. For example, not only should society follow-up with policy makers, but it should also make sure that its entire people understand what is rightfully theirs. Most women in South-East Zimbabwe do not know or understand the Legal Age of Majority Act; neither do they know about “The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.” A concerned society would make sure that it finds those people and links them to organisations that have the knowledge in these areas and hold workshops and pass on information. A society that cares will liberate women from oppressive customary laws. This is clearly spelled out in the case, *Magaya vs Magaya* that deals with the situation of inheritance for women (Kwinjeh 1999:16). Some women are still bound by customary law, and do not know about the existence of new written laws. Society should purposefully help such people understand their rights and hold the State accountable for its unimplemented policies.

---

An empowered society should hold every community, family and individual who works against the development of humankind responsible. Members of society in Zimbabwe have not forgotten their struggle for liberation. Teurai Ropa Nhongo, Zimbabwe's first Minister of Women's Affairs in referring the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe, where women were given the same responsibilities as men, is quoted as saying, "Women showed power and determination that they were not afraid" (*The Herald* March 6, 1981)

What society needs to remember is that if women are to be treated as equals, they should be treated as equals now. Women were strong and powerful then; women are strong and powerful now. Sithembiso Nyoni suggests that it was Zanu PF party members who encouraged women to join in the struggle for liberation. This is the same party that is in power today. Women's efforts should be remembered and rewarded (Nyoni 1994:58). Hence, the problems of the individual are the problems of society, and the problems of the society are the problems of the individual. Until people are willing to look at the strengths and weaknesses in this way, empowerment will continue to be a problem.

If society is to be empowered, it also needs to be honest with itself. Society needs every member, both male and female. Society needs to be concerned for its own existence and well-being. Society also needs to listen to the cries of its communities, families, and individuals. Society will only know itself if it is willing to listen with openness to its people. In listening, society will know if there are things that are not right. It should be aware of things that are needed, and it should be aware of injustice and discriminatory practices. Society must desire to see development. The development of society means the development of all people in society. If this is not happening, society should look for ways to kick-start the process. Within Zimbabwe, many organisations are willing to advise how best to engage in programmes of development. The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network can for example suggest other organisations that offer assistance to a community that is willing to empower its members, especially women who have been left behind for years.

---

A caring society should initiate follow-up programmes and ensure that the gender desk in the President's Office is made fully aware of women's concerns. It was not against customary law that men and women fought the bush war. Rather, the struggle was born out of the need for liberation. This need is for equality amongst both men and women, and liberation from oppressive patriarchal customary laws.

In many respects, the Government has done its share in recognising women. A good example is that of the 1997 law guaranteeing equality between men and women. However, as Peters states:

Article 23 (Sections 1 & 2) of the Zimbabwe Bill of Rights protects individuals against various forms of discrimination, save sexual discrimination. This article also allows for discrimination against women, if it is in the nature of African Society to do so... Zimbabwe...is governed by a system of legal dualism which acts in many ways to negate new legislation adopted by the government. Legal dualism allows for the simultaneous existence of general law as legislated by parliament and customary law as codified by the British Settlers...Primary courts have jurisdiction to apply only limited aspects of general law and as such, often rely on customary law to decide cases...The constitution in Zimbabwe does not recognise equality between the sexes, nor does it protect the rights granted to women under the country's general law (2000:127-128).

Society needs to be well informed about such situations. Governments are elected by society; hence, society has the obligation to keep government honest in these issues. Society should raise awareness within communities about issues of injustice with the aim of confronting such issues. As Peters adds, "the Zimbabwe Supreme Court has not proved to be a champion of women's rights in the country" (Peters 2000:128). This is an unfortunate situation. Committed societies can make a difference in a country. A committed society not only becomes its watchdog, but it also engages injustice for the empowerment for its people. A good example is that of education. Society should encourage families to send their children to school regardless of their gender. Where parents are struggling to raise funds for the education of all their children, members of society should help parent's access scholarships for their children, especially their girl children.

---

Societies need to take a fresh look at the life of married women academics. Amongst African societies, women are expected to be at home with the children and doing housework. Today, some African women are found in the marketplace doing jobs that once men only used to do. These women work outside of their homes often eight hours a day. When they come home, they are expected to do all the work of a mother and homemaker. Sometimes people do not seem to recognise this double career. Sometimes they receive criticism, simply for doing things a little differently. Such women should not be punished for being educated and entering the so-called “men’s world.” Society should recognise and encourage these women.

It is not only in the home that women academics have trouble. Women who find themselves doing work that used to be called “men’s work” are often not taken as seriously by their colleagues, as would be men (Malinga 2002:3-5). While society is not the church, it is nevertheless true that the church is made up of people from society. It makes sense therefore that society has a responsibility to the church. Society should defend the rights and dignity of its entire people, including women in every aspect of life. Women have an important place in society. Society should protect all its members.

While women academics and employed women experience a different set of problems, less educated and unemployed women experience pain in multitudinous ways. Within the 1995 Poverty Assessment Study Survey, the Zimbabwe National Population Policy of 1998 revealed that over 61% of families in Zimbabwe were living under the Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL). The survey also revealed that 45% lived below the National Food Poverty Line (NFPL) (Zimbabwe National Population Policy 1998:13-15). With the understanding that global problems affect the lives of women more than they do men, this situation should tell us that the women of Zimbabwe are more affected by poverty situation than are men. The situation in Zimbabwe has not improved. Poverty has in fact intensified due to drought and the economic collapse of the country. Women and children have become even poorer than they were in 1995. Many families struggle to find food for even one meal a day. The women of South-East Zimbabwe said that going to a shop

---

to buy clothing was a luxury that people do not think about any more, because their concern is to find food for the family (Moyo 2003). While drought is a natural disaster, the interviews highlighted the deeper causes of Zimbabwe's poverty problem, especially for women. Therefore, more work needs to be done in order to address this situation.

A caring society should work with government to find better ways of dealing with the impoverishment, marginalisation and oppression of women. An empowered and a caring society should work through its village structures to create programmes that meet the needs of women. There are some few community projects in existence such as gardening, sewing and carpentry. These could be improved by helping the women establish a market for their products, by sponsoring the transport to the market and paying the salaries of the instructors. Society, working through its village structures, could invite women who know about government's new constitutions and the bill of rights to run seminars for the women. All this would be a way of raising awareness for the women of South-East Zimbabwe, so that they may begin to stand on their own feet and participate in the life of their societies.

While society makes such efforts, women would be encouraged to stand together and support one another. The people of South-East Zimbabwe, society, the church and women need champions such as Anne Nasimiyu Wasike who said that every Christian is a prophet and as such needs to play a prophetic role:

Prophetic ministry and prophetic community must engage themselves in a struggle for alternative consciousness in a community of faith...Moses destroyed the mythical legitimacy of Pharaoh's social world and disclosed the alternative religion of the freedom of God...Moses revealed Yahweh the One Who Is, He...dismantled the politics of oppression and explanation by countering it with the politics of justice and compassion (Wasike 1993:179-180).

While society is called to empower women, women need to believe in themselves. Women such as Queen Ester and Deborah the Judge were mentioned earlier as examples of women's ministry in a society that was willing to empower. Women

---

should take courage knowing that Jesus never treated women as inferior beings. Jesus listened to women when they spoke to Him. Being listened to, empowers. Anne Long in her book, *Listening*, speaks about listening as a ministry (Long 1990:35-38). When the church and society actively listen to the voices as well as to the silence of women, they empower women. Listening in this way takes time and patience, but this was what Jesus did and commissioned his messengers to do. A spirit of dialogue will follow this kind of listening and dialogue between men and women will result in healing peace.

Jesus listened to the woman who suffered from a blood haemorrhage. He listened to the woman who was condemned to death; he listened to the Samaritan woman; he listened to Mary at the tomb; he listened to Mary and Martha, as well as many others. Jesus' way of listening was always accompanied by compassion. Jesus believed in women, restoring their self-value and respect. Henri Nouwen speaks about "suffocating loneliness" (1997:3-15). Those to whom Jesus listened, he delivered from their loneliness and discouragement and restored them to society as fully human, with their dignity intact. These women were empowered.

What was presented in the analysis of women's responses from the women of the area of study is not different from what was said by a group of Lutheran women:

As...women of African descent we have been taught all our lives that the church accepts God's children...yet as victims of racism, sexism and poverty, we have not always experienced acceptance, care and nurture. More often than not we who are both lay and ordained Children of God have been perceived as threats within the church rather than as strong, gifted women with talents...Furthermore we have been expected in light of traditional biblical teaching and cultural conditioning concerning gender roles, to remain silent in the face of our oppression (Elliot and Moody 1997:7-8).

These are the voices that church and society should listen to. The annals church history record that the Christian church spoke out against slavery and all kinds of injustice. The Christian church in South-East Zimbabwe should follow this same



---

pattern. As church and society speak out against the abuse of women, they empower women to become who they were intended to be.

#### **8.4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to refer again to the story of Chido Zarimba. Chido demonstrates well how a few good people who are willing to speak out can make a difference.

First it took a father who trusted his own daughter. It took the elders of the community to have the confidence that the young woman could lead their community. It took a chief of the area who was willing to give a chance to the young woman to exercise her leadership skills. It took a young woman who was willing and daring enough to take responsibility, responsibility that society expected to be taken by a man.

When an individual is empowered, society is empowered. When society is empowered, the nation is empowered. When the nation is empowered, God's purposes are fulfilled. Society should change its wrong ideas and misconceptions handed down to them through history and the processes of socialisation. Society must come together and address those issues that affect any group of people within that society. This is the only way to overcome the obstacles to development that hinder a society.

---

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

#### 9. Introduction

The main aim of this study was first, to investigate the levels of awareness that the people of South-East Zimbabwe have in relation to the marginalisation of women. This was expressed, among other things, by the invisibility of women in leadership positions in both the church and public sectors. Second, the study sought to investigate and demonstrate those factors that were the cause of such invisibility. To do this, and thereby get a better understanding of the situation, a brief overview of the geographical area, historical and cultural background of the area under study was provided. The research revealed various cultural and traditional dynamics to which the people still adhere. To understand what the situation for women was in South-East Zimbabwe, a cohort of women and some men were selected for interview from the area under study. Responses from the interviews were analysed to ascertain what was behind each practice. The analysis revealed a number of things:

1. The society has cultural expectations for each member of its community;
2. Young boy and girl children are cultural prepared to fit into these expectations;
3. The expectations for boy and girl children are different;

- 
4. Women are expected to fit into an already prescribed image that is more closed, static, controlling and disempowering;
  5. The expectations for men are dynamic, open-ended, more flexible and empowering;

The study further investigated the contributions and effects of Christianisation and western civilization upon the community, with particular reference to women. In this regard, emphasis was placed upon the early influences of colonisation and Christian mission upon Zimbabwe.

Since it was not an acceptable practice for women to go to school, not many women of first generation Christian converts received any education. Consequently, they remained dependent on men in every way. Western Colonialism brought little if no relief to women. While it may have not been its intention the approach used by both the church and the colonial administrators encouraged the cultural attitude against women. A general finding from the analysis was that the efforts of the church to improve the lives of the women centred on them being good mothers, wives, and housekeepers. Although this had its benefits, it kept women inside the home with very little access to further their lives. At the same time, the colonial administrators encouraged the cultural oppression of women by passing into law those traditional customary laws, which deemed all women minors and dependants. The same analysis revealed that women leadership in situations where men and women were involved was neither encouraged nor developed.

To establish what the church and civilisation does for women today, various churchwomen were interviewed. The analysis of their responses revealed that Christianity and civilisation brought some measure of liberation to some women. Through education, some women grew beyond total dependence, but the road to this partial independence was not easy. One example was that of Rulani Chisi, a qualified nurse who, nearing her retirement, wrote an article for the Free Methodist magazine, *Missionary Tidings*. In her article, Chisi wrote about her schooling days,

---

mentioning that people in the community, especially men, despised her, because girl children were accused of going to school to learn to become immoral women. Men in her community regarded Chisi's father as being despicable because he had sent his daughter to school. They said that she should not be married but become a woman of loose morals. The people in those days accepted that only boy, and not girl children went to school (Chisi 1978:8-9).

Culture should be a dynamic phenomenon. Unfortunately, for the women of South-East Zimbabwe, it has been made static. Women are expected to adhere to culture's unchanging whims, although no one seems to be able to explain the reasoning behind this. The analysis revealed that some of the situational experiences were because of what happened to women during early days of Christianity and colonial rule. The majority of women were not allowed to go to school during these times thereby ensuring that most of the older generation of women in South-East Zimbabwe do not read or write because their fathers did not allow them to go to school as young children. The majority of men of the same generation however can read and write and some have entered into positions of leadership. The research further revealed that societies, including some churches were influenced more by culture and tradition than by Christian principles or colonial rule.

To find out more about women and leadership a literature review was presented. This confirmed that although there were not many women leaders, there were some capable women leaders in the history of the country, although not from the area of the study. The coming of the church and western colonial rule maintained most of the structures detrimental to women and only replaced only those that they could utilise with education. As the research has shown, the majority of people who have education were men. There was no replacement for women for that which had been taken away from them by civilisation.

The people of South-East Zimbabwe remembered that the national struggle for liberation called for courage, determination and hope. In the pursuit for liberation, there was an opponent. Therefore, it was necessary to be suitably equipped. The

---

struggle for liberation was a risky and daring act. Women and girl children should therefore dare speak out against those cultural practices that are detrimental to their welfare and development. Women should be prepared to stand alone for a good cause when it becomes necessary. If a father cannot protect his young daughter from the demands of a patriarchal society, a mother at home should risk disfavour with her husband if it will give a future and a hope to her young daughter. Women should be prepared to put their lives at risk for their liberation. Women and girl children should make the best of the opportunities they may have been given for their education. If a father cannot, or will not, provide fees for his daughters, girl children should ask other women where they could apply for scholarship assistance. Women should create financial foundations for the education of their daughters. Literate women should read *Speak Out*, a magazine that is concerned with women's issues. It discusses women's initiatives toward their own liberation and provides other information helpful to all women.

The women of South-East Zimbabwe should deliberately work with, instead of against other women. The effect of such collective action is familiar to the women of South-East Zimbabwe. It was a lesson well learned during Zimbabwe's struggle for liberation. These women need to stand together, raise questions about issues of society, and together find answers to such questions.

In a vast rural area such as South-East Zimbabwe, one can often feel alone. In reality, there are concerned women all over Zimbabwe, as well as in the rest of the continent. The researcher challenges women to attend women's meetings, for in these meetings one can meet women with similar concerns. One should either be encouraged or encourage others. These include such meetings as the Ibadan consultations mentioned in Chapter 4. Although there are few women leaders, they all started from the bottom rung; they made the best of every opportunity, even though small and at times seemingly insignificant. They dared to speak when the situation was designed to keep them silent. They did not stop until they got to where they were seeking to go. Their courage, faith and hope led them through small life doors for which they had no guaranteed of success.

---

In the previous chapters, mention was made on a number of women in Zimbabwe who have made it to the top. The researcher mentioned the newly appointed vice-president Mrs. Joys Mujuru. These should serve as examples for the women of South-East Zimbabwe. Mrs Catherine Gumbo, first woman executive mayor of Kariba, and Evelyn Masaiti MP in the Mutasa area, are among many other women who could be mentioned if space allowed. Information produced by organisations such as The Women's Action Group; Zimbabwe's Lawyers Association; Zimrights, and Women in Law in Southern Africa and many others in the country would be helpful in this regard. The *Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network* would have more information on women and their efforts to succeed.

The concern of this study was the invisibility of women in positions of leadership among the women of South-East Zimbabwe. The literature review and field research in South-East Zimbabwe speak with one voice. Due to many factors that hinder women from achieving excellence, there are few women in positions of leadership. Unfortunately, the field research established that the women of the area of study were not fully aware of the situation.

African Women's Theology, by its very nature, has proved to be a good instrument for the liberation of women as it focuses on the humanity of women. It emphasises, without compromise, that women are human beings created in God's image. In African women's theology, women's oppression is chronicled in the context of gender analysis. By so doing, the desire is to discover how societies are made up, who has power over another, and how that power is used to control women.

To conduct such an analysis, it is important to take African women's experience as the starting point. Every theology has to be done from within a given context. The context of African women's theology is the experience of the women of Africa. The present study looked at the experience of women, both in the church and in the community using the analysis of African women's cultural and biblical hermeneutics. Discussion sought to understand and raise awareness about who was

---

responsible for the suppression of women and who should carry the responsibility for women's liberation. In this regard, a gendered biblical hermeneutics raises question about the interpretation of the bible.

It is however not enough to raise questions of responsibility, accountability, interpretation and oppression and then leave it alone to resolve itself. This will never take place on its own. Instead, it will be necessary to find ways of liberating women out of the problem. The present study therefore progressed to issues of empowerment. As women live in community with others, it is not a problem experienced by women alone. Consequently, the discussion went on to address issues of empowerment of the church, society and women in general.

Are women inferior to men? Are they incapable? According to this study, the answer is in the negative. Throughout this study, it has been shown that although only a small number of women hold leadership responsibilities, this should not be perceived as a problem that concerns the supposed abilities of women. Rather, it is a societal issue, which results in the systematic oppression and marginalisation of women.

One of the key theological questions addressed in this study concerns how God could have created two sets of people in his own image, one superior and the other inferior. How could God's enabling Spirit make some capable and others not? It is hoped that this study has helped establish that women are capable of serving in whatever capacity that they are called to serve, as apportioned to the gifts and strengths that God gives. In order for this to happen, the study has shown that:

- Men and women must possess an awareness of the plight that women suffer in their society;
- Men and women must be willing to take the responsibility to transform the situation so that together they may serve as partners, according to their gifts;

- 
- Men and women are equally members of God's church;
  - It is God's intention that both Men and women serve in partnerships of faith.



---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### **(A) Primary Sources**

*All interviews were conducted in South East Zimbabwe Mwenezi District, unless specified otherwise.*

Changu, R. 1999. *On the situation of girls refused education by parents during Colonial era.*

Chauke, M. D. 1997. *History and Culture of the Hlengwe people.*

Chauke, M. D. 1999. *Movements of the Hlengwe and Karanga people in South-East Zimbabwe.*

Chauke, M. D. 1999. *On the Resettlement in South East Zimbabwe.*

Chauke, M. D. 2000. *On the Integration and Resettlement in South-East Zimbabwe.*

Council Official. 1999. *On male and female leadership in schools. South East Zimbabwe.*

Hlongwani, Maseke. 1997. *On cultural issues especially ownership of property for married women South-East Zimbabwe.*

Khoza, Leah. 1997. *On Culture and Women in the Church. South-East Zimbabwe (Sengwe area).*

Langa, F. 1997. *On the Background of the Shangaana/ Hlengwe people. South-East Zimbabwe (Sengwe area).*

Langa, F. 1998. *On the Culture of the Hlengwe people. South East Zimbabwe.*

- 
- Manokore, Grace. 1999. *On the attitudes surrounding girls going to school during the 1950s. South-East Zimbabwe.*
- Mkwananazi, Kheti, 2003. *On situation of girls in boarding school during early days of schools in South-East Zimbabwe.*
- Moyo, Sellinah. 2003. *On women culture and Church involvement South-East Zimbabwe.*
- Makasi, Beti 1998. *On the Cultural situation of women South East Zimbabwe.*
- Phukwani, C. 1997. *On Cultural Issues especially girls training South-East Zimbabwe.*
- School Matron 1999. *On the situation of Comparable training for girls at home and at boarding Schools during the colonial era. South East Zimbabwe.*
- Shava, Ester. 1998. *On women's Involvement in the Church. South-East Zimbabwe.*
- Siya, Elizabeth. 1999. *On subjects, which were taught to girls during the early days of school in South-East Zimbabwe.*

**(B) Discussion with:**

- Five female high school teachers. 1999. *On how it is being a working woman.*
- Group of Church women. (a) 1997, 2001. *On the involvement of women in their Church. South-East Zimbabwe.*
- Group of Church women. (b) 1997 and 1999. *On the involvement of women in their Church. South-East Zimbabwe.*
- Group of Church women. (c) 1999. *On their involvement of women in their Church. South-East Zimbabwe.*
- Ten male Church leaders from different Churches in the area 1997, 2001. *On Church leadership and women. South-East Zimbabwe.*
- Ten male leaders from different Organisations in the area: 1999 and 2001. *On leadership in Public Sector and women, South East Zimbabwe.*
- Three female nurses. 1999. *On how it is to be a woman who is employed full time.*
-

---

Two female education officers. 1999. *On how it is like to be a woman and a leader over both males and females.*

Women of the gardening project. 1997. *On male and female involvement in community projects (a) South East Zimbabwe.*

Women of the gardening project. 1999. (b) *On male and female involvement in community projects South East Zimbabwe.*

**(C) Government Documents – Zimbabwe:**

*Power to the people*, 1999, Social series No.16, Gweru, Mambo Press.

*Rights of Workers* April 1999, Harare, Zimbabwe Legal Resource Foundation.

*The Declaration of Rights* 1998, September, Harare. Legal Resource Foundation.

*Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Project*, 1-6. December 1991  
Harare, Zimbabwe: South African Printing and Publishing House  
(SAPPHO).

*Zimbabwe National Population Policy* Oct 1998: 13-15. National Economic  
Planning Commission Government of Zimbabwe.

**(D) Unpublished Documents:**

Chauke, H. 1997. *Notes on the history of the Hlengwe people in Zimbabwe.*

Gwemende, K. 1996. *Church growth notes of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.*

Houser, T. 1994. *A manual on the Free Methodist Mission in Zimbabwe.*

**Secondary Literature**

**(A) Books**

Aaker, A. David, Kumar, V, and Day, George, S. (1995). *Marketing Research*.  
Fifth Edition. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

- 
- Ackerman, Denise. 1998. "Feminist and Womanist Hermeneutics", in Maimela S. and Konig A. (eds), *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik, 158-349.
- Akintan, Oluwatosin 2001, "Cultural Values: A Factor in The Realisation of Women Empowerment in Ijebu-Land", in Dorcas Olu Akintunde (ed). *The African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights*, Institute of Women in Religion and Culture, Ibadan,: Ohiseye Press, 125-133.
- Aschwanden, Herbert 1982. *Symbols of Life*, Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Bailey, K. D. *178 Methods of Social Research*. London: Collier Maxmillan Publishers.
- Balcomb, Anthony. 2000. "The Power of Narrative: Constituting Reality through Story telling" in Philippe Denis (ed) *Orality, Memory and the Past*. Pietermaritzburg, Cluster publications, 4-9.
- Beals, L. Ralph. (ed) 1959. *An Introduction to Anthropology*. Macmillan, 265-287.
- Bromiley, Geoffrey W. and Everett F. Harrison. (eds) 1976. *Bakers Dictionary of Theology*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 518-520.
- Berkhof, Louis. 1958. *Systematic Theology*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust.
- Brown, L. Judy. 1996. *Women Ministers According to Scripture*. Springfield: Morris Publishing.
- Calhoun, C., Light D, and Keller S. (eds) 1994. *Sociology*, Sixth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Chigudu, Hope. 1999. "The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network", in Eade, Deborah (ed)., *Development with Women*, Oxford: Oxfam, 151-155.
- Chikuku, Ida. 1995. "Women and Education" in Getecha, C. and Chipika, J (eds). *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare, Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 109-115.
- Chilver, M. Alan (ed) 1997, *Women's Ministry in the Church*, Nairobi: Theological and Christian Education Commission.
-

- 
- Chitiga, L. 1995. "Women and Formal Employment" in Getecha, C and Chipika, J. (eds). *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 109-115.
- Cibalonza, Farhi. 1998, "The Evolution of the African's Sexuality", in Bernadette Mbuy-Bey (ed). *Woman, Who Are you?* Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 38-48.
- Daneel, M. L. 1971a. *Old and New in Southern Independent churches*. Vol 1. Mouton.
- Daneel, M. L. 1971b. *African Earth Keepers*, Pretoria: UNISA Press.
- Dorsey, J. Betty. 1975. "The African Secondary School Leaver: Aspiration, Academic Achievement and Post School Employment" in M. W. Murphree (ed) *Education, Race and Employment In Rhodesia*. Salisbury: Artca Publications, 15-167.
- Dube, Musa W. 2001. "Fifty Years of Bleeding: A storytelling Feminist Reading of Mark 5:24- 43", in Dube Musa W (ed). *Other Ways of Reading: Geneva 2, Switzerland: World Council of Churches*, 50-60.
- Dube-Chirairo, Lilian. 2000 "Mission and Deliverance in the Zvikomborero" in *Missionalia*. 294-311.
- Eade, Debora. 1999. "Preface" in *Development with Women*, Oxford: Oxfam.
- Elliott, Robert and Moody, James. (ed) 1997. *A Message From Bulawayo. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. Chicago: Division for Global Mission.
- Elliston, Edgar. J. 1992. *Home Grown Leaders*, Pasadena: William Carey Library.
- Famonure, Naomi. 1997. "Women in the Ministry of the Church. Practical Issues", in Alan M. Chilver (ed), *Women's Ministry in the Church*, Nairobi: Association of Evangelicals in Africa, 107-117.
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. 1990. "Missionaries, Apostles, Co-workers: Romans 16 and the Reconstitution of Women's Early Christian History", in Loades, A (ed.) *Feminist Theology*. London: SPCK, 57-71.

- 
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. 1986. "Missionaries, Apostles, Co-workers: Romans 16 and Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History," in *Romans* Vol. VI Fall, 1986, Number 4, 420-433.
- Getecha, C and Chipika, J 1995. "Women and Culture," in Getecha C and Chipika J. (eds). *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 147-148.
- Gibellini, R. 1988. *The Liberation Theology Debate*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Goodman, Mary. Ellen 1968, *The Individual and Culture*, Homewood, Illinois, United States of America: The Dorsey Press.
- Gordon, R. 1998. "Girls Cannot Think as Boys Do: Socialising Children Through Zimbabwean School System", in Sweetman, C (ed). *Gender, Education and Training*, Oxford: Oxfam, 53- 58.
- Hammond, W. D. 1974. *The Bantu Speaking People of Southern Africa*, London: Loake Roubledge and Kegan Paul.
- Haubert, M. Katherene. 1992. *Women as Leaders: Accepting the Challenge of Scripture*, Monrovia, California: Mack Publication.
- Hayes, Diana L. 1993. "Feminist Theology, Womanist Theology: A Black Catholic Perspective" in Cone, H. James and Wilmore, S Gayraud (eds), *Black Theology: A Documentary History* Volume Two, 1980-1992, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 325- 336.
- Hull, Gretchen Gaebelein. 1987. *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home*, Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Janvier, G E and Thaba, B 1997. *Understanding Leadership: An African Model*, Jos, Nigeria: Acts.
- Johnston, Patrick and Mandryk, Jason. 2001. *Operation World*, United Kingdom: Operation Mobilisation.
- Junod, A. 1927. *The Life of a South African Tribe*, London: Macmillan and Company Limited.
- Junod, Henri P. 1938. *Bantu Heritage*, Johannesburg, South Africa: Hortors Limited.
-

- 
- Junod, Henri P. *Matimu Ya Vatsonga*, 1982. Braamfontain: Sasavona Publishers and Booksellers.
- Kabamba, Kaboko. 2001. "Sharing Power" in Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube (ed) *Talitha cum Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 207-221.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi. 1997. *In search of a Round Table: Gender, Theology and Church Leadership*, Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi. 2001. "Engendered Communal Theology: African Women's Contribution to Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," in Nyambura, J. Njoroge and Dube, Musa W. (eds) *Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 158-180.
- Kapungu, T. Leonard. 1974. *Rhodesia The Struggle For Freedom*: Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Keane, Marie-Henry. 1998. "Feminist and Womanist Theology," in Maimela Simon, Konig Adrio (ed). *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik Publishers, 121-136.
- Kottak, C. P. 1991. *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity*, Fifth Edition, New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Landman, Christina. 1998. "African Women's Theology", in Maimela, S and Konig, A (eds), *Initiation into Theology*, Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik Publishers, 137-140.
- Leach, Fiona 1999, "Women in the Informal Sector: The Contribution of education and Training", Eade, Deborah (ed). *Development with Women*. Oxford: Oxfam Publication, 46-62.
- Leach, Fiona. 2000. "Gender, Education and Training" in Sweetman, Caroline (ed) *Gender, Education and Training*, Oxford: Oxfam.
- Legal Resources Foundation. 2000. *Know your rights: The Legal Age of Majority*. WO 41/84.
- Long, Anne. 1990. *Listening*. London: Dalton, Longman, and Todd.
-



- 
- Longwe, S Hlupekile. 1998. "Education for Women's Empowerment or Schooling for Women's Subordination?", in Sweetman, Caroline (ed). *Gender, Education and Training*, Oxford: Oxfam, 19-26.
- McArthur, John. 1996. *The Body Dynamic*, Colorado: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Maboreke, Mary and Sithole, Ellen. 1999. "Heads Still Above Water, But For How Long? The search for gender equity" in MacGarry Brian and Kwaramba Rudo, (ed) *Power to The People*. Mambo Press in association with Silveira House Zimbabwe.
- Magesa, Laurenti. 1993. "Mission of the Church in Africa During the Post-Cold-War International Order' in Wasike A. Nasimiyu and Waruta, D. W. (eds) *Mission In African Christianity* Nairobi Kenya: Umzima Press, 150-195.
- Makasa, Shumirai. 1995. "A Girl is a Child, Too," in Getecha, C. and Chipika, J. (eds). *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network.
- Marphree, Marshall, W. (ed) 1975. *Education, Race and Employment in Rhodesia*. Salisbury: Artca Publications.
- Materu, Rose. 1990. "Women and Their Role in the Church" in Oduyoye, A. Mercy and Kanyoro, Musimbi. *Talitha Qumi*. Ibadan: Daystar, 155 -160.
- Mathababne, Mark. 1994. *African Women*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Mawire, Veronica. 1995. "Women and Politics" in Getecha, C and Chipika, P (eds), *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Woman's Resource Centre and Network, 63-72.
- Mayer, Marvin K. 1974. *Christianity Confronts Culture*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Mbiti, John S. 1998. "African Theology", in Maimelo, S and Konig A (eds) *Initiation into Theology*, Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik Publications, 141-157.
- Mbuy-Beya, Bernadette. (ed) 1998. *Women, Who are you? A Challenge*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications.
-

- 
- Mbuwayesango, R Dora. 2001. "How Local Divine Powers Were Suppressed: A case of Mwari of the Shona" in Musa, Dube W. (ed). *Other Ways of Reading*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 63- 77.
- Migliore, L Daniel 1991. *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Mosiska, K Stephen. 1997. *Christianity and Traditional Religion among the Tumbuka*, Blantyre: Christian Literature Association of Malawi.
- Mombo, Esther. 2002. "Harahamisi and Jumaa: The Development of Women's Meetings in East African Yearly Meetings of Friends ( Quackers)", in Phiri, Isabel A., Govinden, D. Betty, Nadar, Sarojini (eds.), Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 59-83.
- Mpumlwana, Thoko. 1991. "My Perspective on Women and Their Role in Church and Society" in Ackerman, D, Draper, J. A. and Mashinini, E. (eds). *Women Hold up the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 369-385.
- Mucambe, E. S. 1948. *A Matimu ya Batswa (History of the Tswa People)*, Cleveland, Transvaal: The Central Mission Press.
- Mumbengegwi, Selina. 1995. "Women and Politics," in Getecha, C. and Chipika J. *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 61-67.
- Nichols, Paul. 1995. *Social Survey Methods*, Oxford: Oxfam.
- Nida, A. Eugene. 1981. *Customs and Culture*, William Cary, 28-49.
- Njoroge, Nyambura. 2001. "The Bible and African Christianity: A Curse or a Blessing?" Musa, Dube (ed.), *Other Ways of Reading*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 207-233.
- Njoroge, Nyambura. 2001. *African Christianity Feminist Ethic*, Accra: Legon Theological Studies.
- Njoroge, Nyambura. 1994. "Partnership in God's Mission", in Njoroge, N. J. and Reamonn, P. (eds.) *Papers and Reports of the Consultation of African Women and Men of Reformed Tradition*, March 9-15. Limuru: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 16-32.
-

- 
- Njovana, Eunice. 1995. "Eunice's Voice", in Getecha, C and Chipika, J (eds). *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 161-170.
- Nouwen, Henri J. 1997. *Beyond the Mirror*, London: Found Paperbacks.
- Nwachuku, N. Daisy. 1995. "The Christian Widow in African Culture" in Oduyoye, A. Mercy and Kanyoro, Musimbi. *The Will to Arise*, New York: Maryknoll, 54-73.
- Nyoni, Sithembiso. 1994. "Face to Face with Poverty", in *Reconciliation in Difficult Places*, World Vision, 56-59.
- O' Donovan Wilbur. 1996. *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective* Kwara State Nigeria.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. 1994. "Feminist Theology in an African Perspective," in Gibellini, Rosino (ed) *Paths of African Theology*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 166-181.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. 1994. "Feminist Theology in an African Perspective", in Gibellini, R. (ed.) *Paths in African theology*. London: SCM Press.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. 1995. *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*, Mary Knoll: Orbis Books.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. 1998. "African Women's Hermeneutics", in Maimela, S and Konig, A (eds). *Initiation into Theology*, Pretoria: J. L. Van Schaik Publications, 359- 371.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. 1999. "A Coming Home to Myself: The Childless Woman in the West African Space", in Farley, M and Jones, S (eds.) *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honour of Letty M Russell*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 105-119.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. 2001. "Culture and the Quest For Women's Rights," in Dorcas Olu Akintunde (ed). *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights*, Ibadan: Institute of Women in Religion and Culture, 1-9.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. 2001. *Introducing African Women's Theology*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
-

- 
- Omoigui, Mercy Itohan. 2001. "Tradition, Poverty and The Church", in Dorcas Olu Akintunde (ed.) *African Culture and the Quest for Women's Rights*, Ibadan: Institute of Women in Religion and Culture, 113-123.
- Orebiyi, Olatundun A. 2001. "Dynamism In The Bible and Yuruba Culture," in Dorcas Olu Akintunde (ed.), *African Culture and the Quest for Women Rights*, Ibadan: Institute of Women in Religion and Culture, 72-83.
- Orton, H. W. and Culbertson, Paul. 1946. *Introduction to Christian Theology*, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press.
- Phiri, Isabel Apawo. 1997. *Women Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*. Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi.
- Phiri, Isabel Apawo. 1998. "Christianity: Liberative or Oppressive to African Women," Ross, Kenneth R (ed). *Faith at the Frontiers of Knowledge*, Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi, 198-217.
- Phiri, Isabel Apawo. 2000. "Stand Up and Be Counted," in Ackermann, Denise, Getman, Eliza, Kotze, Hantie and Tobller, Judy (eds.), *Claiming Our Footprints*, Stellenbosch: EFSA Institute for Theological and Interdisciplinary Research, 145-160.
- Phiri, Isabel Apawo. 2003. "Transformation in South African Universities: The Case of Female Academics in Leadership Positions in Theological Institutions" in Gerloff, Roswith (ed.), *Mission is Crossing Frontiers*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 414-432.
- Pobee, J and Hallencrentz, C. F. (eds) 1986. *Variations in Christian Theology In Africa*, Nairobi: Umzima Press Ltd.
- Pratt, Brian and Loizo, Peter. 1992. *Choosing Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxfam.
- Rikhotso, Freddy. 1985, *Tolo anga havuyi*. Lesotho Marija Printing Works: Sasavona Books.
- Qunta, C. 1987. *Women in Southern Africa*, Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers.
- Rakoczy, Susan. 2003. *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Ranger, T. O. 1970. *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
-

- 
- Ranger, T. O. and Weller, J. 1975. *Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa*. London: Heineman.
- Roberts, B. T. 1997. *Ordaining Women*, Indianapolis: Light and Life Press.
- Rowlands, J. O. 1999. "Empowerment Examined", in Eade, Deborah (ed). *Development with Women*, Oxford: Oxfam, 141–150.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. 1983. *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*. London: SCM Press.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. 1996. "Patriarchy", in Russell, L M and Clarkson, J S (eds.), *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 205-206.
- Rukweza, B P 1995. "Women and Politics" in Getecha, C. and Chipika J. (eds), *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Center and Network, 64–72.
- Russell, Letty, M. 1993. *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Russell, Letty, M. 1996. "Authority", in Russell, L. M. and Clarkson, J. S. (eds.), *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 18-19.
- Ruzvidzo, Thoko. 1995. "Equality," in Getecha, C. and Chipika, J. (eds), *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 17-22.
- Ruzvidzo, Thoko. 1995. "Thoko's Voice," in Getecha, C. and Chipika, J. (eds), *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 9–22.
- Samkange, S. 1969. *Origins of Rhodesia*, London: Fredrick A. Paeger Publishers.
- Schapera, I. (ed.) 1959, 1966, *The Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa: An Ethnographical Survey*, Cape Town: Maskew Miller Limited.
- Schipani, S. Daniel. 1988. *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, Birmingham: Religious Education Press.
- Schmidt, E. 1992. *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe 1870-1939*, Portsmouth Hants: Heinemann.
-

- 
- Schmidt, E. 1992. "Race, Sex, and Domestic Labour: The Question Of African Female Servants In Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1939", in Karen Tranberg Hansen (ed), 221-237, *African Encounters With Domesticity*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press.
- Schoffeleers, M. 1997. *Religion and Dramatization of Life*, Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi.
- Scholer, David. M. 1997. Galatians 3:28 and the Ministry of Women in the Church: Inaugural Lecture, Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary.
- Schapera, I. (ed.) 1959, 1966. *The Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa: an Ethnographical Survey*, Cape Town: Maskew Miller Limited.
- Sellew, W. A. 2003. "Shall We Continue to Ordain Those Women Whom God has Called to Preach His Gospel", in Coates, G W (ed.) *Passion of the Founders*. Indianapolis: Light and Life, 147-160.
- Shorter, A. 1975. *African Christian Theology-Adaptation or Incarnation?* London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers.
- Shorter, A. 1998. *African Culture: an Overview*, Nairobi: Pauline's Publications.
- Smith, P. J. and Cronje, G. J. (eds) 1997. *Management Principles: A Contemporary Edition for Africa*, Kenwyn: Juta.
- Snider, Lavern K. 1989. *Back to Basics in Church Administration*, Osaka: Free Methodist Church.
- Snyder, Howard A. 1997. *Community of the King*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press.
- Sweetman, C. 1998. "Editorial", in Sweetman, C. (ed). *Gender, Education and Training*, Oxford: Oxfam, 2-8.
- Thiessen, C. Henry. 1963. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Tichagwa, W. 1998. "Health", in Maramba, P. (ed)., *Beyond Inequalities*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 57-62.
- Tomasevski, Katarin. (ed.) 1995. "Education for Empowerment," *Women and Human Rights*, London: Zed Books, 24-30.
-

- 
- Trible, Phyllis. 1990. "Feminist Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies", in Loades Ann (ed). *Feminist Theology A Reading*, Louisville: Westminster. 23-25.
- Tyrrell, B. 1996. *Tribal People of Southern Africa*, South Africa: T.V. Bulpin Publishers.
- United Nations. 1996. "Conversion on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women", *Review 1 Wom*, June 1996, New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1-14.
- United Nations, 2001. "A situation Analysis of Orphans and Vulnerable Children and Adolescents in Zimbabwe: Background papers". August 2001. New York: UNICEF.
- United Nations. 2002. "Gender Discrimination Against Young Girls: A Causal Analysis", *Child Care Practices in Zimbabwe*, Harare, UNICEF.
- Wasike, A. N. 1992. "Polygamy: A Feminist Critique," in Oduyoye, M. A. and Kanyoro, M (eds), *The Will to Arise*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 101-117.
- Wardell, M. and Thomson, R. 1994. "A Definition of Culture," in Muir, D. (ed.), *Entering Another World*, Great Britain, RPM Reprographics, 2-57.
- Wessles, W. J. 1998. "Biblical Hermeneutics," in Maimela, S. and Konig, A. (eds). *Initiation into Theology, The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, Pretoria: J L Van Schaik Publishers, 261-273.
- West, G. 1995. *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Wutawunashe, Rutendo. 1995. "Rutendo's Voice," in Getecha, C and Chipika, J. (eds.), *Zimbabwe Women's Voices*, Harare: Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 37-50.
- Zvobyo, C. J. M. *Great Strides Forward, 1924-1939: A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890 - 1939*, Gweru: Mambo Press.

---

**(B) Journals**

- Bloch, Joanne. 2001. "How Culture is Used to Propagate Knowledge about AIDS in *Challenge*, No 66, October, 24–25.
- Chigudu, Hope. 1998. "The Impact of War on Women in the SADC Region", in *Women Plus*, Vol. 3 August – November, 17-21.
- Chisi, R. 1978. "Rhulani Chisi" in *The Tidings*, Volume 82, Number 9, 8-9.
- Chitando, Ezira. 1998. "There was at Joppa a Disciple: A Study of the Role of Women in a Rural Assembly in Zimbabwe," in *Journal of Constructive Theology*, Vol. 3, No1, July, 73–85.
- Govinden, Betty D. 1997. "Dominion To Rule: The Abuse of Women in Christian Homes", in *Journal of Constructive Theology* Vol. 3 No 2, 23–73.
- Hayashida Nelson 2002 "Introduction: Justice, Compassion, Reconciliation and Women's Liberation" in *Missionalia* Vo. 30, No 1, 30-38.
- Katahweira, Mabel. 2002. "Vision for Women's Empowerment in the Church of Uganda, in *The Anita Pam Bulletin*, No. 36, November, 10–15.
- Kemdirim, Protus O. 1999. "A Call to End Discrimination against Women in the Next Millennium" in *African Ecclesial Review*, Volume. 41, Number 1, February, 31–40.
- Kemdirim, Protus O. 1999. "The Need to Empower Women through Theological Education, in *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1, February, 41-50
- Khumalo, Bafana. 2003. "Church and Men Must Take a Stand", in *Challenge*, No. 71 December-January, 4–5.
- Kwaramba, Rudo. 1999–2000. "Women Called upon to Demand an End to Discrimination," Noel Muzondo (ed.), *Speakout*, No. 49, 1999-2000, 13-14.
- Kwinjeh, Grace. 1999. "Three Steps Forward and Two Steps Back", in *Women Plus*, Volume 4, Number 1, January–April.
- Malinga, Purity. 2002. "Women in Church Leadership: Co-operation or Transformation", in *Women in God's Image*, No. 8, 3–5.



- 
- Marck Faith. (ed) 1995. "The Road to Beijing", in *Speakout*, No 3, 14-16.
- Marck, Faith and Muzondo, Noel. 2000. "Fewer Women Enter Parliament: Female MPs", in *Speakout*, No 52, 8.
- Mutambara, Elizabeth. 1994. "The Development Approach of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches: A Case Study of the Women's Training and Development Department", in *Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa (ATISCA) Bulletin*, No.3, 24-36.
- Muzondo, Noel. 1995. (ed) "Profile in Courage", in *Speakout*, Issue No. 31. 10.
- Muzondo, Noel. 2000. "Women Challenged to Lead in Changing Their Position", in *Speakout*, No. 49, November 1999-January, 10-11.
- Muzondo, Noel. 2000. "Woman in the News: Thokozile Matshe", in *Speakout*, Issue No. 51, May-June, 4-5.
- Muzondo, Noel. 2000. "Money Crucial to Success of Zimbabwe's National Plan on Advancement of Women", in *Speakout*, Issue No. 51, May-July, 12.
- Muzondo, Noel. 2000. "From Trade Unionist to Politician", in *Speakout*, Issue No. 52, August-October, 4-5.
- Muzondo, Noel. 2001, "Men, Too, Must Support Women's Rights", in *Speakout*, Issue No. 55, June-September, 2.
- Mwaura, Philomena. N 1998. "Empowerment of Women: The Role of the Church", in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 1, June, 28-35.
- Ncube, Thokozile. 1998. "Will the Gender Policy Have Anything For Rural Women?" in *Speakout*, No 43, May-July, 2.
- Nyasha, Utete. 1999. "Today's Women", in *Women Plus*, Volume 4, No. 1, January-April, 21.
- Nyoni, Sithembiso. 1994. "Face to Face with Poverty", in *Reconciliation in Difficult Places*, World Vision, 56-59.
- Onyango, James A. 1998. "Women's Status in Indigenous Southern African Christian Churches in Southern Africa", in *African Ecclesial Review*, Volume 40, Number 3, June, 170-179.
-

- 
- Pearce, Carol. (ed) 1999. "Gender Equality in SADC", in *Women Plus*, Vol. 4. No 1, January–April, 8.
- Peters, Beverley. 2000. "The Erosion of Women Rights and the Political Economy of Customary Law in Zimbabwe", in *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 7. No 1, 124–129.
- Phiri, Isabel. A. 1997. "Doing Theology in Community: The Case of African Women Theologians in the 1990s," in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 99, November, 67-76.
- Tulapona, O. 2002. "A Woman's Look at the Church: A Call for Action", in *The Anitepam Bulletin: Women in the Church*, No. 36, November, 16-22.
- Victoria, Barbara. 1998. "Money, Gender and Power," in *Women Plus*, Vol. 3 No. 3, August–November, 24-25

---

## APPENDICES

---

## APPENDIX I

### QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS OF WOMEN IN SOUTH-EAST ZIMBABWE

#### Questions Responded by Women Only

##### 4.1.1.

To what tribe/group of people do you belong?

---

---

---

In your culture, is there a division of labour between members of the family?

Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

If your answer is 'yes', please give examples of the kind of jobs done by each group:

a. girls:

---

---

---

b. boys:

---

---

---

---

c. women:

---

---

---

d. men:

---

---

---

e. All people:

---

---

---

**4.1.2.**

In your people's culture, are young people (boys and girls) taught sex education?

Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

Is this good practice?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

---

In your people's culture is there emphasis on virginity until marriage for both boys and girls?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this a good practice?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

**4.1.3.**

Culturally, are there any foods that are limited to either women only or men only?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

If your answer is "yes", please give examples of such food for each group.

Only men can eat:

---

---

---

Only women can eat:

---

---

---

---

Do you think this is a good practice?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

**4.1.4.**

In your culture do people practice *lobolo* custom?

Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

Do you think *lobolo* is a good practice?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

Is it culturally acceptable for a woman to decide whether she wants *lobolo* paid on her or not?

Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

---

Why is it so?

---

---

---

Is it culturally accepted that a mother decides about the marriage and *lobolo* of her children?

Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

Do you think this is a good practice?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

**4.1.5.**

In your culture, when a woman is married, often she stays:

a. with her husband and his family?

---

---

---

b. with her husband only?

---

---

---



---

c. with her husband's family?

---

---

---

d. with her own family?

---

---

---

Do you think this is a good or bad practice?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

Where a married woman stays with the husband's family, who is likely to do most of the work?

a. the married woman?

---

---

---

b. the mother-in-law?

---

---

---

---

c. the sisters-in-law?

---

---

---

Why is it like this?

---

---

---

**4.1.6.**

Would it be culturally acceptable for a married woman to refuse having sex with her husband if she finds out that he is HIV+?

Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

Why is it so?

---

---

---

Culturally, is it accepted for a married woman to opt for not having any more babies if she feels that her health is not good enough to continue having babies?

Yes: \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

Why is it so?

---

---

---

---

**4.1.7.**

According to the culture of your people, who is the legal owner of the children?

---

---

---

In the event of the death of the father of the family, who takes over the ownership and responsibilities of this man?

---

---

---

Why is it so?

---

---

---

What do you think about this cultural practice?

---

---

---

**4.1.8.**

Is it culturally accepted for a married woman to become a Christian when her husband is not?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it so?

---

---

---

---

Culturally, is it acceptable for a Christian married woman whose husband is not a Christian to denounce/separate herself from all the activities and rituals of the non-Christian?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this practice fair?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

**4.1.9.**

Is your family involved in the project “work for food” and or any other development projects in your area?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

Who works for your family in these projects?

---

---

---

Why is it so?

---

---

---

---

According to the culture of your people, what are the community's expectations of women? Please list some:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**4.1.10.**

Are there some cultural practices of your people that you feel are oppressive to women?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

If the answer is "yes," please give some examples:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**APPENDIX II**

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS AND  
EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANIZATION AND  
CIVILIZATION INFLUENCE ON THE WOMEN OF  
SOUTH EAST ZIMBABWE**

**Questions Responded by Women Only**

**5.1.1.**

Are you a Christian?

---

---

---

What is your Church denomination?

---

---

How long have you been a Christian?

---

---

Are you married?

---

---

Is your husband a Christian?

---

---

---

Are your parents/family Christians?

---

---

What about your husband's family – are they Christians?

---

---

Do you remember a time when you and your family were not Christians?

---

---

What differences can you tell about what life is like now and what it was before you became a Christian?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.2.**

A common understanding among church people is that man was created first, and created in God's image. Is this the understanding of the people in your church?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What implication does this have on women among your people?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.3.**

A common understanding among church people is that God revealed Himself to people through Jesus. According to your people, is this an indication of God's gender?

---

---

---

Please explain the reason for your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

**5.1.4.**

A common understanding among many church people is that a preacher, like an Old Testament prophet, is a representative of God. Is this true among your people?

---

---

---

Would the people see it differently where a preacher might be male or female?

---

---

---

Please explain your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.5.**

Does the fact that both Jesus and his twelve apostles were males suggest the gender of people who should represent Jesus as pastors?

---

---

---

---

Please explain the reason for your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.6.**

What is your understanding about the coming of sin in the world and its punishment?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.7**

Would people in your church think of women and men as equals?

---

---

---

---

Why is this so?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.8**

From your own understanding of the culture of your people, would you say Christianity brought some changes in your culture?

---

---

---

If it did, what would you say are some of those changes?

---

---

---

---

---

---

Would these changes be for the good of women or are they worsening the situation of women?

---

---

---

---

**5.1.9**

Does your church teach about Christianity as having liberated women?

---

---

---

Do you see the practical ness of this liberation of women in the church?

---

---

---

Please give examples.

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.10.**

Church: In your church, do you have:

a. more female members than male? \_\_\_\_\_ % \_\_\_\_\_

b. more male members than female? \_\_\_\_\_ % \_\_\_\_\_

---

Does your church denomination accept women ordination?

---

---

---

What is the total number of the ordained ministers in your church?

---

---

---

How many of your ministers are female?

---

---

---

If the number of women ministers in your church is less than that of male ministers, what do you think is the reason for it?

---

---

---

---

---

---

In your church are there duties that women should not do because they are woman?

---

---

---

---

Please give examples of such duties.

---

---

---

---

---

---

In your church is it acceptable for a woman to preach to a group that is made up of both male and female?

---

---

---

Why is it so?

---

---

---

Would you say that women in the church are more liberated than those who do not go to church?

---

---

---

Why is it so?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.11.**

Do you see Christianity and its influence as having helped in the development of the women of South East Zimbabwe?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

Do you know of some projects or programmes that the church has started in order to help the women to develop themselves?

---

---

---

Please give a few examples if there are any?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.1.12.**

Are there some cultural/traditional practices that the churchwomen of South East Zimbabwe need to be liberated from?

---

---

---

If there are, please give some examples.

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.2.1.**

In the culture of your people, where a family does not have enough money to send all the children to school, which children might be the likely ones to stay at home?

---

---

---

Is this practice fair?

---

---

---



---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.2.2.**

In your schools, how does the enrolment of boys compare with that of girls?

---

---

---

Why is it so?

---

---

---

**5.2.3.**

How does the pass rate for female and male students compare in the ordinary and advanced levels? (“O” level and “A” level)

---

---

---

---

What do you think are the reasons for that?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.2.4.**

In the culture of your people, is it accepted for a married woman to leave children with her husband and go to school?

---

---

---

Why is it so?

---

---

---

**5.2.5.**

Has education and its influence affected your people's culture?

---

---

---

---

If your answer is “yes,” please give examples of how your culture has been affected.

---

---

---

---

---

---

Would you say educational influence on your people’s culture has helped?

---

---

---

How did it help?

---

---

---

Would you say educational influence on your people’s culture was bad?

---

---

---

How is it bad?

---

---

---

---

**5.2.6.**

What cultural practices would you like to see improved?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.3.1**

Are you employed?

---

---

---

What do you do?

---

---

---

At your work place, do you feel that women and men are treated alike?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

---

**5.3.2.**

What about promotion? Do you feel that women are considered as much as men are?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.3.3.**

Who is the ultimate owner of all the family money and family property?

---

---

---

Why is it so?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5.3.4.**

In your people's culture would both male and females receive inheritance from their family and relatives? Why is it like that?

---

---

---

What do you think about the practice?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**APPENDIX III**

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON WHAT THE PEOPLE OF  
SOUTH EAST ZIMBABAWE EXPECT OF A  
LEADER IN BOTH THE CHURCH AND PUBLIC  
SECTORS**

**Questions Answered by Female and Male Leaders**

**6.1.1.**

What is your responsibility / what do you do for a living?

---

---

---

Culturally, when people in your area think and speak of a leader, what kind of a person do they have in mind?

---

---

---

---

**6.1.2.**

What would be the qualities they would look for when the people of your area are looking for leaders in the following areas?

**a. Sunday School teacher:**

---

---

---

---

**b. Teacher in a Bible school:**

---

---

---

**c. Pastor of a church:**

---

---

---

**d. Church Overseer/Bishop:**

---

---

---

**e. Headman (*sabuku*):**

---

---

---



---

f. Chief

---

---

---

h .President of the country:

---

---

---

**6.1.3.**

Would it be appropriate and acceptable for the people in your area to appoint a woman as pastor?

---

**6.1.4.**

Do you think that women of your area would be happier if they had a woman pastor than a male?

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

---

**6.1.5.**

According to your people, if the chief dies and leaves behind young sons and older daughters, can one of the daughters become the next chief?

---

---

---

Why do say so?

---

---

---

**6.1.6.**

Considering all the problems that the leaders of the countries go through, do you think that the people of your area would consider voting for a woman president?

---

---

---

Why do you think so?

---

---

---

Would your people consider that some women might be better leaders than some men?

---

---

---

---

Why do you say so?

---

---

---

**6.2.1.**

What position of leadership do you hold?

---

---

---

As a leader, do you have men and women working for your organisation?

---

---

---

How many women? \_\_\_\_\_ How many men? \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity do they work?

---

---

---

Does your organisation run any programmes for the purpose of upgrading/developing your staff from time to time?

---

---

---

---

Do these programmes cater for both women and men?

---

---

---

Would you please name some of these programmes?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**6.2.2.**

In your capacity as a leader, do you see women just as capable for leadership as man?

---

---

---

Please explain your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**6.2.3.**

In your organisation would you say women and men are treated as equals?

---

---

---

If your answer is “no”, suggest what needs to be done to change the situation.

---

---

---

---

---

---

**6.2.4.**

As a leader what advice would you give to young women who are aspiring leadership?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---