<div align="center">**Chapter 1**</div>

<div align="center">**Building the picture**</div>

1. Introduction

Gender insensitivity and patriarchal discourses feature very prominently in African communities as well as in the practice of the Christian faith among those who claim to subscribe to biblical dogmas and its practices. I am a product of a culture and a belief system that marginalises and subjugates women knowledges and looks down upon the female gender. Even though I have been a Christian for over twenty years, it was only in recent years that I have been made aware of how the dominant discourse of patriarchy has influenced my warped view of women and their role in society and church. I have been a Christian leader for more than half of the time I have been a Christian and I have observed (now in retrospect) with a sense of awe, how women are negatively perceived and regarded in the community of faith and social settings. They are disadvantaged in almost all spheres of life: socio-political, religious, industrial, educational, etc.

Living and working in a culture which is predominantly male driven and dominated raises the need to deconstruct these male constructed discourses and create an opportunity for the male gender to engage in meaningful conversations with the females in raising gender consciousness. I should also be quick to mention that the female gender too needs to challenge the internalised idea that has led them to accept the disadvantaged position as constructed by the male. Unfortunately these internalised ideas by many a woman have been taken as the 'truth'- that is an acceptance of the woman's status quo.

2. Gender Consciousness

Scott (quoted by Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988:456) states that the term 'gender' was appropriated by American feminists to refer to the social quality of distinctions between the sexes. But just what constitutes gender differences and similarities (other than anatomical) has been, and continues to be, a subject of much study and theorising. It is not the intention of this study to explore these differences and similarities.

It is said that children, as early as three or four years, become aware of their gender and develop an idea of what that means. It is at this stage that they learn that they share certain viewpoints or interests on the grounds of their shared gender. They develop what social scientists have called "group consciousness". (Sapiro 1991:14). Sapiro urges that group consciousness include three basic beliefs:

- a disparity of power or other resources exists between this group and others
- that disparity is illegitimate and based on systemic factors

• the group should engage in some form of collective action to rectify the situation.

From the three basic beliefs of group consciousness a possible definition of gender consciousness could be understood as:

> Women's beliefs that they are less powerful than men as a group and are accorded fewer resources, that this inequality is illegitimate, and that they should engage in some form of collective action.
>
> <div align="right">(Sapiro 1991:14).</div>

3. The motivation for this topic

I have already indicated above that I have been in church leadership for a number of years, during which I have observed how the women have been disadvantaged in church ministry and church life. These disadvantaged positions of the women will be explored and discussed later. The men have defined and interpreted the women's experiences and have named these experiences on behalf of the women.

A second factor that has motivated me to explore this topic is one which is based on my own experience and that of my siblings following the death of my father in the 1960s. Following my father's death his brothers grabbed all of my father's property and money. Because customarily a surviving wife has no say over the property of her late husband, my mother was left destitute. We children were left destitute as well. As a church leader, I have had to deal with similar cases over the years. These have been very difficult and emotional cases for me.

A third factor is that of the prevailing work circumstances. I work in a Bible College which, although it trains students from a cross section of church affiliations, mainly subscribes to the practices of the Brethren Movement. I am very proud to associate myself with this movement and indeed endorse their creed and some practices. I say, "some practices" because, as we shall observe later some of these practices have disadvantaged and disempowered the women. The Brethren Movement started in the UK around 1825. This movement was basically a breakaway group from the institutionalised Anglican Church. Putting it simply, this movement claimed that biblical truths (truths such as the unity of the body of Christ, the centrality of the worship and the priesthood of all believers) had been ignored by the Anglican Church and needed to be recaptured. In subsequent years, the Brethren movement developed what they call "Assembly Distinctives" (Mackay 1981:10). These distinctives are primarily a set of the Brethren Movement practices that makes it distinct from other Christian churches and movements. Amongst these distinctives is their understanding of the role of women in church life. They uphold the teaching that women cannot be in any position of authority in the church and that women should keep their silence in church. This teaching is based on the hermeneutical understanding

of certain biblical texts[1]. These texts have been used in many a church to disempower and silence the woman's voice to the advantage of the male folk. The following comment drives the above point home:

> Today sex discrimination is still with us in some churches despite legislation forbidding sex discrimination in secular professions. It does not aim at inclusion but exclusion of women. The result is inequality which in the field of the churches is not so much the result of a division of labour as that of maintaining power, the balance of power and with it the control mechanisms, protection of the churches own privileges and manipulation of everyone in order to ensure that the churches keep their privileges.
>
> (Isherwood and McEwan 1993:27,28)

This status quo is maintained in the church probably due to what Isherwood and McEwan (1993:28) observe; that theology has been a discipline of study dominated by men. They illustrate this by quoting the Catholic Encyclopaedia which describes women as 'inferior to the male sex, both as regards body and soul'.

4. Research curiosity

Both my growing up in a culture and working in a Christian discourse that is patriarchal and authoritarian (Fillingham 1993:10) and insensitive to gender issues have made me become very curious about how students at my work place, at the Gospel Literature Outreach Bible College:
• understood and constructed gender issues and
• how these ideas and beliefs about gender issues influence their church ministry and relationships with the female gender; and
• how they may be assisted to deconstruct dominant gender discourses that disempower and marginalise the female through the mechanism of raising gender consciousness.

5. Purpose of the Study

It was my intention that participants and facilitators:
• begin to question and challenge the perpetuation of dominant gender discourses that disadvantage and dehumanise the female as promoted by:
- Zambian culture
- Religion
- Contemporary work culture
- Poor economy

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[1] Such texts as 1 Cor. 14:34; 11:3; 1Tim. 2:11,12;

• challenge their subversive internalised ideas and beliefs about women.

• have their gender consciousness raised.

For the purpose of this study I recruited as facilitators:

• a fulltime woman home-maker from a very economically poor location to story her experiences of gender related issues.

• a working house wife to story her experience of gender at her working place.

• a female pastor to story her experience of gender in her work and from her own experience.

In addition I:

• facilitated workshops among the students where gender issues as constructed by biblical hermeneutical understanding and traditional culture as well as work culture were deconstructed.

• allowed for stories of gender as experienced by the participants in their cultures/customs and

• listened to gender ideas of other people as collected by the students (See appendix A)

6. Feminist research methodology

I followed a feminist research methodology (Reinharz 1992) to give direction to this research. Feminist action research is an essential integral part of feminism in that it contributes in one way or another to social change. This entails that feminist action research should not simply be viewed as an academic exercise but as a research that is translated into action. Feminist research methodology breaks through power hierarchies (as can be found in empirical scientific methods of research) because it involves the objects of research as subjects. In other words the subjects become study participants (McTaggart 1997:29). This approach is post-modern in its conceptualisation. A post-modern approach conceptualises reality as a multiverse of meanings, as Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) state:

> The conceptualisation of reality as a multiverse of meanings created in dynamic social exchange and conversation interaction moves us away from concerns about issues of unique truths and into a multiverse that includes a diversity of conflicting versions of the world. Within this framework, there are no "real" external entities, only communicating and languaging human individuals. There is only the process of the constantly evolving reality of language use. Thus there are no "facts" to be known, no systems to be "understood" and no regularities to be "discovered".

Thus this research was not about "discovering" preferred women gender appreciation or facts that are lying somewhere in the mind of the researcher or somewhere out there. Instead I hope that as we engaged in social conversation with the participants we together deconstructed dominant women gender discourses that marginalise and disempower women. The study did not only aim at deconstructing these discourses that work against women but also sought to raise a female gender consciousness among women and especially among men as we co-constructed new knowledges about gender.

Feminist action research is group and participatory oriented. In other words feminist action research is participatory action research. Participatory action research could in simple terms be defined as:

> research concerned simultaneously with changing individuals on the one hand, and, on the other, the culture of the groups, institutions, and societies to which they belong … these changes are not impositions: individuals and groups agree to work together to change themselves, individually and collectively. Their interests are joined by an agreed 'thematic concern'.

> (McTaggart 1997: 31)

Since participatory action research tends to be a group oriented activity working on a particular theme, could pose a problem if the participants have varying backgrounds in terms of status, influence power, language, education etc (McTaggart 1997:28; Kotzé 2002:28). Thus it was important that all the participants *owned* the research and actively participated in the "production of knowledge and improvement of the research practice and theory".

This study tried to raise women gender consciousness among students (especially male students) as both sexes reflected on their lived experiences and reflected on their internalised assumptions about women. I worked from the assumption that, as men enter into dialogue with women who have been at the receiving end of gender discrimination and abuse, men can change their thinking, attitudes and behaviour toward women. The study captured the stories of women who have suffered by virtue of their gender. Through group discussions, students were given an opportunity to reflect and challenge their own assumptions on gender issues. As participatory research, this study created new knowledges that I hope will be of benefit and value to all co-researchers. Commenting on the value of co-owning the research, one of the most respected feminist researchers states that in:

> Participatory or collaborative research the people studied make decisions about the study format and data analysis. …the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risk…

> (Reinharz 1992:181)

This approach to research negates the scientific knowledge and theories that reduce events to observable, quantifiable elements on which results are based. In such social scientific research the researcher's power is deconstructed. In participatory action research ethics play a major role. Kotzé (2002:25) refers to this as "ethicising research" because in research we are constructing realities/knowledges that will shape the kind of world we shall live in. "Therefore, searching for new knowledges in acts of participatory ethicising foregrounds ethicising knowledge" (Kotzé 2002:25). It is in this respect that Reinharz (1992:196) challenges researchers to reflect on the knowledge they have acquired about themselves from the research.

7. Feminist theology

As a feminist researcher informed by feminist theology, which seeks to address the injustices upheld against the marginalised (especially women) in religious, social, political, cultural and economic life, this research was embedded in feminist theology. Feminist theology is suspicious of patriarchal theology since the latter limits women's full participation in theology. It is for this reason that Isherwood and McEwan (1993:33) observe that "[p]atriarchal theology stands in need of critical reassessment so as to make visible the richness of scripture, the all-inclusiveness of teaching and the all-embracing vision of participation by everybody". It is argued that patriarchal theology has been guilty of various types of discrimination in both past and contemporary history including racism, sexism, unequal power systems, etc. Patriarchy is not an occasional or localised evil. On the contrary, it clearly is a general political structure, which favours men at the expense of women as Watkins (2000:ix) has observed: "Males as a group have and do benefit the most from patriarchy, from the assumption that they are superior to females and should rule over us".

Women and men informed by feminist theory now have the challenge of deconstructing the way theology has been done by patriarchal theorists. Feminist theologians are looking at theology from a different perspective. A perspective which, according to Isherwood and McEwan (1993:35), "takes as its starting point the experience of women and men and their interaction with each other and with society, as a source from which they do theology. We see the stress shift from authority, imposed from outside, to self-authority, striven for throughout life".

8. Research report write-up

Informed by Reinharz's (1992:211) feminist research method that views research as commencing on very momentous journeys, my research is presented in a way that portrays the activity of a co-discovering and co-constructing/deconstructing process with the participants and facilitators along the journey. Voices of facilitators and participants are reflected and heard in this research story so as to enable the reader to engage in the conversations and not just listen to one voice of the researcher – which Reinharz (1992:231) refers to as "… the voice of authority". The researcher is not the authority of any research but the participants' (and facilitators' in this study) storied experiences are the authority.

This research should not be viewed as a study that has a beginning and an end. Instead, I prefer this research to be understood as a continuation of a journey of the quest to get rid of gender discrimination and raise gender consciousness. Since life cannot be packaged and is permanently in a flux, its uncertainties offer possibilities for negotiated changes. As demonstrated in every sphere of research, the research results of yesterday are always challenged by today's results; subsequently, today's results

may be disputed by tomorrow's findings. It is for this reason that post-modern research methods disagree with positivist social scientific research techniques.

9. Pastoral care

This study raised concerns for the desperate need of pastoral care in the area of gender discrimination. In places where gender discrimination has been institutionalised, the challenge for the pastoral obligation is to speak against such and work at dismantling these institutionalised gender biases. I stand with Pattison (1993:89) in discounting pastoral care that is focused on individuals only because, "to be concerned only about the private and not the public in pastoral care is … a fundamental theological error… human beings are at all points in their lives inextricably bound up with, and formed by social and political groupings".

It is with this in mind that Robert Bonthius (quoted by Pattison 1993:90) states:

> You cannot take good care of persons without doing something about the environment which makes them what they are … My thesis is that pastoral care for structures is fully as important as ministry to persons. Indeed, that unless a clergyman is giving 'equal time' to changing structures, he is just as neglecting his pastoral duties as when he fails those who can use pastoral counselling.

Pastoral care could be described as the "repairing of citizens so that they can once more take part in their normal social participation" (Sevenhuijsen 1998:131). Pastoral care therefore empowers, motivates and envisions people to have, and aim at, developing preferred communities wherever there may be oppressive and dehumanising social or political systems. It is therefore important that pastors are in no doubt about their own socio-political context if they are to effectively undertake their responsibilities.

Pastoral care cannot be apolitical or neutral. It works for, and with, the marginalised. It seeks to liberate and emancipate the socially, economically and politically disadvantaged as it challenges systems that militate against the interest of these disadvantaged people. This kind of pastoral care stands in agreement with Liberation Theology which grapples with the problems of systemic injustice. Liberation theology believes that human problems are not naturally bred but that humans who seek to exploit and destroy the powerless cause them. Consequently, the exploited engage themselves in the process of liberation. It can therefore be said that Liberation theology is theology "from below" (Bosch 1991:439).

Furthermore, pastoral care is more meaningful when it is practiced within the context of contemporary contextual theology. According to Gutiérrez, (quoted by De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio 1994:11) contextual theology is concerned with the "critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word". De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio (1994:11) put it this way:

> [d]oing theology begins with the witness of the church in the world, then
> proceeds to reflect critically on that witness both through reflection on the
> Scriptures and through an analysis of what is happening in the world, and
> finally it seeks to inform Christian witness so that it may be both faithful to
> the gospel and more relevant to the needs of the world.

Liberation theology maintains that reflection on the experiences of the poor and exploited groups should be at the heart of theology.

10. Research Approach

Act one – research field

I did the research together with students at the Gospel Literature Outreach Bible College in Ndola, Zambia. There are twenty-five students at the college and these students come from a cross section of church affiliations. There are those associated with the Pentecostal and Charismatic Church; the Evangelical Church in Zambia; the United Methodist Church; the Apostolic Church; and the Brethren Church. All the above churches have their varying views on their understanding and perception of women in church life.

I started off with a session introducing my research to the students, highlighting the purpose of the project. This was done by lecture and interactive approaches. Following this, other sessions were conducted at which we discussed what gender is all about.

Act two – participants and facilitators

The twenty-five students were the participants in this research project. Of this number twelve were men and the rest were women. I approached two women: a fulltime home-maker from a very economically poor location to story her experiences of gender related issues and a working mother to story her experiences as a mother and a career woman. The main reason for approaching these two women is that gender discrimination is made very evident in the home and at the work place. For the purpose of clarity I refer to these women as 'facilitators' and the students as 'participants'. Students were given opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations with these facilitators.

Students were also given an opportunity to conduct interviews in the community. These interviews were based on the interview schedule on gender (Appendix A), which I had prepared. The terms of the research and the ethical and moral implications were negotiated with the facilitators and participants.

Reading materials relating to gender were given to students to study, and they then presented their observations and findings to the other students. Students were asked to research material on the subject of gender. Their research was presented to the workshops for discussion. During the workshops

students were divided into small groups to discuss issues raised by the facilitator and their findings were reported to the whole group.

11. Written Documents

I prepared an interview schedule (Appendix A), which the students took to people they knew and did some research on ideas and concepts about gender issues. The students took this interview schedule to the people in the community especially those individuals working or associated with different life contexts such as full time homemakers, pastors, traditionalist, widows, etc. The idea was to enable the students to get a 'feel' of where people were in terms of gender relations and also to bring gender issues to the forefront of peoples' minds. Following this process, the students were given an opportunity to report their findings to the group for discussion and observations where necessary. In negotiating with the participants, letters were written to facilitators expressing the feelings of the students upon reflecting on what they had heard as told by the facilitators. The stories as told by these facilitators were dealt with from a "not knowing" position (Anderson & Goolishian 1992:27). This means that the participants interacted with the facilitators in a way that did not privilege the participants' hypothesis and hermeneutical comprehension based on their lived experiences and empirical truth. The facilitators were allowed to be the experts of their own stories. Although the participants' knowledges and experiences are vital, these did not take pre-eminence over those of the facilitators. Anderson (1997:247) says, "…all participants are learners and are subject to change as they share and explore each other's voice; as voices connect and intertwine constructing something new and different for each".

Act three – setting off
As I have mentioned above, the first meeting was with the students where I informed them of the aims of, and my passion for, the research project. At this meeting I stated and negotiated with them how we would go about doing research. McTaggart (1997:28) says:

> Authentic participation in research means sharing in the way research is conceptualised, practised, and brought to bear on the life world. It means ownership, that is, responsible agency in the production of knowledge and practice.

I aimed at undertaking this research **with** participants and not **on** people (McTaggart 1997:29) for doing research **on** people makes people tools of the research project and simply serves to empower the researcher and does not bring about meaningful change to the participants. Together, with the participants we engaged in a continuous process of co-creating the direction and process of the project as the needs dictated, yet without loosing the ethos of the study.

Act four - deconstruction of gender discourses

It is hoped that, as we engaged ourselves in the whole process of this research and negotiated with each other, it resulted in a more just and ethical way of deconstructing gender discourse. White's (1991:27) loose definition of deconstruction is as follows:

> deconstruction has to do with procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices: those so-called "truths" that are split off from the conditions and the context of their production; those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices; and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of person's lives.

The subjugating discourses of gender are so common and rigid in our way of life that we often don't speak up and challenge them. Deconstruction of such discourses enables us to take a political position that challenges the patriarchal discourses. Feminist research bids the researcher to interact with people in ways that encourage them to relate to their lived stories not as passively received data, but as actively constructed stories. The process of deconstruction is to be an ongoing activity as we reflect on the community's beliefs and practices as well as the effects gender ideology have on people.

In addressing gender issues, there is need to critically examine the root problems of gender and not come up with preconceived solutions. This resonates with what Hare-Mustin says (quoted by Kotzé 1994:124):

> Instead of looking for solutions to the basic problems of gender, we have looked for problems which correspond to the solution we have available. Since we do not have a solution to the problem of the disadvantaged status of women, we have ignored the problem and defined it as a non-problem.

People need to appreciate that it is not the stories that should shape them but that they themselves have the power to shape their preferred stories. Thus negative stories about gender ideology need not dominate and shape our understanding of gender issues. We have the power and choice to embrace and understand gender in ways that promote justice for both sexes in all areas of life.

Act five – recording of data

In each of the sessions, the participants recorded their understanding and reflections of the session. I then collected this data and compiled a summary of these notes. My summary notes were then reviewed at the next session for corrections, questions and observations. The participants then discussed these observations. Sessions conducted by facilitators were put on tape for the purpose of reflecting on what had been said and not said – "What would the conversation be if at all the available but not used questions had been asked? What would be seen then? And which explanation could be constructed based on all these other not-seen descriptions?" (Anderson 1991:41). These summary notes were also made available to facilitators for comment, correction, editing, etc to establish their validity as well as to add to or respond to what had already been said and shared.

Act six – deconstructing my "author-ity"

Feminist research method calls for particular attention to be paid by the researcher to how the research itself has impacted on the researcher (Reinharz 1992:196). It raises questions like, What ethical and moral issues have been co-constructed as a result of the knowledges created? Who is benefiting from these co-constructed knowledges? How has my power as a researcher been deconstructed before, during the research process and post the research? How have the assumptions and views of my own discourses been challenged? And perhaps the most important question, "How has this research changed me?"

I would like at this stage to borrow Kotzé's (2002:27) helpful observations for the researcher on the need to reflect on issues of power. He writes:

> If our research is to be really for the people with whom we study, the question should be: "How do we ensure this?" This is not a task we as researchers can take on ourselves. Research involving people can never be the privilege or responsibility of researchers alone, individually or as a community. We cannot know for people what is good for them. We also have to know with them. To be ethical, the participation of the people about or for whom we do the research is of primary importance at all levels of our research.

12. A summary of the chapters that follow

Chapter 2 looks at post-modern theoretical discourses in so far as they effect and come to bear on issues of gender and sexuality in contemporary society.

Chapter 3 explores the participants' understanding and awareness of gender issues. This chapter will reflect participants' voices as they engaged in conversation one with another and with various literature.

Working on the assumption that the participants have grasped the issues of gender raised in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 addresses two major gender issues namely traditional culture and work culture. These cultures are critical in understanding and appreciating how gender influences work and personal relationships within these disciplines.

Chapter 5 illustrates how gender discrimination is alive and active in the Church. Stories as told by the facilitator and participants as well as biblical hermeneutics and the experience of others are discussed. In addition, the chapter explores ways and means as to how and why gender discrimination need be addressed and avoided in the Church.

In Chapter 6, I discuss general reflections of the research methodology that was employed in this research. In this chapter I become a witness to the outcome of the research and appreciate new knowledges that have come about and how these knowledges relate to existing knowledges and how these new knowledges have impacted me.

<center>**Chapter 2**</center>

<center>**Toward a post-modern discourse in gender and sexuality**</center>

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I shall endeavour to look at mainly post-modern theoretical discourses and briefly at theology in so far as they effect and come to bear on issues of gender and sexuality in contemporary society of which participants of this research are a part. In philosophical terms, post-modern discourse emerged as a reaction to modernist truth-claims and values, and displays a preoccupation with language as an inadequate vehicle for expressing any sort of "reality". The postmodern discourse has implications in the way gender and sexuality issues are studied because male or female is always mediated by people's relationship to others through language practices (Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988:461-462).

2. Discourse

Hare-Mustin (1994:14) defines discourse as "a system of statements, practices, and institutional structures that share common values". For example, the subject of "gender" may be referred to as a discourse. It can therefore be said that discourse is a social system for it presupposes conversations (language use) that are at play between people and dominant or powerful discourses constructed within society. This interaction of discourses in society does have a shaping effect on an individual. Foucault (1979) submits that language is a power instrument that is employed by those in power to shape society's attitudes by determining the preferred discourses in society while other discourses are discounted or subjugated.

3. Modernism discourse

The Enlightenment was the birth of the "Modern" period in intellectual history. Some historians date this period as beginning with the French Revolution in 1789, and ending with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (Oden 1992:32).

Modernity is fundamentally about order: about rationality and rationalization, creating order out of chaos. The assumption is that creating more rationality is conducive to creating more order, and that the more ordered a society is, the better it will function (Sampson 1994:16,17). Because modernity is about the pursuit of ever-increasing levels of order, modern societies constantly are on guard against anything and everything labelled as "disorder", which might disrupt order. Thus modern societies rely

on continually establishing a binary opposition between "order" and "disorder", so that they can assert the superiority of "order". But to do this, modernists have to have things that represent "disorder" - modern societies thus continually have to create/construct "disorder". In western culture, this disorder becomes "the other" - defined in relation to other binary oppositions. Thus anything non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual, non-hygienic, non-rational, (etc.) becomes part of "disorder", and has to be eliminated from the ordered, rational modern society. The ways that modern societies go about creating and maintaining categories labelled as "order" or "disorder" are through the means of "grand narratives" or "master narratives", which are stories a culture tells itself about its practices and beliefs (Sarup 1993).

For example, a "grand narrative" as observed among the research participants is the concept that visible physical differences and presumed temperamental differences give justification to judgmental views of ability and intellect, which serve as a basis for a system of gender-specific life goals, rights and responsibilities. This "grand narrative" sees women as petty, naive, indecisive, over-cautious and only able to manage small things, whereas men are knowledgeable, unyielding, principled, aggressive and have their eyes set on important issues.

Post-modernism refutes "grand narratives" and instead prefers "mini-narratives": stories that explain small practices, localized events, rather than large-scale universal or global theories. Postmodern "mini-narratives" are always situational, provisional, contingent, and temporary, making no claim to universality, truth, reason, or stability.

4. Modernity and Sexuality

I strongly suspect that the participants' construction of gender and gender roles was largely influenced by historical and modernist construction of gender and sexuality as revealed in our research. Let me explain. As early as from the time of the Ancient Greeks, to the Renaissance and beyond, indeed until the Enlightenment age in the 17th and 18th centuries, all bodies were regarded as alike in substance. Difference was understood in terms of degrees of perfection (Laqueur 1990). A matter of degree rather than the modern conception of biological difference separated female and male. It was a world in which male and female had all the same bits, they were simply arranged differently along a vertical axis of perfection. Lacquer (1990:8) refers to this as the "one sex/one flesh model" in contrast to the modern "two sex model". This "one sex" model was, however, patriarchal since the male body was taken as the most perfect in form and beauty while the female body was regarded as the less perfect version of the male (Laqueur 1990:71-72).

The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century brought forth radically new conceptualisations concerning human beings and their relationships to nature and each other. Sexuality was largely located within the disciplines of medicine, biology, psychology and politics. With the dawn of

modernity came the belief that all "men" are born equal, that the liberty of each individual was sacred. The 1789 declaration of the "rights of man and citizen" made no explicit reference to an individual's gender or race, leading many to believe that the liberties proclaimed were universal (Londa 1993:143). In other words, if all peoples were by nature equal, all were socially equal. However, science and political theorists began to engage in a study to demonstrate whether natural inequalities existed amongst human beings, especially in the area of gender/sex and race. The obsession associated with the discussion and study of gender, sex, sexuality, sexual difference, sexual disposition and sexual normality prompted Foucault (1976) to write that sex has "become the truth of our being". Modernity assumed that difference between men and women was reducible to innate biological characteristics and it was asserted that cultural differences stemmed from biologically based sexual differences (Londa 1987:50-52). Hence, social inequality was viewed as a reflection of 'natural' inequality. Consequently sex roles were normalised and naturalised, which in turn reinforced the idea that women and men were innately different (Chodorow 1974:43-46). Hence in this research it was necessary that this normalisation and naturalisation of sex roles be challenged and addressed by a post-modern approach to gender and sexuality.

5. Toward a post-modern discourse

Postmodernism is a new set of assumptions about reality, which goes far beyond mere relativism and is, basically speaking, anti-foundationalism, or anti-worldview. It denies the existence of any universal truth, meaning or standard. Lyotard (1984:34), perhaps one of the most influential writers in post-modern thought, defines postmodernism as "incredulity towards meta-narratives". For all intents and purposes, a meta-narrative is a worldview: a network of elementary assumptions . . . in terms of which every aspect of our experience and knowledge is interrelated and interpreted (Demar 1988:8). Meta-narratives are, according to postmodernist scholar Waugh (1992:1): "[l]arge-scale theoretical interpretations purportedly of universal application".

Postmodernism does not only reject meta-narratives, but also the belief in coherence. It calls for the deconstruction of the many worldviews around today, so that no one particular approach or belief is more "true" than any other. What constitutes truth, then, is relative to the individual or community holding the belief. Postmodernism rejects the idea that reality makes sense in any absolute fashion, and reduces any construction to personal or cultural bias. It calls into question the traditional notions of truth, structure, and reality. Truth is a social construct, pragmatically justified, so as to make it one of many culturally conditioned approaches to the world. Logic, science, history, and morality are not universal and absolute; they are the constructs of our own experience and interpretations of that experience (Gergen 1985:267). Hence, the participants of this research were challenged to deconstruct all attempts at creating absolute foundations, as they listened to various conversations and stories.

6. Postmodernism and gender

The "truths" of modernism contributed to the reproduction of the stereotyped gender identities. For instance, women were put in a double bind based on their physical appearance and so-called "femininity": which were judged according to the needs of the male-defined context. For example, the argument by some participants that all women are potential wives and mothers becomes a discriminatory factor. Postmodernism instead emphasizes the significance of the individual. Reality (or better still in this context – "gender roles") can only be interpreted on an individual level: how does one manipulate her life, how does one interpret her situation?

Furthermore, modernists emphasised the intervention of social systems in gender behaviour and argued that factors such as the mode of production, education and employment opportunities, and familial division of labour played a more important part than biology in explaining the asymmetrical power relations between men and women (Kanter 1997:985-990; Lorber 1994:1-10). However, a postmodern discourse would argue that such propositions tend to "ignore the rapid, ever-changing social, economic, political, and interpersonal world in which we live and they ignore the variations within the world" (Anderson 1997:31) and how in fact individuals are able to manipulate resources and regulations, and take part in the negotiation of identities for themselves – resulting in their preferred realities. This was demonstrated by a female participant's comment: "Let me be what and who I want to be. I don't want men to define me". If gender is seen as behaviour performed by interacting agents, or how gender is "practised" by women and men, then it situates gender in its empirical form (Cassell 1986:13-16).

7. Social Construction

"Truth is not to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (Bakhtin: 1994:110).
A growing movement in the human sciences and humanities is referred to as social constructionism (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Coulter, 1979, 1983, 1989; Gergen, 1985, 1991, 1994; Harré, 1983, 1986; Harré and Gillet, 1994; Shotter, 1975, 1984, 1993a and b). Gergen (1985:270) states that the social constructionist movement "begins in earnest when one challenges the concept of knowledge as mental representation". Basically, the point is that knowledge is not objective; knowledge is something people together socially construct. People construct this knowledge as they use language. Why language? Because it is in language that societies construct their views of reality as they interact. Through language society gets to see the world and what is in it. Arguing for the postmodern view of how the language we use constitutes our world and beliefs, Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) state, "language does not mirror nature; language creates the natures we

know". Speaking is not a neutral or passive activity; when someone speaks they produce words which give legitimacy to the distinctions that the spoken words bring forth. Hence, language afforded the participants and facilitators of this research an opportunity for developing new language, new knowledges, and new meanings that can give authenticity to alternative views of reality. Language provides the matrix for all human understanding and experience (Kaye 1990:30). What Kaye implies is that 'knowledge and experience' are formed by the assumptions present in language as interpreted by the observer or listener. It was important therefore that in this study participants paid particular observance to language, words, and affectations and how these are used as signifiers of respect, communality and humility.

Social construction theory suggests that meaning and understanding are socially constructed through dialogue and discourse. Social construction could therefore be understood as "an attempt to approach knowledge from the perspective of the social processes through which it is created … and mediated through language" (Kotzé 1994:32). I hope that new knowledges as regards gender issues were constructed through this social interaction praxis because knowledge is not to be viewed, "as the objective reflection or representation of an external reality, but as the social construction of people in their attempt to live together within this world. Knowledge is negotiated meaning within the context of linguistic interaction" (Kotzé 1994:32).

8. Social Construction of gender

Gender is socially constructed (Gergen 2001:36,37). It is what culture and society make of the fact that one is either a man or a woman. As evidenced in the initial conversations in this research, social constructions of gender are the results of the process of socialization – a process through which the values, norms, beliefs, wisdom, philosophy, customs, skills and practices of the community and the society are learned, accepted and internalised (Njau 1994: 18). Socialization means that people are taught to accept and perform the roles and functions fixed by a particular society as revealed by the proverb: "Women cannot rule a village" in the findings of the interviews conducted in the community in Chapter 3. Men and women are socialized into accepting different gender roles from birth.

Indeed, this research observed that establishing different roles and expectations for men and women is a key feature of socialization in a given community. For example, from the interviews conducted in the community, while men and women differ on account of their biological and anatomical constitution, it was discovered that gender differences are a product of socio-cultural traditions which are created and perpetuated through cultural forms such as belief systems and rites as well as through folk stories and tales, etc. This resonates with Morgan's (2000:9) observation when she comments that the ways we understand our lives are influenced by the broader stories of the culture in which we live. This was a very revealing finding for some participants and did help to raise gender consciousness among them.

Through the process of socialization, values and behaviour patterns associated with maleness and femaleness are learned, acquired and internalised. Hence socialization is based on gender and gender roles. Gender in this context refers to a set of qualities and behaviours expected from a male or a female by a given society. A person's gender behaviour is affected by social or cultural expectations. These expectations originate in the preconception that certain qualities, and therefore roles, are "natural" for women while other qualities and roles are "natural" for men. Based on that assumption, men and women are socialized through social pressure and conditioning to learn and act according to the different qualities that society considers "natural" for them. In this regard Freedman and Combs (1996:32) observe, "These dominant narratives will specify the preferred and customary ways of believing and behaving within a particular culture". It was necessary for the participants to understand the role that social pressure and conditioning play in order to raise their consciousness in gender issues.

9. Social construction of woman in an African context

The initial conversations in this research indicate that to be born a woman in an African society is more than a simple biological fact. She is born into a deeply patriarchal society. Hence, to be born a woman is a biological fact with social implications. Women constitute a distinct and subjugated social group. The biological sexes are redefined, represented, valued, and channelled into different roles in various culturally dependent ways. I therefore would say that the discourse on gender can be a set of arrangements by which the African society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which their transformed sexual needs are met.

"Woman" is a creation of the masculine gaze. The masculine conception of woman gives rise to idealizations and norms that strongly influence the behaviour of women, who are deprived of the power to challenge the male view of their sex. An African woman's self-being has been split into two. And this has disadvantaged and disempowered her. A woman is expected to continually watch herself. This was confirmed in the words of one of the male participants: "You women, you are expected by the community to behave in a way that wont embarrass your husbands and family". A woman is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. For instance, the research revealed that whilst she is walking about in her neighbourhood or whilst she is sweeping her surroundings she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or sweeping. From her early childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually – a practice that she has come to internalise – a practice described by Foucault's (1993: 126-129) panopticon idea.

From the illustration above, we notice that a woman comes to consider the "surveyor" and the "surveyed" within her as the two constituent, yet always distinct, elements of her identity as a woman. She has to survey everything she is, and everything she does, because how she appears to men is of

crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another. I might simplify this action by saying: in an African relational context "men act and women appear". Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. Foucault (1993:60.61) refers to this type of arrangement as the "gaze". This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an "object" - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. Men's domination of gender discourse has trapped women inside a male "truth". This male "truth" is perpetuated by the position of power that men have in traditional society. What is this power?

10. Power/Knowledge

Foucault disputes the common assertion "that power is repressive in its operation and in its effects, that it is negative in force and character" (White & Epston 1990:19). He asserts that human beings experience the constitutive effects of power through the normalization of "truth" that shape humanity's lives and relationships. In examining the constitutions of power Foucault comes to a conclusion that power and knowledge are inseparable, like Siamese twins to an extent that he would rather talk in terms of "power/knowledge or knowledge/power". By closely examining the discourse of power/knowledge at work in the history of systems of thought, Foucault thus concludes that people end up becoming objects of bodies of knowledge and, by means of internalisation, they allow these knowledges to become a gaze subjugating their lives (Kotzé 2002:7). As observed from the initial conversations in this research, some participants had internalised the body of knowledge that believed that men are more superior than women. "Thus, it can be seen that a domain of knowledge is a domain of power, and a domain of power is a domain of knowledge" (White & Epston 1990:22). Hence, by talking of "power/knowledge" Foucault sees power as something that is not concentrated in one area. "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 1990:157). Power is to be found in all different directions; hence power is removed from the individual. Power moulds and influences every community. No one individual can choose to be powerful. Power does not originate from one central place. Power comes from many diverse places depending on the paradigm used to measure power.

In various disciplines of study, the methods of 'discovering truth' and its validation has been the privilege of the male. Michael Foucault (Gordon 1980:132) marries the search for 'truth' with the desire for power and the economic and political role it plays. Bons-Storm (1998:11,12) explains:

> This power works by certain strategies, namely strategies or procedures of control,
> selection and exclusion. The matters that may be discussed, the ritual of the manner
> of speaking and the privilege of being a speaker are regulated by strict rules,
> maintained by those who are already inside the realm of the discourse of the
> discipline. Those who are inside by the virtue of having been educated and

socialised in the right university and the right social class maintain their power of speaking by these procedures of exclusion.

This prevailed position of males as 'truth' determinants and validators seems to be a continued effort by men to maintain their power. How does this power/knowledge apply to gender and sexuality?

11. Power and Gender/Sexuality

Foucault discloses that power relations are central to the analysis of society, and that this is especially true for sexuality and gender. He claims power relations are formed in all relations where differences exist. According to Foucault (1990) sexuality is essentially about power. Sexuality or gender is not just a way of distinguishing the male from the female species. The issues of sexuality and gender actually find their way into domains of discourses and interpretations. The way in which we converse, write, and discuss the subject dealing with gender is really what gender is about. Gender is more than just one being man or woman. Our discourses on gender instinctively affect society, and the result is a complex network of power relations concerning gender. This therefore raises the need to deconstruct gender. Before addressing the deconstruction of gender, let me briefly focus on the subject of deconstruction.

12. Deconstruction

Kotzé (1994: 44) quotes Flax's view that all postmodern discourses are deconstructive:

> Postmodern discourses are all deconstructive in that they seek to distance us from and make us sceptical about beliefs concerning truths, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted within and serve as legitimation for contemporary Western culture.

Modernist Western culture has tended to assume that speech is a clear and direct way to communicate. Drawing on psychoanalysis and linguistics, Derrida questions this assumption. As a result, the author's intentions in speaking cannot be unconditionally accepted. This multiplies the number of legitimate interpretations of a text. Thus by deconstructing the works of previous scholars, Derrida (1978) attempts to show that language is constantly shifting. In much of Derrida's writing he focuses on language and is concerned with the deconstruction of texts and the relationship of meaning between texts. He states: "a text employs its own stratagems against it producing a force of dislocation that spreads itself through an entire system." (Rosenau 1993: 120). Derrida attacks Western philosophy in its understanding of reason. He sees reason as dominated by, "a metaphysics of presence." Derrida agrees with structuralism's insight, that meaning is not inherent in signs, but he then proposes that it is incorrect to infer that anything reasoned can be used as a stable and timeless model (Appignanesi 1995: 77).

Deconstruction is the preferred "method" of postmodernism in dealing with ideas and constructs. For me as a postmodernist, language is the encapsulator of reality. All meaning is seen as socially

constructed in language. These assumptions make "meaning" relative to the author and the reader because a text is open and cannot be reduced to any fixed frame of reference. "Language is a system of signs which is in constant play and meaning is a product of this play of differentiations" (Degenaar 1992:189). Hence, narrative, which is viewed as ultimate, is deconstructed so as to show the subjectivity of the claim. Veith (1994:19) says this is why postmodernism developed out of literary criticism, and not traditional philosophy. Deconstruction emphasizes negative critical capacity. Deconstruction involves demystifying a text to reveal internal arbitrary hierarchies and presuppositions. By examining the margins of a text, the effort of deconstruction examines what it represses, what it does not say, and what it says (Derrida 1978). It does not solely unmask error, but redefines the text by undoing and reversing polar opposites. Literary deconstruction does not resolve inconsistencies, but rather exposes hierarchies involved for distillation of information (White1991; Hare-Mustin & Marecek 1988) .

As I have already indicated above, Derrida contends that the traditional, or metaphysical way of reading makes a number of false assumptions about the nature of texts. He further observes that a traditional reader believes that language is capable of expressing ideas without changing them, that in the hierarchy of language speech is privileged over writing (Derrida 1974:11), and that the author of a text is the source of its meaning. Derrida's deconstructive style of reading subverts these assumptions and challenges the idea that a text has an unchanging, unified meaning. This resonates with what Freedman and Combs (1996:29) state:

> Meaning is not carried in a word by itself, but the word in relation to its context, and no two contexts will be exactly the same. Thus the precise meaning of any word is always somewhat indeterminate, and potentially different; it is always something to be negotiated between two or more speakers or between a text and a reader.

Deconstruction shows the multiple layers of meaning at work in language.

13. Deconstruction of Gender/Sexuality

Let me now briefly comment on the deconstruction of gender and sexuality. Foucault (1990) deconstructs the subject of sexuality in society. He deconstructs the previous conception of sexuality as advanced by the Victorian Age, transforming an era known for its repression into an era of expression. Foucault's concepts of power and sexuality bring gender studies to a new level. Foucault challenges people's previous understanding of the Victorian Era arguing that the 19th century was a time of sexual abundance, rather than repression. He states:

> Toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, there emerged a political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about sex. ..... This need to take sex 'into account', to pronounce a discourse on sex that would not derive from morality alone but from rationality as well, was sufficiently new that at first it

wondered at itself and sought apologies for its own existence. How could a discourse based on reason speak like that?

<div align="right">(Foucault 1976:25)</div>

He shows how people have been marginalized by the Victorian era's dominant repressive teachings on sexuality. In the same manner, dominant repressive teachings on gender, as witnessed in the participants' conversations, had hindered them from creating other possibilities. Dominant narratives such as these advocated by Victorians and participants can prevent people from creating other possibilities or alternative stories (White & Epson, 1990; White 1991; Freedman & Combs, 1996). During the Victorian period the shared view was that sexuality was confined to the home –the bedroom - thus reducing it to a purely reproductive function. Foucault argues that controlling sex actually turned sex into a discourse. At this time, population control became an issue for the first time. In order to control a population, sex required to be in the public domain. This led to the researching, analysing and publicizing of sex (Foucault 1976).

A discourse of gender or sexuality that disempowers people can be abusive and needs to be deconstructed in order to empower the marginalized and disadvantaged group. Deconstruction of gender is necessary because people's lives are moulded and shaped by the meaning that they give to their experiences by their situation in social structures, and by the language practices and cultural practices of self and of relationship that their lives are recruited into (White 1991:27).

Having looked at how post-modern theoretical discourses effect and shape participants' understanding and appreciation of gender and sexuality, let me now briefly examine the role that theology also plays in facilitating the understanding, appreciation and raising of participants' gender consciousness. It is important to address the question of theology because being students at a Bible College the participants' lives are lived within a theological context. A variety of theologies shall be examined.

14. Contextual Theology

Contextual practical theology is a theology of struggle and of liberation from oppression and is in dialogue with the Latin American theologies of liberation. It is very much committed to supporting society's most vulnerable members and groupings. Contextual practical theology has an edge of justice, liberation, and a preferential option for the poor. It is "theology 'from below' … its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) is the social sciences, and its main interlocutor the poor or the culturally marginalized" (Bosch 1991:423). It operates on the premise that God is on the side of the poor and the oppressed as is clearly illustrated in the biblical texts. For example, the Israelites were liberated from Egypt and granted lands by a different god, the God Yahweh: a God who defended the poor and other victims of injustice, a God to whom the people owed their only allegiance, a unique God whose image was to be translated into the establishment of an egalitarian society based on a confederation of tribes,

clans and families. Contextual practical theology examines the "contemporary world and tries to interpret what God is saying in the circumstances of peoples' lives" (Keane 1998:127).

Contextual practical theology presupposes that everything, every thought, every belief and creed must be set in context. It advances the idea that biblical and theological themes must be interpreted and formulated anew in each different context. Faith, and everything it embraces, must be seen through context (Bosch 1991:426; De Gruchy 1994:10,11). Human beings are products of their culture and context. Contextual practical theology calls us more towards "political" intervention than it does to passiveness. It is firmly convinced that the Gospel is political and is not removed from the essence of peoples' lived experiences – including gender discrimination. Once again this is clearly illustrated in the life of the history of the Israelites. In Egypt, God "heard the cries of his people" and intervened to liberate them. Later on, the prophets intervened to protect the weakest. The Jubilee came about regularly to correct social inequalities through laws: a law on the forgiveness of debt and on release from servitude, a law on the return of lands that had been lost, a law on leaving the land fallow and leaving work before exhaustion. The Jubilee tradition enabled society to self-correct; it recognized that any social order has a tendency to backslide, unless it is regularly adjusted and brought back to its real reason for existence, in this case the common good. It recognized that there is always a gap between that which is and that which could or should be (Atkinson & Field 1995:257-258). Feminist theologies attempt to address this gap between that which is and that which could or should be. Let me briefly highlight some of these theologies in the context of gender.

14.1 Strands of Feminist Theology

Within Christian feminism, three principle strands can be identified. Firstly, the post-Christian feminists (Atkinson & Field 1995:380) or radical revolutionary view (Keane 1998:123) which advances the argument that Judeo-Christian tradition is irredeemably patriarchal and therefore should be discarded and instead an alternative feminist religion must be constructed. Then there is the revisionist view, which is reformist. Revisionists aim at reinterpreting the biblical texts and liberating it from patriarchy. The main characteristic feature of the revisionist theology is their emphasis on investigating "her-story" and also "his-story" as the key to correctly interpreting biblical texts. Finally, there is Biblical feminism (Atkinson & Field 1995:380). This view is also reformist in character. Biblical feminism focuses on challenging some of the methods of biblical hermeneutics of deculturisation.

14.2 Christian Feminist Theology

The history of Christianity has clearly demonstrated that women have been marginalized in as far as their participation in public church ministries are concerned. Feminist theology emerged as a sort of

sibling to its sister, the secular feminist movement. Feminist theology surfaced with the detection that traditional theology is wedged in the experience of socially and politically dominant men. Hence, traditional theology is understood to assume that men's experience is normative for all of humanity. This bias is therefore regarded as a serious theological problem and feminist theologians attempt to develop alternative norms for theological reflection: "The task of feminist theologians today, therefore is to criticize abuses in the church which seriously affect them" (Keane 1998:122-123). However, there is no one predominant feminist theology, but rather a variety of feminist theologies based upon women's experience of life and God.

Isherwood and McEwan (1993) advance the theory that if equality between men and women is to be realised two things need to happen; one has to do with structures and the other with biblical hermeneutics and love:

> • The structures which inhibit equality have to be identified and denounced and then positive steps must be taken to devise and promote strategies that enhance equality.
> • Religion is not about standing still, repeating established 'truths' being limited by accepted interpretations; religion is about the communion of community in the present, the interrelatedness of everybody, connecting and networking, carrying and caring. Thus feminist theology presents a radical critique of religious and theological thinking stuck in notions of patriarchal supremacy.
>
> (Isherwood and McEwan 1993:60,61)

In addition to Isherwood and McEwan's two observations mentioned above, other scholars such as Atkinson and Field (1995:381) have further advanced the following reasons in the quest of dismantling patriarchy in the community of faith (I have summarized and adapted some of these points):

• Traditional patriarchal theology needs to be more open to the feminist critique and must seriously evaluate feminist hermeneutics. Feminist theology is not for women only.

• Women's experiences have been ignored. The church's teaching must engage with the real issues in women's lives. It must get inside the futility, anger, hurt, powerlessness and contradictions many women feel. Single women, for example, complain that instead of alleviating their pain, the church exacerbates it by emphasising marriage and child-bearing as a woman's vocation.

• The need to have a fruitful evangelistic and apologetic approach for women to explore the extent to which Western literature and religious art reflect a patriarchal, cultural image rather than a positive, biblical image of woman.

• The church must examine its use of exclusively male language which tends to isolate women. In this debate about linguistic discrimination, there are two separate issues to be considered: firstly the language used to describe God's people, the church; and secondly the language used to address God. There is certainly scope for modifying the language that we use to describe God's people in hymns and prayers, and to make sermons more gender-inclusive. The Church must make a deliberate effort to

teach and publicly teach the female imagery used to describe God as this could help some women to see how closely God has identified with their experience.

• The Church has to recognize and acknowledge women's spiritual gifts. For a long time traditional theology has approached the role of women in the church from the wrong angle, emphasizing the restrictions that should be placed on women, when the real problem is how to help all Christians to discover and use their gifts. Often church structures discourage both women and men from developing their gifts.

• The feminist movement has led the way in objecting to the ways women are used in advertising, 'pornography' and media violence. It has also provided practical help for women who are victims of violence. This must prompt some soul-searching in the Christian community about its silence on these issues and the extent of its social involvement.

14.3 African women's theology

African women live in a given dynamic cultural, social, religious and political context. They live in Africa and are faced with issues that are unique to their geographical location – Africa. It is for this reason that African woman's theology stands aloof from Womanist theology which addresses issues that black women are faced with in the United States of America. In this regard one woman theologian states:

> The main issues in African women's Theology center around redefining the
> nature of theology in terms of African women's experiences and re-analysing the
> relationship between traditional theology and culture with reference to patriarchy
> as an unhealthy contact point between the two.
>
> (Landman 1998:137)

In other words, this theology becomes a vehicle by which the injustices and gender discrimination apparent in the ways in which men view women, and the manner in which males relate to females, are re-evaluated. It is obvious that in African traditional beliefs and tradition, theology informs the conduct of men toward the women. African women's theology is mainly based on real life women's daily stories and experiences. It does not engage in much philosophising at the expense of lived experiences of women. Hence it advocates, "an integration of mind and body, of philosophical thinking and experience, of academia and activism" (Landman 1998:138). Because African women's theology considers experience as its starting point, it takes various forms of theologies depending on the cultural context of each women's group. Thus scholars would often speak of African women's theologies as opposed to African women's theology.

African women theologians are now making a mark in the world of religious studies and academia. The result is that women issues, which traditional theology fails and shies away from addressing, are

now been tackled, bringing some healing and a sense of worth to women. All this has come about as a result of women being trained in religion. However, Landman (1998:139) observes that:

> [t]he future for religious women does not lie solely in training women for the ordained ministry. It is the conscientization of religious women from all walks of life that will change patriarchal systems. In this regard it is important to teach women a new type of God-talk that will change societal concepts of a male God who abuses people who challenge the stereotypes of society prescribed to women.

In this research there were voices that demanded that the women rise up and challenge the church and its traditional theology and be liberated from male dominance. These voices observed that for this to happen women would need to have some level of literacy and academic education in order for them to engage with the biblical texts and interpret them in accordance to their own lived experiences.

Having hopefully highlighted the theoretical components of this dissertation, I would like at this stage to move on and focus on some specific ways, as undertaken in this research project, that are aimed at raising gender consciousness.

Chapter 3

Exploring Gender Issues

1. Introduction

This chapter will seek to explore the participants' understanding and their awareness of gender related issues. The interaction between the participants' experience of gender and the written material on the subject form the milieu of this chapter.

Let me start by attempting to define my understanding of the term "gender" from what I have read. A simple and traditional definition of "gender" could be that which refers to the sex-role identity used by men and women to emphasize the distinctions between male and female (van Leeuwen 1990:19). Sometimes people may use the words "gender" and "sex" interchangeably. However, it is generally accepted that "sex" relates specifically to the biological, physical characteristics which make a person male or female at birth (van Leeuwen 1990:19). "Gender" tends to be the word used to refer to the behaviours associated with members of either of the two sexes.

2. Gender bias

Human mechanisms that bestow privilege on one group and not another are often invisible to those upon whom that privilege is bestowed. Hence, not having to think about gender is one of the internalised patriarchal dividends that men gain from their position in the gender order. Men tend not to think of themselves as "gendered" beings, and this may be the reason why both men and women often misunderstand or dismiss "gender" as a women's issue. In his book, Connell's (1995) overall observation is that a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change. Gender determines social relations that legitimise and sustain men's power over women. It is essentially about relations between women and men, as well as relations among groups of women and among groups of men. Raising gender consciousness is therefore necessary to achieve gender equality in men's lives as well as in women's.

There are two schools of thought (Greg 2002:6) as to whether gender is culturally constructed or is a biological determinism or essentialism. Feminists are of the view that gender (especially masculinity) is constituted in and by society and culture, rather than nature and biology. It can therefore be said that human experience is very much influenced by sanctioned ideas and social practices in a given historical era. As a matter of fact, it is from this premise that institutions and practices concerned with the advancement of women have applied their programmes.

Understanding gender as a cultural construction will greatly assist in perceiving some insights that are of use in working with men toward a construction of gender equality. A cultural construction of masculinity makes it possible to separate men from their masculine roles creating a space within which their gender, and the process of their gendering, can become more visible to men themselves. Feminism would say that making men more conscious of gender as it affects their lives as well as those of women is a first step towards challenging gender inequalities (Tamasese & Waldegrave 1994:57). Undoubtedly, one of the significant achievements of feminism has been to name the connections between men, gender and power and give them visible expression in the term 'patriarchy'. In both the public and domestic spheres, patriarchy refers to the institutionalisation of men's power over women within economical, religious, social, political, and marital relationships (Isherwood & McEwan 1993). I am therefore of the view that men's relationship to such patriarchal arrangements of power must be a critical area of concern in developing gender consciousness.

In fact, gender inequality is a worldwide phenomenon as is reflected in the Beijing Platform for Action (United Nations:1995a). This report listed critical areas of concern including:

> • the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
>
> • violence against women
>
> • inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
>
> • inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
>
> • gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in safeguarding the environment.

3. Enlivening the participants

The title given to this chapter presupposes that, prior to this study, a number of participants had not deliberately taken the time to explore how the gender discourse is present and constitutes their lives and relationships. A large number of the students had internalised the taken-for-granted, disadvantaged and discriminating status of women in their communities and relationships.

Since it was the first time for all the participants to be involved in a gender study, some of them initially were somewhat insecure, others were uncertain of what to say and how to say it. Yet still others were anxious; some male participants seemed to have been threatened by virtue of the fact that they were about to have their views on gender challenged. Just before the beginning of the formal first session comments such as these were passed by the male folk:

"You think this is your chance to tell us off" (While looking at the female participants).

"Ooh! It's now equal rights for all"

"We are not the problem, you women are the problem".

There were equally cynical responses to these comments from the female participants:

"Yes, you men need to know that we are also human beings".

"You people need to listen also".

"Yes, it is equal rights for all. We are also human beings in case you need to be reminded".

Listening to this conversation made me realise that I needed to dispel some of the anxieties, insecurities and misunderstandings on gender and hostility and also give lectures on feminism. I would imagine that the fact that the subject of gender was going to be addressed was in itself provocative enough, particularly to male participants who were aware that a research on gender ideologies would possibly raise unpleasant questions about issues which normally remain unaddressed by the male folk in the Zambian culture. Masculinity imposes a lot of pressure on men to perform and maintain their perceived 'superiority' position often to their own detriment as Gokova (1998:9) has noted:

> Men have not realized how much they pay in insisting on separate gender roles….
> Men deny themselves the experience of being human, particularly in so far as their relationship with women is concerned. They miss important lessons of life derived from challenging relationships in which women play an equal role. Living the myth of male superiority has sometimes resulted in men suffering from stress, even early death, because of pressure to project an image that is not naturally theirs and that is not sustainable.

Heise (1997:425) reveals that this concept of the pressure of masculinity is often linked to a notion of the fragility of masculine identity that requires constant performance. She observes that this explains the stereotypically problematic male behavioural patterns, such as violence and sexual risk-taking. Heise (1997: 426) comments, "[T]he more I work on violence against women, the more I become convinced that the real way forward is to redefine what it means to be male". In other words, there is the need to deconstruct the term 'male' because this would offer us "a means of examining the way language operates below our everyday level of awareness to create meaning" (Segal quoted by Hare-Mustin & Maracek 1988:460). This notion offers the possibility of reconstructing masculinity and creating new models and identities for men that will enable and encourage them to work towards gender equality, and therefore more effective models of development.

4. Personal Introduction and Setting off

We began the first session with personal introduction. Each of the participants (including myself) was asked to talk about her/his family background, their present family status, and their church affiliation. On the importance of beginning with a personal introduction for this kind of programme, Bhasin (1996:51,52) states:

> Getting to know each other well … is the basis for developing a common understanding and creating solidarity; and in order to know each other well, we have to see each other as a "whole"; we have to break the usual compartments between the "personal" and the "official", between the private and the public. Starting with the personal also gives everyone a chance to speak, and build a confidence that everyone has something to share. It helps in creating an atmosphere of warmth, closeness and equality… Sharing our lives and experiences also helps root our discussions within our own realities, and to help us make sense of these realities. Thus, none of our discussions become "academic" impositions.

Following the introduction, I asked each of the participants to tell the group their expectations of the study. As people express their expectations, "… it gives an idea of where each one of us is and what areas we would like to discuss and explore, and therefore, makes it easier to plan the contents and gauge the level of discussions for the rest of the program" (Bhasin 1996:51,52). Though there were a variety of expectations, there was a thread of similarity in almost all the expectations, i.e. to understand and appreciate gender issues and deal with the internalised misconceptions and perceptions about gender.

Having earlier introduced my research to the students, highlighting the purpose of the project, I allowed time for suggestions and questions where and when the students needed further clarification on the subject matter. This was to be consistent with the nature of a participatory action research methodology, which was the research approach I had employed. Concerning this approach, McTaggart (1997:28) says: "Participatory action research is in principal a group activity…"

5. Feminism: A misunderstood terminology

Married male participants were anxious before the official introduction of the first session, leading them to make such comments as:
• Are you now advocating for the formation of a Women's Liberation Movement in this College?
• Feminism is not for African women. It must be left with Western women. Feminism will kill our culture and destroy our marriages.
• The Bible is against the teachings of feminism.
• Feminism is a movement bent on usurping men's power and authority by the women.
• Feminism is for those women who have failed to maintain their marriages and families.

Most participants felt that these statements had little basis and were generally informed by the uncalled for discomfort people had with women's movements. They also felt that it was not fair to judge feminism by the conduct of two single mothers in Zambian politics who are outspoken on a number of issues – especially on gender (the male participants had constantly made reference to these two female

politicians). The two single mothers referred to had each been sleeping around with married men and in the process had wrecked some marriages.

It is very evident that the above statements are a gross misrepresentation of feminism. But this only goes to prove how many of the participants had no proper understanding of what feminism is and what it advocates for, its relevance and significance. Having observed that there were suspected misunderstandings and misrepresentations on the issue of gender I spent some time lecturing to students what feminism is all about. Below are some of the issues I brought to their attention.

I started by giving them a definition of "feminism". Hooks (2000:viii) gives a simple definition of feminism as: "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression". It is not a movement for women against men because male and female can both be sexist since they are from birth socialised to accept sexist thought and action. However, males in most cases benefit from patriarchy "[f]rom the assumption that they are superior to females and should rule over them" (Hooks 2000:ix). Feminists are united by the idea that women's position in society is unequal to that of men, and that society is structured in such a way as to benefit men to the political, social, and economic detriment of women. However, feminists have used different theories to explain these inequalities such as 'reformist' and 'revolutionary' approaches (Hooks 2000: 4,5) and have advocated different ways of redressing inequalities, and there are marked geographic and historical variations in the nature of feminism.

Then I proceeded to show how feminist thinking is succeeding in drawing public attention to inequality between women and men, and to the structures within society which belittle and mitigate against women. It has led to a reconsideration of women's role in the workplace, resulting in moves towards equal pay and equal opportunities policies; and it has identified and tackled the problem of sexual harassment at work (Burstow 1992; Hooks 2000). Feminism is also succeeding in challenging perceptions of women's skills, with the result that some women are entering non-traditional areas of employment such as the construction industry. At this juncture participants gave examples from their own experiences of women well known to them who are employed in such industries.

I pointed out that feminism has influenced culture, resulting in greater coverage of women's interests and concerns, particularly by the mass media. Participants were familiar with a number of programmes on both Zambian television and radio that are aimed at highlighting women's interests and concerns. Feminist thinking has adapted and diversified to tackle new issues, including AIDS, homophobia (prejudice against homosexual persons), technology and warfare. Some feminists have combined feminist ideas with pacifist and environmentalist ideologies to condemn nuclear weapons (Welch 1990) and criticize new technologies. Such technologies include reproductive technologies and surrogate

motherhood, which are regarded as a means by which men exert control over the earth's resources and over women's bodies.

I also made the participants aware that feminist thinking has had a powerful influence upon many academic disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary criticism, history, theology, and the sciences. I gave an example of "Women for change", a feminist organisation in Zambia, which is currently undertaking research that draws attention to neglected female concerns and it is exposing the patriarchal assumptions which underlie traditional approaches to scholarships for students in colleges and universities.

The students found this lecture very enlightening and deeply appreciated what feminism stands for. One of the students said to the other participants, "You know, ignorance is not good. So it is important to research and read widely. You know, all along I was of the view that feminism is all about women fighting to be like us men. But this is not what it's about. For me now feminism is about justice and equality for all in all areas of life".

6. Holistic approach

In consultation with the participants we agreed to undertake this study in the context of a wider socio-political, cultural and economic perspective because individual females do not suffer oppression in isolation but as the result of wider social and political systems. We worked from the premise that any meaningful change in gender ideologies would inevitably demand changes in these social networks and vice-versa. The participants were made to appreciate that gender discrimination is a system and therefore should not be viewed or understood as an issue of men versus women. This, however, is not to refrain from personal responsibility as gender discrimination is kept alive and promoted by individuals' actions. Men and women constitute this system and therefore they have a moral and ethical obligation to change this system. Therefore, this study was going to provide an opportunity for both sexes to enter into an honest and ardent dialogue and hopefully together consciously engage in creating new knowledges about gender on a level playing field and develop a shared commitment to challenge institutionalised patriarchy.

7. Participatory ethics

We negotiated with the participants and facilitators that the research would be participatory and non-hierarchical as a way of providing an unbiased platform and relaxed atmosphere during the discussions. The reason for using the participatory approach is because participatory ethics can ensure that those privileged with knowledge/power deliberately and consciously engage in creating new knowledges on the subject matter. Participatory ethics provides for participatory consciousness, which

Heshusius (quoted by Kotzé 2002:5) describes as "a freeing of ourselves from the categories imposed by the notions of objectivity and subjectivity; as a re-ordering of the understanding between the self and the other to a deep kinship of "selfother", between the knower and the known". Kotzé (2002:6) goes on to state:

> Within such a participatory consciousness, knowledge itself is quite different from knowledge discovered as the product of applying our theories to uncover an understanding of what "'is'". It is an ethical political process, co-constructed in the course of relating with others in a specific context or situation, at a specific moment in time.

8. An awareness of gender related issues

In the second session, an interview schedule (Appendix A) was given to each student to take to people they know and do some research on ideas and concepts about gender issues. The students took this interview schedule to people working or associated with different life contexts. The idea was to enable the students to get a "feel" of where people were in terms of gender relations and also bring gender issues to the forefront of peoples' minds. The interview schedule was also designed to make the students define and understand their own position regarding gender issues in the process of collecting this information.

The interview schedule was circulated to the people living nearby the Bible College. The students were asked to take note of the sex and social and marital status of the interviewees. The students themselves in conjunction with the interviewees completed the interview schedules. The people interviewed included customs officers, the police, teachers and peasant farmers. Among these were nine widows and five widowers, three single men and seven single women. The rest were married couples. The completed interview schedules were sorted out and analysed in accordance with the answers given by the interviewees. Following the completion of the interview schedule, the participants discussed the answers together as one group and later in four small groups. This was necessary as we wanted to give plenty of opportunity for people to express their views and this could be effectively done in smaller groups. As a facilitator my obligation was to fill in the gaps in the deliberations, contribute my insights as and when I deemed necessary as well as provide conceptual or theoretical information such as patriarchy discourses and feminism.

It was interesting to note that in most cases the areas of discussion covered in the interviews extended beyond the scope of the prepared questions this was so because the students allowed the interviewees to explore other gender related issues that were of much concern to them. Ninety-three percent of the interviewees from this research stated that women experience discrimination in the four areas namely: Social life, Religious life, Cultural life, and Family life. In addition it was discovered that traditional gender roles and social stereotypes construct criteria for what is considered appropriate for women and

appropriate for men. Ninety-three percent of the research revealed that the lives of most women centre around their households. For example, women raise children, manage the family gardens and cook for the household. Women in society are confined to home as mothers and wives and on agricultural farms as labourers. It was also observed that even in large factories, which employ many women in such industries as food processing and textiles, women receive low pay and have little job security.

However, in reality, women, just like men, are also major contributors and strategic agents of national development. Signatories to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (United nations 1995) recognized this when they committed themselves (in Commitment Five) to:

> Promoting full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men, and to recognizing and enhancing the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, socio-economic and cultural life, and in development.

Informed by feminist ideas I would argue that masculinity and the role it plays in human relations and the development process must be examined as it has widespread implications for the effectiveness of programmes that seek to improve economic and social outcomes in the world. "If development is not engendered, it is endangered", warned the 1997 Human Development Report, according to BBC's "Every woman" programme. Gender equality is not only an end in itself, but also a necessary means to achieving sustainable human development and the reduction of poverty. Furthermore, the participants found out that vast cultural differences make it difficult for women to voice their feelings as a corporate group because they come from a tradition where men's and women's activities have been strictly segregated and women have lived largely in seclusion.

Of the seventy-eight people interviewed, fifty-one per cent felt that women should participate in the paid labour force. They should be free to pursue careers of their own choice, including mothers with young children. They felt that long-standing differences between the sexes in job opportunities and in earnings need to disappear. They observed with dismay that the majority of women's work opportunities still fall within a narrow range of occupations, such as nursing, teaching, shop assistants, and secretarial work. One person interviewed commented:

> People should wake up and realise that times have changed. In the world today attitudes about the roles of women and men are changing hence affecting the way people conduct their everyday lives. For example, many men now take a more active role in parenting where the wife is the breadwinner of the household. Some Zambian husbands now join their wives during childbirth. Others take leave from work when they become fathers in order to give support to their spouses.

This development is in conformity with one of the objectives of the 1994 Cairo conference on population and development (United Nations 1994) which states:

To promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life, and to encourage and enable men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour and their social and family roles.

The research also revealed that there are more proverbs that discriminate against women than those that promote the women's welfare and well-being. Proverbs such as ones listed below were identified:

• Ubucende bwa mwaume tabutoba ing'anda (If a man is an adulterer this cannot break his marriage)

• Abanakashi mafi ya mpombo (Women are as many as a duiker's droppings) – the implication is that men can afford to marry and divorce and remarry at will.

• Bana mayo teti bateke umushi (Women cannot rule a village)

As can be seen from the data collected, there is a strong indication that women occupy very disadvantaged positions in many areas of human life. This conclusion led to the arousal of particular uneasiness, resistance and some kind of "hostility" from a few male participants. During the discussions, for example, the female participants challenged the men to list discrimination and injustice that both men and women may suffer in a given family situation. The ladies had come up with a long list of such including the following:

• lack of participation by men in raising children

• lack of involvement by men in household activities

• women excluded from participating in making major decisions in the family and in their communities.

• discrimination against girls in education. When resources are scarce, parents often choose the male child to receive education or professional training. This choice has its basis in the perception that it is "useless" to invest in girls, who are expected to marry and be economically sustained by their spouse.

• women considered as beasts of burden.

• little attention is paid to women's health issues and women are expected to nurse the sick in the homes.

• sexual and physical assault against women.

• husbands controlling their wives' income.

• marriage is almost a necessity as a means of support or protection, and pressure is usually constant to produce children, especially male heirs.

• married women generally take their husband's status and live with his family, with little recourse in cases of ill treatment or non-support.

• women always face emotional and psychological abuse and blackmail. For example a man may threaten his wife with divorce if she fails to submit to him even for the husband's selfish reasons and motives.

Before I refer to the male participants' list of injustices that they face it is worthwhile to pause here and reflect on two of the issues raised by the female participants in the list above – that of violence against women and health issues. These are two issues which the participants felt needed to be looked into in detail as they affected nearly all women in Zambia.

9. Violence against women

Zambian tradition has for long promoted some form of physical assault on the wife. The beating of the wife by the husband within "reasonable" limits is encouraged, as it manifests the love existing between husband and wife. It is assumed that wife beating shows that the husband is jealous of his wife and the beating helps to correct the wife from wrongdoing. Quite clearly this notion is basically about injustice done to women in the name of love.

Heise (1997: 414) reports on a summary of twenty studies from a wide variety of countries that document that one-quarter to over half of women in many countries of the world report having been physically abused by a present or former partner. She concludes "[t]he most endemic form of violence against women is wife abuse, or more accurately, abuse of women by intimate male partners" (Heise 1997: 414). The programme broadcast on Television Zambia in July 2003 on the topic, "Effects of the war on women in Africa", made a very astounding revelation as far as violence against women is concerned in cultures that naturalise violence, especially in places where war and internal conflict abide and where colonialism and imperialism is present. The panellists revealed that internal conflicts or war "naturalise" violence whereas colonialism and imperialism, which tend to inhibit men from expressing themselves, cause men to vent these "bottled" feelings of anger in marriage. The panellists urged that in such environments, the interpersonal violence in couple relationships is placed in the context of the structural violence of inequalities based on gender, class, age and race. One of the female panellists noted:

> Violence in couple relationships is a problem of power and control… It is maintained by the social structures of oppression in which we live – based, among others, on gender, class, age, and race inequalities. A national history of wars and a culture of settling conflict through force also maintain it. Colonialism and imperialism have had a role in intensifying this violence.

The panellists noted therefore, that placing men's violence in a historical and cultural context helps overcome the naturalising of men's violence, or what might be called the "masculinising of violence", and affirms that by moving from biological determinist to cultural constructionist accounts of masculinity, a number of men's anti-violence programmes have been able to work with violent men to help them understand the ways that structural pressures, cultural messages and/or parenting practices, have contributed to their socialization into violence. Deconstructing their violence in this way has helped some men to change.

10. Health issues

Public health for women and masculinity are closely connected. Cultural construction of masculinity is about taking risks even in matters of personal health for men. This notion is one of the major obstacles against women's improved health care. For example, women who seek to improve access to health care, to avail themselves of existing methods of contraception or practice safer sex often run into a wall of uncooperation from men. Health is gendered. Traditional ideologies of masculinity influence sexual health matters among men, as is reflected in the UNAIDS (2000) report which challenges shameful concepts of masculinity and contends that changing many commonly held attitudes and behaviours, including the way adult men look at risk and sexuality and how boys are socialized to become men, must be part of the effort to curb the AIDS epidemic. Broadly speaking, men are expected to be physically strong, emotionally robust, daring and virile, the report says. Some of these expectations translate into attitudes and behaviours that endanger the health and well-being of men and their sexual partners with the advent of AIDS.

In Zambia, HIV risk-taking behaviour by men is viewed as a facet or demonstration of masculine identity. This raises the need for deconstruction of the need for this demonstration and highlights the pressures on men to "perform" their masculinity through risk-taking. This would create a space for men to be more conscious of the reasons for, and consequences of, their own sexual behaviour. In Zambia, it is generally believed that the husbands mainly spread HIV/AIDS in marriage since culture is tolerant of male promiscuity.

Health and gender inequality in marriage relations translates into a sense of entitlement for men to express their desire and seek sexual pleasure with other women. This notion increases the HIV risk factor for many women and therefore calls for the need to integrate men into HIV prevention initiatives as quoted below:

> Involving men more fully in HIV prevention work is essential if rates of HIV transmission are to be reduced. While such a move may not be universally popular, it seems necessary if we are to ensure that men take on greater responsibility for their own sexual and reproductive health, and that of their partners and families.
>
> (Rivers and Aggleton 1999: 18).

The general expectation of the Zambian community is that women are responsible for taking care of the sick at home and in the community. For example, in a home when a husband is sick, his wife is expected to apply for leave from work in order to nurse her husband. However, in the event that the wife is sick, the husband would usually ask for one of the wife's relatives to nurse his wife. In matters of family health the Ministry of Health has been advocating for husbands to be involved in "Under Five Clinics" and in the reproductive health of their wives by attending family planning clinics together with their spouses. One of the students during the workshop was applauded when she commented:

> Husbands should not think of wives as service stations to service them
> (sexually) and then forget about giving moral and practical support when a wife
> gets pregnant. We need husbands' support from making love right through to
> 'Under Five Clinics' and beyond this – to raising kids. Men should take a keen
> interest in the health issues of their wives and children.

Let me now state the reasons that men came up with. The male participants had to scratch their heads in order to identify the injustices that they face. Nevertheless, they came up with this list:

• a wife may put so much pressure on the husband to sexually perform. Participants laughed uncontrollably when one of the male participants made the remark: "We men also get tired, you know, we are not water taps".

• wives spend so much time complaining about their husbands to fellow ladies and hence the husband may develop a low-self image.

• community expects men to look after women.

The participants further observed that the family could be a place where injustice and patriarchal ideologies are highly at play. A couple of married men were particularly insecure about this observation such that they became extremely defensive about "a man's role in the family" as informed by their local culture. They observed that the list that women had come up with was meant to destabilise the marriages and thus would lead to the disintegration of the family. Some of these participants desperately tried to divert attention from the issues at hand and tried to bring in irrelevant issues. However, the other participants observed that such a notion was simply meant to protect the husbands' authority, security and power position.

At this point I challenged the participants to seriously reflect on their reactions to the discussion. One of the participants in one of the groups made an interesting observation: "An honest look at the realities of the family can assist us to remove the injustices and discrimination and consequently, can result in strengthening the family". The women participants urged the male folk for once to examine the family power relationships from their point of view since they (the women) were the victims of these injustices. I stand with Kotzé (2002:18) who advocates:

> Those who have a voice and power have an ethical obligation to use the privilege
> of their knowledge/power to ensure participation with the marginalized and
> silenced, to listen to them, but not to decide for them, and to engage in
> participatory solidarity with them.

During the discussions, eventually most men were agreed that women were suffering atrocities and injustices from men but a few of them could not understand that these inhuman practices were perpetuated by patriarchal discourses. It seems that some participants were blinded to the influence of patriarchal and hierarchical practices, even during these discussions. In one group the participants were confusing the two terminologies – equality and sameness. They accused the women of advocating for sameness, "You women you just want to be the same as men". When this happened, I came in and explained that there was a world of difference between "sameness" and "equality". Sameness is about

"the state of being the same; very close likeness" whereas equality is about the state of being equal; to have equal opportunities – men and women are not the same but have equal opportunities in life.

11. Group Consciousness

Below is a summary of the deliberations that transpired in each of the four groups that students were divided into. Most of the observations were similar, but I have highlighted the unique ones that were made by each group. Group one made the following observations:

In Zambia, men and women share similar perspectives about the role of women and men in society and especially in home and family set-ups. Such perceived roles that women play include domestic labourers, child raisers, and sexual beings – simply servicing their husbands. This group observed that generally women have lower incomes, somewhat less education, and less employment experience than men. This group also noted that men needed to discount their superiority and claims to power and privilege, and recognise women's relative deprivation of power and influence.

Furthermore, it was observed that there is an internalised belief by most women that men are more qualified for highly responsible jobs, or that men are born with more ambition and drive to succeed, or that women are happiest looking after the home and the children. Sapiro (1991), a leading scholar on gender urges that women with such an internalised perception may themselves need to develop gender consciousness. She observes that development of this consciousness may be a risky issue for women:

> Developing gender consciousness requires a unique and difficult developmental process of achieving a level of individual independence that can allow a woman to gain a sense of political alliance with other women that does not at the same time create more threats to her personal relationships with men than she can tolerate. The problem is not just that many women may sense a conflict between their growing gender consciousness and their affections for male family, friends, or loved ones, although there may be potential for conflict, especially if those men do not share their views or if they even provide the springboard for the women's gender consciousness in a negative sense.
>
> Women often expect to bear great costs for the expression of their new consciousness because of the negative reactions they anticipate on the part of men. Women tend to believe that men are not really bothered by discrimination against women and that men become annoyed and resentful when women express these concerns. Thus women may resign themselves to their situation in an effort not to hurt or be hurt by these people. Of course, other kinds of group consciousness and political mobilization can also be inhibited by individuals' social situations. But

gender consciousness is unique because many of the affected social relationships are among those most connected with an individual's sense of identity.

(Sapiro 1991:15)

The second group observed that women in Zambia have not developed group consciousness as readily as other subordinate categories such as "People Living with HIV/AIDS in Zambia" due to lack of structural conditions that encourage a sense of solidarity among the women. Even the existing institution in Zambia "Women for Change" is viewed with much suspicion by many a man and woman as an institution existing to change the much valued traditional gender roles. It was observed that gender discrimination is not given the same attention as social injustices such as racial inequality because in the eyes of many, gender discrimination is not perceived as much of a social evil as racial injustice.

A very interesting observation was made by the third group, which wrote:

Perhaps the most extreme restraint of gender consciousness among women, is the manner in which they relate with each other and with men. Women, generally, tend not to get along with each other – there is plenty of gossip and competition among themselves - and ironically they seem to flow well with the male folk. This conduct tends to steal away their sense of solidarity and intimacy.

This group further observed that in as far as women's relationships with men are concerned: most women in Zambia tend to derive their social status and fame exclusively from their married roles. Such a position has worked against them in the sense that it simply helps to perpetuate their discrimination by men.

Gurin (1985:148) suggests that if gender disparities are to end, there is need for women to be involved in what she terms, "collective orientation" i.e. women should come and work together to change the existing status quo of women – "to change the laws and social processes that cause job and wage inequality" (in the case of career and professional women). She believes that this collective orientation will create an awareness of gender disparities which in turn produces a sense of discontent. Once this process has occurred "…the group members are likely to raise questions about the legitimacy of disparities…awareness of a common fate means that members perceive common treatment and outcomes, which should help them question and criticise the legitimacy of many group based disparities" (Gurin & Townsend 1986:140). Gurin and Townsend (1986:140) further point out:

[A] positive attitude toward collective action is more likely to develop when group identity includes a strong sense of common fate. When members of a group understand that individual mobility depends not on individual performance alone but also on group membership they are motivated to act collectively to remove category-based barriers.

There is available historical documentation to prove that group consciousness among women has proved effective in correcting gender imbalances. Ellen Ross's (quoted by Livingstone and Luxton 1989:245) study of women in Eastern London proves how women's common experiences led to gender solidarity which empowered their challenging of male power and granted a springboard for questioning patriarchal discourse. Another success story Livingstone and Luxton (1983:245) quote is the one based in the United States of America by Sarah Eisenstein – studying working women. She observed that, once women are moved from their family household and come together in groups with other women, they develop a group gender consciousness more readily than women who are full-time homemakers.

The fourth group noted:

> During the research we discovered that women were more open than men in sharing their experiences whereas men seemed to be somewhat closed. We think this was the case because women are the objects of injustices and felt this research was an outlet for them to speak out. Even those men who agreed that gender discrimination needs to be addressed avoided talking about how as men they may be perpetuating this discrimination in their families. They were so impersonal. They simply talked about the suffering and marginalisation of the women in general.

Livingstone and Luxton (1989:248) advocating for men to acquire gender consciousness state: "…men can develop a pro-feminist consciousness – that is, sympathise with the women's interests and a reject of male power and masculinist discourse –without denying their male identities. Men need to listen to the voices of the "other" i.e. women – as Cochrane & Ngwane (quoted by Kotzé 2002:19) put it:

> [t]he voices of the other should be heard. With the 'other' he means "at least not the self… the other at least means that it is in their context, as much as one's own, that counts". The key issue is not the voices of those others that are strong and "fully fore-grounded", but of those who are subjugated, "even perhaps driven into silence", and those who are "not heard or present", "the oppressed".

12. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a review of the meanings and uses of gender to catalyse thinking around these issues as well as to raise gender consciousness among the students in order to inspire new conversations and debate surrounding gender issues. Conversations reflected in this chapter show that there is need to have continued efforts to converse around gender issues, publicise and advocate for the importance of men's responsibilities and roles to work towards gender equality at all levels of society. Making gender visible and men more conscious of gender as it affects their lives and those of women is a first step towards challenging gender inequalities and the transformation of men.

The conclusion of the 1995 Human Development Report (UNDP) articulated a vision of transformation:

> One of the defining moments of the 20th century has been the relentless struggle for gender equality. . . When this struggle finally succeeds – as it must – it will mark a great milestone in human progress. And along the way it will change most of today's premises for social, economic and political life. Let us hope that the success of that struggle will be one of the defining moments of the 21st century, because gender equality will enable both women and men to live lives of greater freedom and integrity.

If this vision is to be achieved, all human institutions at various levels should carry out transformative work in as far as gender issues are concerned. At a very small level this research aimed to do just that, but gender consciousness can be optimised if everyone in the community gets involved in the quest for gender equality. Let me finish this chapter with words uttered by one of the participants: "Transformation occurs as the reformer feels the pain of those who are oppressed".

The next chapter addresses two major gender issues namely traditional culture and work culture. These cultures are critical in understanding and appreciating how gender influences work and personal relationships within these cultures.

Chapter 4

Gender, traditional culture and work culture

1. Introduction.

This chapter will focus on two major gender issues, namely, traditional culture and work culture. The former shall attempt, through the experience of a woman, to enlighten how gender is understood and how gender culture discourse influences the experience of both men and women. Because of a strong link between traditional culture and contemporary economic culture, these two cultures shall be explored and suggestions shall be made on how these two are linked and work against women. This link is seen in that women are consumers of economic and social goods; and contribute to GDP growth as part of the labour force, as producers and household income generators within a given cultural context. Women are also social service providers, playing the role of caretakers and community organisers. Through the story of a mother and working woman and contemporary writings on the subject, the research examined contemporary work culture and how this has been gendered.

2. What is culture?

Culture is understood by anthropologists as, "the integrated system of learned behaviour patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance" (Hoebel quoted by Kraft 1984:46). Consequently it can be said that humankind is shaped by, and participates in, the transference of culture. Humankind also influences and contributes to the reshaping of a given culture. Inevitably our culture frames both our actions and our thinking pattern. In terms of gender Sapiro (1991:20) reinforces this preceding statement by noting that "[c]ulturally constructed belief systems about the nature and roles of women and men may be learned by individuals and incorporated in whole or in part into their own gender schemas". This observation resonates with the quotation below from World Book of Records (1999) CD ROM:

> Throughout history, most societies have held women in an inferior status compared to that of men. Women's status was often justified as being the natural result of biological differences between the sexes. In many societies, for example, people believed women to be naturally more emotional and less decisive than men. Women were also held to be less intelligent and less creative by nature. But research shows that women and men have the same range of emotional, intellectual, and creative characteristics. Many sociologists and anthropologists maintain that various cultures have taught girls to behave according to negative stereotypes (images) of femininity, thus keeping alive the idea that women are naturally inferior.

Undeniably, there are some physical differences between men and women. For example, women are childbearers and consequently nurse infants. This leads to a tradition of women taking on most of the

responsibility for childcare while the men work outside the home thus giving men economic superiority.

3. Women viewed through the eyes of culture

Mrs. Grace Nkausu, a very cheerful and pleasant woman, comes from a very humble family background. She comes from a poor residential area where she shares her house with nine of her children. Her husband is a retired worker and now makes his living by growing crops on his small plot of land. Ever since her husband retired the Nkausus have been struggling to feed and educate their children. Grace was kind enough to be one of the facilitators. I introduced Grace to all the participants and then the participants introduced themselves one by one. Earlier on, Grace and I had negotiated that she would story her experiences of gender in the common local language, –ciBemba, and then I would interpret for her. Looking very frail but cheerful, she told us her experience and understanding of gender issues from her cultural perspective.

Her opening statement sounded like a quote but it went something like this:

> Women are the principal providers of Zambia's health care. They are the principal suppliers of Zambia's food. They bear and care for Zambia's children. They make, wash and mend Zambia's clothes. They already clean Zambia's homes, collect Zambia's fuel, cook Zambia's food, fetch Zambia's water and look after Zambia's sick.

Grace explained that the socialisation of girls plays a significant role in the conditioning of girls in cultural expectations and behaviour patterns. The socialisation of a girl is a long process, which reaches its climax in the initiation rite. She recalled that, as a young girl, she was expected to help her mother with the housekeeping like sweeping, fetching water, working in the fields and looking after younger children. Although she knew all these chores, she was not fully responsible for them. She was nevertheless instructed that these chores were her responsibility in marriage. It was her duty to serve her husband and make sure her husband was always happy. A girl was instructed not to complain about her work and her service to her husband and the community. At this comment some participant made the following candid observation, "It seems to me that the African culture really promoted, or should I say still promotes the framework for gender inequality, male dominance and power and discriminatory and subjugating gender roles". Another one commented:

> Us women, we live and work in various unpaid, and often unappreciated, levels of domestic work as wives, mothers, daughters, nieces, and sisters. It is us who care for the male family members, young and old, especially when these are sick. We hardly have time for recreation or vacation. That is why, when there is a funeral out of town, in the family, we always desire to go attend as this gives us a 'holiday' and rest from the mundane activities in the home.

There was great laughter followed by similar comments to support this observation. One of the women shouted:

Since most Zambian men cannot take their spouses on holiday, the funeral home
makes an ideal place for holiday. While you mourn the dead and comfort the grieved
family members you have a great time of catching up with family and friends and get
to visit a few friends around the village or town.

Grace went on to say that small girls and boys played at marriage, they built themselves tiny huts, cooked, and sometimes imitated the sexual act. At about the age of ten the two sexes were separated at their games and no sex play was allowed any more. Parents used to betroth their unborn daughters (the betrothal would cease if a son was born) and would marry their daughters to their husbands at puberty. This often meant that girls were married to husbands much older than themselves.

As a girl was growing up, her mother and the older women would keep an eye on her and instruct her to behave properly, obey older people and dress properly. Becoming pregnant before being initiated was thought to be a bad omen. The belief was that the new-born child would attract evil which would result in the destruction of the crops and damage to a family and the community at large. Pre-initiation pregnancy was tantamount to contravening the ancestral law, which stipulated that only after initiation was a girl entitled to bear children and that children could only be born in marriage.

Grace explained that a girl's first menstruation was solemnised by a rite in which she was treated with herbs, ritually separated from fire and brought into contact with it again, and taught the dangers associated with menstruation. The initiation ceremony was observed soon after the first menstruation. The girl was secluded and taught various topics ranging from sex in marriage to relating to relatives and members of the community. This resonates with what White (1962:8) records:

Other instruction given over the period of seclusion is directed to social aspects of
a married woman's life. The girl is enjoined to live harmoniously, and to avoid
jealousy in respect of her husband or her co-wives in a polygamous marriage; she
is warned to get on well with the relatives of her husband; in particular she is
advised that if her father-in-law makes sexual advances to her she must conceal
the fact from her husband.

A girl was socialised to think that she existed for the sake of her husband. She was there to give sexual satisfaction to her husband. It was not important for her to reach orgasm during sexual intercourse.

Grace went on to explain that the seclusion period ranged from three to six months. When a girl reached puberty she was not to have physical contact with her father or any other male species. The wedding ceremony followed soon after the initiation ceremony. Parents of both the girl and the man made the marriage arrangements. Whether the girl agreed or not, she had to marry. In some cases, a small girl would be engaged when very young and when the boy was also young. As they grew up together, they would eventually get married.

4. Marriage and gender

According to Grace, in the Zambian culture, the man *marries* and the woman *gets married*. The understanding is that the man "acquires" a woman and the woman is the "acquired". Consequently this leads to the perception that a wife becomes the property of the man. This notion is reinforced by the expectation that the man pays the bride-price or bride-wealth (Lobola) to the parents of the girl. Marriage was primarily for the perpetuation of the family, with children being central in the whole relationship. Grace strongly stated, "To date most Zambians consider their wives as gardens that need to produce". Commenting on this concept Trobisch (1980:43) says:

> The husband is the bearer of the seed of life; the wife is the soil - the garden. Just as a plant grows out of a seed of grain, so does the child grow out of the man's seed. The body of the mother is just nourishing soil. But the man sows the seed and the substance of the man grows into a child.

The ethical consequences of this concept result in discrimination against women according to Trobisch (1980:44,45). I have summarised and listed them below:

1. The child is regarded as the man's child. The woman simply carries his child. This is the case even where the matriarchal pattern is upheld.
2. Men are more important than women - just as the bearer of the seed is more important than the soil.
3. The bride-wealth connotes that the man has acquired a garden for himself– or rather what grows in that garden. It is like a refund for the reproductive powers which the wife's clan loses.
4. Since a garden cannot choose what seed should be planted in it, in the same manner, in traditional community, the girl had no say in the choice of her husband.
5. A fruitless garden (childless marriage) resulted in divorce or successive or simultaneous polygamy. (In many Zambian cultures a husband would be given to marry a sister or cousin of the wife if the wife was barren – so he would end up with two wives).
6. Just as a man can own several gardens so can a man marry several wives.

A woman without children was regarded as not a real woman. She was viewed as a bad ancestor as she would mark the end of the chain of kinship. Even if it was known that it was not due to the wife being infertile that there were no children in the marriage relationship, it was still the woman who received the blame.

5. The power of culture

Grace's lived experience aroused a lot of questions and discussion among the participants. The participants who wanted to know whether certain rites were still practised today constantly interrupted Grace. She observed that most of the rites were still very alive, especially in the rural areas, and even among some city dwellers who are still very traditional at heart. She was however, quick to acknowledge that the practice of parents finding a husband for the girl was becoming less and less attractive even to rural dwellers. When asked as to whether her husband was expected to assist her with her household chores, Grace expressed surprise at such a question. "No, my husband has his own job roles he has to fulfill as a man and I have mine. Imagine me asking my man to help with dishes? What would other women and men think in the community if they saw him washing the plates? Wouldn't they think that I have secretly given him some juju so he could perform roles of a wife? What would the community say about me? A man is supposed to be a man and doing a woman's job will diminish his image". What Grace was saying here resonates with Foucault's (1979) ideas on docile bodies and normalising judgment. Grace had become almost powerless to patriarchal discourse that was informing her position as a woman. I also recalled the following comment, "When, as is often the case, the society as a whole is male dominated, women's material condition may be dictated by men and of benefit to men…" (Livingstone & Luxton 1989:246). Hence men are engendered to receive the benefits of this conditioning and women are simply the docile bodies for them to use.

"You see, us women are traditionally expected to work harder and longer hours than our husbands because men do not participate in household duties". When queried whether she meant what she said she responded, "What do you expect me do to when there is little or no food to feed my children at home? I have to be proactive, I have to provide some food for my family. Sometimes I have to sell some of the produce from my piece of land to raise some money to pay my children's school fees". I later learned that Grace's piece of land had exhausted soil and that at peak agricultural seasons she was often having difficulty in mobilising labour other than her own. As a woman, Grace is heavily gendered, to her detriment, as she cannot have access to soft loans for fertiliser to produce cash crops for sale so she continues to produce food only to feed her family. Grace and her husband and family are not on any social welfare scheme for the simple reason that such services do not exist in Zambia. Women like Grace have to struggle to fit into one life the activities of a housewife, mother, farmer, water-carrier, wood-gatherer and marketeer.

Following Grace's talk, each participant agreed to put his or her reactions on paper. Below are excerpts of what participants noted.

Male students:

a) I think the plight of women requires an urgent address by the government and the church. Especially as a church, what are we doing in addressing such issues faced by women like Grace?

b) With this increasingly desperate plight of women, it is time for the church to reflect seriously upon the implications of the evangelical call to make preference for the option of the poor women.

c) I think Grace should allow her husband to assist her with household work. The times have changed – it is now normal to see men doing housework. I really want to make her see this point at a personal level.

d) I have seen my wife in Grace. I shall now be there for my wife all the time.

As I read through these comments, I knew for certain that consciousness raising was taking place. Such comments were in sharp contrast to the remarks made at the onset of the research. At the beginning of the research comments such as, "You think this is your chance to tell us off", were made by the male students. But now a different scenario was emerging – a transformative relationship (mutual transformation) was taking place. It is said that a transformative relationship takes place when, "there is the power of empathy and compassion, of delight in others, and strength in the solidarity of listening to others bearing together stories of pain and resistance" (Welch quoted in Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:3). Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:3) further observe, 'Transformation occurs when one feels the pain of another person who is oppressed, examines the different standards of justice, acknowledges ones own pain and finds joy in listening to others…".

Female Students:

a) I hope Grace's experience will assist our husbands to appreciate us more. But I think Grace should share her family burden with her husband.

b) Grace is a nice person but she must not allow cultural expectations of women to run her life. I think the days for a woman's slavery are long gone.

c) Grace should not allow herself to carry the weight of the whole world on her shoulders just because she is a woman. She could die and 'Culture' would continue to live on.

d) I think this calls for the need for women like ourselves to come together and sensitise our communities regarding the discrimination of women. We are surely downtrodden.

In the research proposal it was mentioned, that in negotiating with the participants, letters shall be written to facilitators. The students therefore felt it vital to write letters to Grace. Concerning the importance of therapeutic letters Epston (1994:31) writes: 'But the words in a letter don't fade and disappear the way conversations do; they endure through time and space, bearing witness to the work of therapy and immortalizing it. A client can hold a letter in hand, reading and rereading it days, months and years after the session'. It seems to me that the letters written to Grace were not only therapeutic to her but were more therapeutic to the authors.

The letters below were two of the many letters by the participants to Grace following her storying her experience. The first one was written by a male participant and the second by a female participant.

Dear Grace,

Thank you for coming the other day to share with us your life. I thought you were very brave to stand before a group of men and women and tell us so many things about your growing up and your marriage.

After giving us your talk a number of us students could not stop talking about your difficult circumstances in your marriage and social life. We admired your resilience and tenacity in the midst of all that you are going through.

As a married man I saw my wife through your experiences and could not help but see what I hadn't seen before. I know that I too, as a man, have taken for granted the idea that I am not expected to assist my wife with household duties. While my culture expects me not to, I feel that there is need for me to help my wife in all her work. I hope that this is not just something I am writing about but that I shall put it into practice.

Grace would you permit me to come over with my wife and meet with your husband so I can get to know him better.

God bless you and your family,

Your friend,
Teddius Malunga.

Here now is another letter, this time written to Grace by a female participant.

Dear Grace,

I am a young unmarried woman of 25 years old. I paid particular attention to all that you said when you came to the college. What you said about how a girl was brought up and her expectations in traditional society affected me indeed. I tried to put myself in your shoes but I found them too big for me. You are a very strong woman and mother.

Honestly speaking, I strongly feel that some components of our culture discriminate against us as females. For example, I don't feel for one moment that wives should be treated as properties of their husbands. I certainly would not want to be equated with a house-hold item. As a Christian, I read in the Bible that before God created woman he said, "It is not good for man to be alone, I shall make him a help-mate". God did not say, "I shall make him a property to use".

I just think that our culture promotes the 'horse and rider' relationship in the marriage; it also works against the biblical values and contemporary culture.

I thank you for what I have learnt through you.

Best wishes,
Martha Shabashaba

Upon receipt of the student letters Grace was so moved that she made an impromptu decision to come and meet the students. She spoke to students as they were having lunch, expressing her gratitude for the overwhelming support and understanding she had received from the participants. I was particularly encouraged when she reiterated that some cultural perspectives on gender surely needed to be challenged. She hoped that her girls would grow up in a culture that respects women and treats them as equals.

It seems the letters reinforced the notion that Grace was not the problem but the patriarchal discourse that was acting on her. The letters helped Grace to externalise the problem. She saw that "culture", and not she, was the problem. Lobovits and Freeman (1993:39) stress the need for externalisation by saying: "Externalising discourse deconstructs the oppressive specifications and effects of a problem. Personal agency and collective action can then emerge as powerful forces for change in relation to the undesired and oppressive characteristics of the problem". As Grace bid us all farewell, I couldn't help but think that, if this research so far had made a difference in the life of one woman to the point of impacting on the participants such that they were made to reflect on their dominant knowledges, it was worth all the effort.

Dirk Kotzé (2002:8), reflecting on Foucault's ideas about knowledge and power writes:

> We have to ask each other and ourselves these questions when we reflect on
> the knowledges we participate in and that shape our lives…
> Whose knowledges are these?
> For whose purpose?
> To whose benefit are these knowledges?
> Who is silenced or marginalised by these knowledges?
> Who suffers as a result of these knowledges?

These questions are very fundamental and must all the time be borne in mind by those in positions of knowledge, leadership and authority. Ethical responses to these questions would ensure that those in power are called upon to engage with people in an accountable and continuously reflecting process of their practices and use of power and authority.

6. Pastoral care

Grace's situation raises concern for the urgent need of pastoral care for her and many women in similar situations. In the Zambian way of life, where gender discrimination has been institutionalised, the challenge for the pastoral obligation is to speak against such and work at dismantling these institutionalised gender prejudices. Fundamentally, this calls for society to care one for another in the community. It is not the kind of pastoral care that is simply directed at individuals. I agree with Pattison (1993:89) in discounting pastoral care that is focused on individuals only, because, "to be concerned only about the private and not the public in pastoral care is … a fundamental theological error… human beings are at all points in their lives inextricably bound up with, and formed by social and political groupings". This kind of assertion is also made by Selby (quoted by Pattison 1993: 90):

> To presume to care for other human beings without taking into account the social and political causes of whatever it is they may be experiencing is to confirm them in their distress while pretending to offer healing.

As a Christian leader I submit to the idea that human beings are relational because they are created in the image of a relational God. God is the initiator of community. Our individuality is found through relationship with one another and with God. Hence, a society should not only experience relationship, but experience relationship in order to empower the marginalized.

7. Gender as understood by a working housewife

Although in the research proposal I had indicated that we would only recruit a fulltime woman home maker from a very economically poor location to story her experiences of gender related issues, it was felt, after the encounter with Grace, that there should be a minor shift. The participants felt it necessary to invite a career housewife as well. The reason given for this shift was that the participants wanted to know whether there were any similarities and differences in the way the two women from different social statuses experience gender.

Informed by participatory action research methodology which among other things, "…means sharing in the way research is conceptualised, practiced, and brought to bear on the life-world…" (McTaggart 1997:28), it was easy for us to negotiate together as co-researchers and introduce another facilitator. Regarding this kind of approach Reinharz 1992:181) comments:

> In feminist participatory research, the distinction between the researcher(s) and those on whom the research is done disappears. To achieve an egalitarian relation, the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risk.

We decided to invite Jessie Phiri, a senior manager's personal secretary in one of the leading companies in Ndola and a prominent woman activist. Jessie has been working for more than twelve years and has been married for as long as she has been working. When she came to share her gender experiences with the participants she really looked very confident and well dressed. After all the

formalities of welcoming her, I asked her how she would like the participants to address her. "Just call me Jessie, that will do", she replied, while switching off her cell-phone.

Her introductory remarks included the following:

> I understand my task is, as a working lady and mum, to share with you gender experiences at my work place and may be at home. I am glad my sweet husband is not here (smile) and so I have the freedom to talk to you without decoding messages on his face if he were here. Not that he would mind me telling my story anyway. I would like you please to interrupt me as I talk because I would that we were as interactive as possible.

8. Gender issues at work

Jessie narrated how, as a young girl growing up in the city, she would have her grandmother come from the village to visit her parents. Her grandmother would often educate her as regards the role of the woman in the home and society. She had internalised the concept that, as a woman, her role was to take care of her husband and the children while the husband would be the breadwinner. This notion is highlighted in this quote:

> Perhaps the most pervasive [gender] stereotype is the belief that a man's main responsibility is to go out to work and a woman's is to look after her family. One consequence of this belief is that a working man is seen as the breadwinner and a woman as merely working for 'pin money'. This view may also be used as a reason for undervaluing the contribution of women workers, for justifying lower pay for women, and for regarding men's careers as being of greater importance than women's...

(Archer & Llyod 1984:242)

"Cultural expectations of a woman's role still influence the way men relate to women at work", Jessie noted. "Even though, since the sixties, many women have begun to enter highly paid employment due to the opening of the University of Zambia, many men find it difficult to accept the fact that women are equally capable of performing as well as men, if not even better". She further observed that, because women are numerically a minority at work, they are both isolated and highly visible. For example, during meal times in the canteens, most men would not want to sit at the same table with these women in middle management. She thinks this is due to the fact that most men feel threatened by these women. In order to show their male-dominance the "boys" (as Jessie sometimes referred to the men) would resort to using sexually antagonistic language (even though such language is against company policy). For instance, the men would nearly always use terms for sexual intercourse, such as the "f" word, when angry and sometimes simply as they conversed around the table while having a meal. These scenarios have prompted the women to share the same table with other women to provide support and a hospitable environment for one another.

When Jessie and her friends became aware that they were being treated without the respect they deserved, they developed a spirit of solidarity and mutuality. Their solidarity motivated them to act collectively to remove gender-based biases. Their solidarity helped Jessie and her workmates to question and criticize the legitimacy of the men's conduct at work.

The following reflection is typical of what was taking place at Jessie's work place:

> On an everyday level women want to go out and earn a living, to become independent and self-supporting, and often face sexual harassment and verbal abuse which is demeaning to any self-respecting woman. Yet many women daily take that risk … [T]his realisation has shaped a threefold approach to promoting the aims of feminism: resistance to societal prescriptions which are harmful to the body and mind of women, solidarity with those sharing the same predicament, … and the creation of a community of equals.
>
> (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:30,31)

9. Sexual harassment

Jessie further informed the participants that women bosses who are disliked by fellow colleagues are usually accused of performing sexual favours for their superiors in order to gain promotion. "If you are a woman, no promotion will come your way on merit as far as the boys are concerned. It's always said that you must have sold yourself to the promoting authorities. However, when a male employee is promoted, no dirty talk is heard because it is expected that a male employee deserves it anyway". At this point, Jessie challenged the participants to think of hard working female members in their families, communities, and in the nation and who, as a result of applying themselves to their jobs/businesses, have become successful. A list of names came up to the delight of all the participants.

However, Jessie was quick to admit that she knew of cases of female employees in her company and other companies who had been, or were being, sexually harassed. She had come with a quote which defined sexual harassment as, "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours or other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive working environment". She revealed to us that there were two approaches to sexual harassment namely; 'quid pro quo' and 'hostile environment'. The former has to do with sexual harassment occurring when there is a demand by a supervisor -man or woman - directed to a subordinate, who may be man or woman, that the subordinate grant the supervisor sexual favours as a condition of retention of employment benefits, wage increases, promotions, placement, or the job itself. Hostile environment approach, sexual harassment could be defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours or other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive working environment."

Isherwood and McEwan (1993:31) highlight the danger of rape that working women daily face when they leave their homes to go to their places of work. They state, "Rape and especially the fear of rape, powerfully reinforces the injunction against leaving the house. Rape, thus, is perceived not to be a horrible crime and experience, but a punishment on those who have ventured out, who have been disobedient and do not deserve any better". The New Dictionary of Christian ethics and pastoral theology (1995:783) states:

> [S]exual harassment depends on the idea that one person has the right to impose his sexuality on another, regardless of that other person's wishes. It is inherently violent, and in all its forms debases and dehumanises the victim and asserts the dominance of the attacker. It can inflict physical and/or psychological, emotional and spiritual injury.

Jessie observed that the unfortunate development in most working places was that sexual harassment against women is not recognised as such by either employees or employers. On the contrary when it is present it is simply viewed as a 'cultural' or 'natural' way in which adults establish relationships. Jessie revealed labour laws that oblige employers to protect their employees from verbal and physical abuse. However, this is not reinforced as the people to do so are men and only extreme cases of sexual harassment attract prosecution. At this point two participants narrated stories of their female relatives who had been sexually harassed at their places of work. Not until, at this workshop, did the participants learn that it was an offence for any individual to be harassed in this way. They wished they had known earlier so they could have prosecuted their relatives' bosses for sexual harassment. This new awareness was an indication that consciousness raising was taking place.

Let me at this point mention that sexual harassment is a social construction. This does not mean that I approve of sexual harassment. The point I am trying to make is that what constitutes sexual harassment in one culture/community may not necessarily be the same in another. For example, traditionally, among many tribes in Zambia it is acceptable for the man to fondle the breasts of his wife's young sisters as they are regarded as heirs to their sister's marriage. Working from the premise that realities are socially constructed and that realities are constituted through language (Freedman & Combs 1996) we can begin to appreciate why some people do not think of sexual harassment in the way others do but would rather refer to it as a 'cultural' or 'natural' way in which adults establish relationships.

10. Employment and gender

The gender composition of the employed workforce in Zambia today has changed dramatically with more and more married women participating in working class jobs. When asked about what she thought of the highly upheld traditional view that a woman should simply confine herself to the home-maker role, Jessie challenged the participants that there is a big shift culturally from this traditional view about the role of women in society. "We can no longer bury our heads in the sand and suffer for

the sake of culture. Think about what is happening these days. So many men have been retrenched or have lost their jobs due to companies going into liquidation because of free-market global capitalism. These retrenched workers have had to depend on their working spouses (for some of them) as sole breadwinners for the families. Should we go to these working mothers and ask them to quit their jobs because culture tells them to stay at home and take care of the family? How many of you men would ask your wife to stop working if you were in that situation?" She went on to say that inclusion of married women in paid employment should cause both men and women to rethink the mother-wife-homemaker role as the taken for granted female gender identity in society. She noted that it was unfortunate that in some families when the wife has become the bread-winner, husbands become jealous and this often leads to violence.

One of the participants also revealed that she has aunts whose husbands have been retrenched. These aunts have had to go into buying and selling. One of them is involved in cross-border trading. She goes to Tanzania to purchase plastic kitchenware, which she resells in Zambia at a good profit. This development, she observed, has released some women from the traditionally held view that women ought only to be home-makers. These aunts' incomes have made them become the major income earners in their families. Indeed in Zambia, where the economy is poor, one can observe that more and more women are becoming breadwinners as they involve themselves in various forms of income earning projects. "This is something that the men must appreciate", Jessie observed.

Wishing to challenge the taken-for-grantedness discourses, as well as desiring the participants to reflect on who benefits from dominant discourses, I posed two questions: "Who made the rule that a woman's place in the home should be only that of home-maker?" There was a moment of silence and then a chorus of answers started coming up. "God", "Ancestors", "Women", "Men", "I don't know". After some discussion around these suggested answers, it was found that the majority thought it was the men who came up with this idea. Someone pointed out that it could have been workable in the Stone Age when men went hunting and the women looked after the family, "but we are now in the space age and we need to adjust and redefine the sex roles". I then posed a second question: "Who benefits from this rule?" "Men", came a quick response from almost all the participants. Jessie asked the participants what their answer suggested. There was a general agreement that it was up to the women themselves to define their roles both in the home and workplace. Women as women are discursively constituted as non-agents – an agent could be defined as someone who is able to speak with authority (Davies 1991:51). Davies (1991:51) further states:

> Agency is never freedom from the discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognise that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted. It is the freedom to recognise multiple readings such that no discursive practice, or positioning within it by powerful others, can capture and control one's identity.

Women, therefore can be, and need to be, agentic even as they participate in the various discursive practices.

Someone in the group suggested that the women should be allowed to determine their roles in collaboration with their male folk – a suggestion that was agreeable to almost all the participants. One male participant suggested that the issue of gender and work should not be about women only. It is about how a society can maximise its productivity and wellbeing of the citizens, both men and women in a context of justice and equity.

Following this discussion with Jessie, and in collaboration with the participants, Jessie suggested that the students be divided into groups so they could examine how gender discrimination presents itself in specific work situations.

11. Participants' Research Feedback on Employment

Participants were divided into four groups and given materials to read, investigate, and conduct free-range interviews with women in employment on how women are discriminated against at their places of work. They were to carry out this research over a period of three weeks. Below is a summary of their findings:

Group one looked at the issue of employment in general among women:

1. Because of the poor Zambian economy, some women prefer to have a job even under exploitative conditions as they have no choice.
2. Some women workers in micro-businesses are not aware of their rights and lack professional support to ensure these rights are given to them.
3. Women experience tension as they seek to balance domestic responsibilities with work at their working places. These tensions and struggles affect their chances of achieving equal access and opportunities to work.
4. Even though both men and women have the right to employment, this right is simply on paper as employers generally have a bias toward employing males.
5. Cultural norms promote gender discrimination in job categories. For example, only women are expected to work as secretaries and it is assumed that a woman cannot work as a carpenter or truck driver. These sexual sterotypes promote job sexual roles.

Group two was specifically asked to research discriminatory issues among female domestic workers. Listed below are their findings:

1. Domestic workers (in Zambia these are mainly women) enjoy fewer rights than other workers because there are no domestic working conditions enshrined at a national level.

2. Because of the nature of domestic work, which often includes cleaning and cooking or looking after young children, it is often undervalued. Thus, it does not attract national legislation. Because no law or policy protects these workers, they are often exploited. We found out that most employers of domestic workers have no written agreement or contract with their employees.

3. Domestic workers are often paid partly in kind and partly in hard cash.

4. In most cases, the employees revealed, their workdays are open, consequently leaving them with no time for personal development, rest and for family time.

5. Members of the household abuse their position by sexually harassing the domestic worker.[2]

6. Domestic workers would not find it easy to organise labour unions or express solidarity because their mobility is restricted and they are isolated in the homes.

The third and last group researched on "Pregnancy and postnatal discrimination among working mothers". Below are their findings:

1. Because the Zambian social security system has put measures in place to protect women workers in their pre and postnatal periods, male bosses tend to cite other reasons whenever they fire a pregnant employee.

2. In Zambia, due to low job opportunities, some pregnant workers are so afraid of losing their jobs that they prefer not to take long maternity leave. They simply stop working shortly before delivery and then return to work shortly afterwards.

3. Some employers view pregnancy as an obstacle to company production so they tend to limit access to strategic jobs to men only. This may explain why women are rarely promoted. Some women interviewed felt that, in order to avoid this bias, paternity and maternity leave should be instituted and implemented.

4. Babies are part of the life of a lactating working mother. In spite of this, the mother has to wait until the end of her workday to breastfeed her baby. Women felt that it would be proper if a place for breastfeeding was made available at their work place and specialised personnel were available to attend to babies while lactating mothers worked.

5. Employers should view pregnancy and maternity responsibilities as consequences of procreation. If it is these babies, who in years to come will run these economies, employers might as well pay particular attention now to babies and their mothers.

I was really overwhelmed by the participatory nature of this research and the enthusiasm that the students showed in both the interview process as well as in the presentation of their findings to their fellow students. During the presentation there were a number of comments that students made on their findings. I took particularly note of two. The first was, " I want to thank my fellow participants, especially the group that researched on domestic workers. We have a servant in our house back home

and we have never treated her with the respect she deserves. We have been unfair to her in many ways". Another stated, "After listening to all these reports, I want to challenge all of us, as church leaders, to get involved in politics so we can influence the abolishing of laws that discriminate against our women. Notice I have deliberately said *our* women because we men cannot claim to be truly human if we view women as *them.* We are intrinsically connected with them". It was refreshing to note that the students were challenging the dominant patriarchal discourse and had embraced gender equality and no longer perceived women and men according to traditional stereotypes.

As can be observed in the above research process, Jessie exhibited a higher level of gender consciousness than Grace. I became curious at this and decided to investigate why.

12. Gender Consciousness among working women

According to Gurin (1987: 167) women in the work force exhibit higher levels of gender consciousness than do homemakers. As already observed, a look at Grace and Jessie's stories reveals that Grace was not as gender conscious as Jessie. Even among the participants it was noticed that the young women who had been through high school and those women who were in employment were much more conscious of gender discrimination. It was noticeable that wives of students (these were participants too) were less gender conscious. These women had little education.

Yet, this gender consciousness on the part of the professional women may work against them. In writing about gender consciousness among professional women Hochschild (1974:194) highlights a rather interesting development. He states that, as a professional woman faces a variety of obstacles in her life on the fringes of male dominated professions, in trying to combine the two roles, i.e. as a woman and as a professional, she may be made to feel that these two are contradictory. This would happen in that the woman feels the pressure from the males and hence she disaffiliates herself from other women as she is forced to prove herself different from the negative stereotype of others like her. Hochschild (1974:194) refers to this process as "de-feminisation". Succumbing to this pressure leads to women's isolation and incapacity to stand in solidarity with other women at work and consequently limits collective political and social action for gender equality.

13. Conclusion

In this chapter I looked at gender issues in traditional culture, and work culture. As can be deduced from the participants' and facilitators' conversations and experiences there is a need to bring greater justice and parity, and assure non discrimination in cultural social relations, in economics and in the work force. Institutionalised gender biases are deeply embedded in work cultures and practices, management systems and bureaucratic structures in many a working place. Women, like men, are

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[2] The South African 'Drum' Magazine of February 20 2003 (pp 10-11) carried a very sad story of a maid who for ten days was at the mercy

creative and contributory agents and beneficiaries of change and development. The men should encourage the development and unleashing of women's potential and the exploitation of women must be guarded against. Culture must constitute an environment where men and women enjoy the same good conditions and non-discriminatory practices in all areas of life.

of her employer as a sex slave.

Chapter 5

Gender and Church Culture

1. Introduction

This chapter shall demonstrate that gender discrimination is alive and active in the Church. Stories as told by the facilitator and participants as well as biblical hermeneutics and the experience of others shall stand to illustrate the presence of gender bias among the community of faith. The chapter shall also explore ways and means as to how and why gender discrimination need be addressed and avoided in the Church. Cathy Stubing was invited to conduct the workshop on the subject.

2. Cathy's Story

The facilitator for this workshop was Dr. Cathy Stubing, a Harvard University graduate in Human Development and now lecturing at the Theological College of Central Africa (TCCA). Cathy introduced herself as one brought up in a strict Christian family. She revealed:

> My parents were committed believers and attended a very strict church with lots of rules on do's and don'ts. Women were not permitted to speak or take an active role in church. They were mainly in the background: teaching Sunday school classes and preparing tea after the service etc. As a result, I grew up with an impression that women had nothing worthwhile to contribute to the church and even the community at large. I was very timid and lacked confidence right through to high school and university. This continued until I met a lovely Christian young man when I was doing my undergraduate degree. He came from a good church background where women took an active role and some were even in Church leadership. It was through the encouragement of this man, who is now my husband, that I developed confidence and I was awakened to the fact that I had a lot to contribute to the church and society. In fact my husband, Richard, encouraged me to pursue my post-graduate studies at Harvard while he took care of our children. How I wish there would be more men like him. I really thank God for my man.

Cathy pointed out that, in her ministry, she has come across many women who, as a result of patriarchal biblical hermeneutics, have had difficulties and inhibitions when it came to using their gifts and abilities in public ministry. As a result of this church discrimination against women, Cathy has devoted long hours to studying biblical texts that complementarians (Grenz & Kjesbo1995:19) use to suppress women and spends her time in running workshops in churches and para-church organisations as well as women's NGOs on issues of Gender from a biblical perspective. Complementarians are those who are convinced that women can properly serve only in supportive roles. Cathy is informed by an egalitarian view (those who believe that all facets of ministry ought to be open to women) (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995:19).

This workshop was highly anticipated as a few of the students come from churches where women are not encouraged to play an active public role in church. Some of the students have never really had an opportunity to examine the biblical texts on women the way Cathy understood and interpreted them. One of the students interrupted Cathy and said:

> I am glad that today I have a chance to ask and listen to this subject that for years has troubled me. In our church, the pastor and elders do not give us an opportunity to pose questions on this subject, even outside the church Bible study programme. If one was to challenge my leaders on the subject of women in the Bible, they would perceive this as an act of disobedience to the Scriptures and to the church doctrine.

Another student remarked, "My leaders feel very uncomfortable when questioned about the role of women in the church". A couple of students were very particular about the role of women. They came from a strict church background that held conservative views on ministry of women.

3. Complementarian & Egalitarian Views

Cathy explained that the main texts used to understand and determine the role of women in the church are 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. She outlined the two schools of thought based on these texts. First there is the 'Complementarian View' or the 'Traditional interpretation'. Cathy explained that most of the debate on the ministry and position of women in the church is fuelled by the understanding and interpretation of the texts cited above, although there may be a few others but these are not as significant as the two above. Cathy observed:

> Traditionally Christianity has held, until recently, to an understanding of 1 Tim. 2:11-15 that does not examine historical context and that even denies the relevance of historical context, and, on that basis, traditionalists have prohibited women from exercising "leadership roles" in their public worship. This prohibition has resulted in the almost complete silencing of women in public worship services.

This resonates with the following statement (although made in the context of church hierarchy but the principal of discriminating against the women remains the main concern):

> When women reflect on the hierarchical model of the church, they remark most often that the gifts and charisms of women remain unwanted; that though they are in posts of responsibility, women have no authority; that they are placed under too much control or have too little choice; that there is no climate for trust.

> (Isherwood & McEwan 1993:85)

This kind of discrimination against women rightly attracts the engaging of feminist pastoral practice, which seeks "justice, peace, healing and wholeness for all in partnership" (Ackerman 1991:96). According to Isherwood and McEwan (1993: 61 & 87), this could be achieved by employing the following measures:

> • sharing a vision of a just and participatory system of focussing on local needs;
> • providing ways of mass participation;
> • empowering men and women to become agents in creating a more just society;
> • questioning assumptions on the role of women held by societies and churches and
> • placing reflection on theology in the context of women's lives in the present practice of theology and its interpretation.

Cathy went on to say:

> Women have made a major contribution to the Christian faith. For example, we sing songs composed by women, we enjoy and profit from articles and books written by women and we benefit from their contributions and insights at Bible

study sessions. They are the ones holding the fort when it comes to benevolent ministry i.e. orphanages, church feeding programmes etc. I am sure you would agree with me that for the first time in history, women in our culture are generally as educated as men, and as trained for responsible leadership in society.

Then Cathy went on to explain the second view known as the "Egalitarian View". She pointed out that Paul was concerned with the manner and conduct of worship in both the Roman and Corinthian situations. The apostle is addressing the same Greco-Roman community in a particular historical context. She revealed the following interpretation of these texts:

Firstly, that in 1 Tim. 2:9-15 especially verse 11 (…Let a woman learn in silence with all submission) the main focus here was not to urge the church to teach women, but described the manner in which learning was to occur. Women were to learn in "silence". The Greek word is *hêsychia*. This word does not entail 'not speaking' (same word is used in 1 Tim. 2:2; compare 2 Thess. 3:12). The word implies respect or lack of disagreement. In fact the rabbis and the early church fathers deemed quietness appropriate for their students, wise persons and leaders (Spencer 1985:77-80). Spencer (1985:77) stresses the significance of this term by writing: "Consequently, when Paul commands that women learn in silence, he is commanding them to be students who respect and affirm their teacher's convictions"

Secondly, complementarians find verse 12 "And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence"- a permanent apostolic prohibition preventing all women from being teachers of the church. An egalitarian argument is that on the basis of his choice of the present active indicative (epitrepô) rather than the imperative, Paul is not voicing a timeless command, but a temporary directive applicable to a specific situation: In other words Paul is saying "I am not presently allowing". The general use of this Greek verb in the entire Bible involves a timeless and specific prohibition (Tows 1983:84).

Cathy went on to say that it should therefore be understood that the problem was not women teaching in general (Tit 2:3-4), or even women teaching men (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14 -15), but that certain women were putting themselves in the position of teachers before they had been properly taught (1 Tim 1:7). Cathy stated:

> It is urged that the lifting of this ban is indicated by Paul's instruction to Timothy to entrust sound doctrine to persons who in turn could teach others. Like other texts in which the apostle admonishes Christians to teach each other (1 Cor 14:26; Col 3:16; cf. Heb 5:12), he gives no hint that the teaching is to carry gender restrictions. This is proved in the manner in which Paul uses the gender-inclusive Greek term *anthrôpos* rather than the specifically male word *ançr*.

Furthermore, Cathy went on to explain that what Paul writes to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 14:33-35) was to keep it respectable at that time. He urges Christian women of the church in Corinth to be consistent with contemporary standards of respectability, and to quit disrupting worship by asking

irrelevant and pointless questions out loud, the kinds of questions only the uneducated would ask, questions that waste everyone's time. In the Greco-Roman world it was highly detestable to challenge speakers without first understanding their point. The apostle thus makes it clear in context that he is concerned with the impressions their gatherings create on outsiders (1 Cor. 14:23). His main concern is that it is disgraceful, given the social culture of the day, for a woman to disrupt their public assemblies in this manner. Thus Paul is not establishing a blueprint for church structure (Anderson 1996:110). The participants found Cathy's lecture very interesting and revealing. One of the male participants commented:

> If only all our church leaders would have this kind of knowledge that we have acquired from this lecture, our churches would grow and impact the communities since women would be given opportunities to exercise their God given gifts and abilities in the church and the community.

4. A brief summary of women in the Bible & Church history

It is important to note that this summary presents the work that was done by the participants and is therefore not representative of a thorough analysis of the discourse of women in the Bible and church history.

Following Cathy's lecture, the students were asked to research the status of women in the Old Testament. They were asked to come up with possible answers to the following questions: What was the status of women in the Hebrew community? Does the Old Testament advance the teaching or the precept that women cannot be leaders on gender grounds? In keeping with the participatory nature of this research, it was important that the students conduct the research for themselves "in the data collection and analysis" (Tandon quoted by McTaggart 1997:29). Hence, in the following section, I will provide a brief summary of the status and position of women in the Bible and church history as researched by the students and myself. Let me begin with what we found out as regards the status and position of women in the Old Testament.

4.1 The Old Testament

Together with the students we found out that reading through the Old Testament one clearly sees that the patriarchal discourse was very much at play within the Israelite community. Although this was the case, the women were not completely excluded from positions of leadership. Patriarchy determined family and tribal identity. For instance, the male was the progenitor and the woman was the child bearer. This understanding disadvantaged the woman. The patriarchal family structure ensured male dominance of public life among the Israelites. A summary of the status of the women in Hebrew community is stated below:

> The place of women in Israelite society was narrowly circumscribed by law and custom. An adult woman was a minor in the eyes of the law and lived under the

authority of her nearest male relative. Even her vows to God could be cancelled by her father or husband (Num 30:3-16). Her husband could divorce her (Deut 24:1-4) or take another wife (Ex 21:10; Deut 21:15-17), but she could not divorce him. She was subject to a terrible ordeal if her husband even suspected her of unfaithfulness (Num 5:11-31). She could inherit the family lands only if there were no male heirs, but she could only marry within her own clan because the land would then pass to her husband (Num 27:1-11; 36:1-13)

(Scalise 1986: 8,9)

Not withstanding this position of women, there are those who often exercised great influence in public life. Such examples include Miriam and Deborah. Miriam, together with her siblings Moses and Aaron, was chosen to lead Israel out of Egypt. The Bible refers to her as a prophet, she demonstrated this role as she led the Israelite women into celebration after crossing the Red Sea. (Ex 15:20-21). In Numbers 12: 1-15, as a leader she and Aaron challenged fellow leader Moses on his choice of a wife. Deborah (Judges 4 to 5) served as the highest leader of her people. She combined the offices of prophet and judge and wife. As a judge Deborah conducted court just as Moses had done earlier (Judges 4:5 & Exodus 18:13). As a judge Deborah performed political and spiritual functions. She also mapped out the plans for the military attack on the Canaanites. Of Deborah's ministry Campbell (1993:8) has written:

Deborah's prophet/judgeship was not a private little cottage industry being practiced out of her home. In view of the text there can be little doubt that Deborah was the recognized, appointed leader/judge of the Israelites at that time. I mention this fairly obvious fact only because of the persistent rejection or downplaying of Deborah's authority by traditional patriarchists: Deborah does not fit into their male "headship" theory of God's economy.

The students observed that there were other female prophets. These are referred to in such biblical texts as Ezekiel 13:17-24; Nehemiah 6:14; Isaiah 8:3; and 2 Kings 22. The reference in 2 Kings 22 is about Hulda, whom King Josiah consulted (even though there were male prophets) in order to hear a prophetic word after discovering the Book of the Law. A quick survey of the Old Testament revealed that, although males dominated public life, it was also accepted that God had not looked down on the contributions of women at all levels of public life.

Having done some research on the status and position of women in the Old Testament, we proceeded to do the same in the New Testament. As can be seen from our findings below, we discovered that the New Testament revolutionised the status of women in public life.

4.2 The New Testament

We started off by examining Jesus' attitude to women. An examination of Christ and women showed that Jesus' action and attitude toward women was non-discriminatory. Within the existing Judaic and ancient Near Eastern cultures Jesus "emerged as a unique, even a radical reformer of the widely held attitude toward women and their role in society" (Witherington III 1984:126). We discovered that at the time of Christ, women were gravely disregarded and discriminated against. The list below outlines the status of women then:

· the Greek community held the view that women existed for two main purposes: to produce sons for their husbands and to provide sexual pleasures to men even though many women in this culture had become professionals in various careers (Pomeroy 1975: 93-148).

· Roman women played a more public role than that of Greek women. They were involved in commerce and politics although the general philosophy was that a woman lived under male authority, whether that of a husband or father (MacDonald 1990:223).

· Jewish Rabbis considered women as a source of sin and death in the world. They believed that women were more sensual and less rational than men and therefore considered women as inferior and as examples of undesirable traits (Hurley 1981:23) This accounts for the popular Jewish prayer, "Blessed art thou … who has not made me a woman".

Upon examining biblical texts, we discovered that Jesus' attitude to women ran contrary to all the above views. Jesus saw people, whether female or male as individual persons. He freely associated with women even those who were ritually unclean (Mat. 9: 18-26) or those whose morals were condemned (Luke 7:36-50). Unlike Rabbis who could not teach women, Jesus taught them and he let them minister to his physical needs (Mt. 27:55-56; Mk 15:40,41). He chose women to be the first evangelists to announce his resurrection (Mat. 28: 1-10).

4.3 The Early Church

The early Church community was to exemplify the teachings of Christ in all their life and relationships. As already demonstrated, Jesus radically altered the position of women, elevating them to partners with men. Witheringston III (1984:147) writes:

> In the post-Easter community we find women assuming a greater variety of roles some of which were specifically of a religious nature (e.g. the prophetess of Acts 21:9), and some of which would have been forbidden to a Jewish woman (e.g. being a teacher of men in Acts 18:24-26)

A survey of the New Testament presents women as full participants in the church from its founding. They were fully active and present in the activities of the community of faith and they fully shared in the endowment of the Spirit for public ministry and service (Acts 1:4; 2:16-17; 16:13,40; John 4:27-30,39-42).

5. Some reflections of the participants

Let me now bring in some selected voices of the participants as they researched and reflected on this subject. One of them remarked:

> I have never realized before now just how much women contributed to the growth of the early church. I have discovered that without their contribution the church would not have been what it was. I am thinking of preaching a sermon on "Women's contribution in the early church"

"Why don't we hear sermons about these women in our churches?" a man asked. A female student quickly replied, "How can we hear sermons about women when all the preaching and teaching in the main services in our churches is done by men. What do you expect?" Another commented:

> I see there is a desperate need for leaders in our churches to study the scriptures extensively and exhibit a genuine willingness to discern God's will whatever it may be and be led by it! We need to study the whole Bible, not just selected passages such as 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2. From what Cathy said, and from my research, I think the interpretation of the biblical texts depends upon a proper biblical and historical understanding of the scriptures. It is certainly important that those of us interested in matters of faith and gender be equipping ourselves to rightly understand and interpret scripture.

Yet another student commented:

> I must admit, I was ready to tear Cathy apart at the beginning of the workshop but half way through, as she explained the texts from a historical perspective, and now, after my research, I realise how little I know about the Bible and that I needed to work on my biblical hermeneutics.

Nevertheless, one complementarian was not fully convinced and said that he would need to do further research to prove whether Cathy's interpretation was the correct one. The other students cynically challenged him to provide his evidence to them once he has concluded his research.

At this stage, it seemed clear to me that this participatory action research was beginning to raise gender consciousness as well as emancipating the participants from the dominant gender discourse. I stand with Reinharz (1992:185) who says, "[t]he most effective emancipatory approaches are…negotiation of the interpretation…". Reinharz (1992:185) also quotes Lather in stressing the view that, for change and conscious raising to occur, the research must be designed in such a way that people are encouraged to self-reflect and develop a deeper understanding of their lived realities.

Having established the status and position of women in both New and Old Testament times, it was necessary for the group to examine the same as regards the situation in their churches in Zambia.

6. Women in the church of tomorrow in Zambia

The students and the facilitators observed that, if the church in Zambia is serious about fulfilling its

God given mission, then it needs seriously to address the issue of gender in its ranks. There was a consensus that future decisions on matters of faith and gender depend upon the resolution of certain basic questions and principles. The first set of questions they would like to ask themselves and the church in Zambia is the following:

> When it comes to issues of faith and gender, is it really possible to hold a guaranteed "safe position"? Do we sometimes feel that if we hold to positions traditionally held, we are at least doing the safe or right thing in the eyes of God? But if we are unnecessarily (just for the sake of our tradition) holding to a position that now hinders the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 9:12, 19-23), we are keeping people from seeing God's good news and thereby, shutting the Kingdom of Heaven in their faces (Matt. 23:13). Would we not then be answerable to God for doing what we consider to be the safe thing?

The group also asked:

> If by clinging to traditional positions, women are prevented from exercising their God-given talents, shouldn't God then hold men accountable for that? We must always bear in mind that today women are generally as educated as men and as trained for responsible leadership in society. There are instances where a woman may be more educated, knowledgeable and gifted than all the men. If men refuse to learn from such women purely on the basis of gender, then they are missing out on the blessings of God that should have come through the women.

Expanding on their question the group also wondered, "What do we expect women to do with such talents and what message are we communicating to our children?" Subscribing to a traditionalist position in this generation entails that we tell women to accept restrictive and subordinate roles although they now have education and training for leadership equivalent to men's. The group challenged gender restrictions by asking and stating the following:

> Do men really understand the consequences and implications of this? Just how many people would be hindered from believing as a result of taking this position? From a sociological, spiritual, and biblical perspective is this really profitable? While it is true that fundamental Christian doctrines should not be determined by negative secular responses with regard to teaching on the issue of female subordination, it is not in any way immoral to hold a different view from traditionalists.

The second set of questions the group wondered about was:

> Isn't the traditional view of women contributing to evils against women such as rape, domestic violence, verbal abuse, and various forms of gender condescension and disrespect? Shouldn't the church take the blame for these matters when non-religious men draw on the church's authority to assert a God-given right to dominate and thereby abuse women? What is the way forward for the church in terms of setting an example for gender equality?

 The group also asked:

In assuming that gender distinctiveness argues for certain gender-distinctive roles, aren't those roles best understood as norms still subject to individual aptitude and immediate context rather than rigid restrictions that allow no exceptions? Is it not the very gender distinctiveness of women (that usually they are more gently nurturing) that makes it so spiritually important that their voices be heard by men and women in our churches?

Lastly the group wondered:

Does the fulfilment and success of male leadership depend on the subordination of women? What then makes men to be so preoccupied with female subordination in the church?"

The participants encouraged themselves to have these sets of questions raised in various church conferences, gatherings and church publications. The group then proceeded to examine the consequences of engendering the Christian message. A summary of their observations is represented below.

7. The Consequences of engendering the Gospel

"The issue of gender is now affecting how folk respond to the gospel", some participants observed. Increasing numbers of people must first be persuaded that on matters of faith and gender, what we are saying and practising as a church is, in fact, just, honest, and truly consistent with the liberating gospel of Jesus. One of the female students observed:

In my church of about 500 people two thirds of the members are women and yet men continue to make decisions that affect women negatively – their decisions are oppressive to women. If the gospel of Christ is about liberation, how can outsiders take us seriously if the church oppresses women? In regard to the oppression of women I really think that religion is one of the most oppressive structures in our world today. Sad to say.

This resonates with the observation made by Sullerot (1971: 233) concerning gender in African churches:

A visitor from another planet would find it paradoxical that while the majority of the Churchgoers are women, religious doctrines certainly do not value the female sex very highly, or at least have been misinterpreted over the centuries to give women a subordinate role in religious practices. They have been debarred from conducting religious services and administering sacraments. In the main line churches currently a number of women are now rejecting the self-effacement involved in this definition of their religious roles.

A male student added:

I do not know why the church in Zambia is scared of addressing gender issues within its ranks openly and honestly. While in academic, professional, and socio-

political circles gender is being discussed, the Church shies away from addressing it. That is why I think we need to have workshops like this one in churches to talk about this issue. If the church is to be taken seriously by its critics and emerge as a body that is there to liberate people both spiritually and otherwise, gender issues must be at the top of its agenda. Personally, I feel that the current church as it is, is a creation of males and our women feel like aliens.

This sentiment was applauded by the participants. Most of the participants felt that it would be helpful for all the participants to fully appreciate the existence of gender discrimination if we focused for a moment on how oppression of women presents itself in the church. One of the students had made a comment to the effect that the non-participation of women in critical church ministries and in decision-making processes has led to the oppression of women. It is with this in mind that Kotzé and Kotzé (2001: 6,7) advocate for a spirituality or theology that is participatory as this, "not only calls for a sensitivity to the suffering of marginalized people in general, but especially for 'a sensitivity to the practical consequences that theological perspectives and belief perspectives might have'" (Rossouw quoted by Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:6,7).

8. Oppression of Women

Ndenda (s.a.:2) defines oppression as:

[t]he imposition of the will of a certain person or group upon another person or group which may take the form of structural (repressive cultural customs) or more personalized forms of oppression.

She further observes that oppression can be expressed in the forms of externalised and internalised oppression. Externalised oppression is manifested through androcentrism, exclusion and subjection. Androcentrism is the habit of thinking about the world, ourselves and all that is in the world from the male perspective. It drowns or silences the women' s voices and perceptions by a continual outpouring of male perceptions into the world.

Ndenda (s.a.: 2,3) points out that androcentrism is a male centred worldview, which devalues or excludes female perceptions, critique and contributions. It is also seen in instances where women are not permitted to define themselves or their roles but simply discover that they have been defined and categorized by others. So they become the silent other. Women are then perceived as non-men, those who have neither the status nor the roles of men. Very often women are defined in terms of their relationships with other people.

The participants agreed with Ndenda (s.a.:2) that women may be oppressed through exclusion, which means restriction to certain areas and from certain responsibilities for instance, church government. The main area of exclusion has been that women are prevented from occupying positions of leadership, power and authority or from participating in significant ecclesiastical roles. This means that men have

controlled the access to the decision-making sectors. In relation to the church, women can attend church services, raise money, teach children but they cannot themselves be ordained or serve in positions of leadership. The participants also noted that another form of oppression is that of subjection which also has cultural forms. One female participant concluded that all forms of oppression of women in the church have one thing in common; they are imposed by men serving in leadership roles in the church. Hence, all forms of oppression of women in the church can be encompassed under the name of patriarchy. Given that Zambian culture is patriarchal, it is difficult for male church members to view women and men as equal partners. Both men and women perpetuate this form of oppression. Hence, unconsciously, in many Zambian churches it has remained as the norm.

Participants further observed that internalised oppression is devious and women themselves internalise it. In religion and other areas they become what Ndenda (s.a..:3) refers to as "compliant victims". Such women are difficult to liberate because they first need to be convinced, since they have accepted the order and systems of the powerful. These women, "actively participate in the performance of stories that they find unhelpful, unsatisfying, and dead-ended" (Freedman & Combs 1996:39). Internalised oppression becomes something of a vicious circle since, once women accept the judgements of androcentrism or patriarchy, they are unable to critique it. Patriarchy gives men power to abuse women and this power is taken for granted as it is exercised under the guise of leadership, care and protection to such an extent that the abuse is normalised. Foucault (1979) refers to this as "normalising judgement". The oppressed or abused women are socialised to believe that they cannot do without men because they need men to protect and guide them, leaving them either to resist or to be "trapped in dangerous situations because the men they depend on are abusive" (Poling 1991:105).

The above observations on the oppression of women in the church aroused an interest among the participants to research into the way in which African patriarchy has influenced or influences the way of "doing" church.

9. African patriarchy and the church

Adrienne Rich (cited by Poling 1996:128) defines patriarchy as:

> [t]he power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male…

Some participants made the observation that because African culture is very patriarchal, it has strongly and sadly affected the way women are viewed in the church. The group stated that patriarchal value systems borrowed from African culture were transferred and reinforced into church structures at the

introduction of Christianity. This development makes it difficult to seriously challenge the basic structure of gender relations within the church. Hence, inequality between men and women remains rooted and perpetuated - women continue to be victims of male dominance. Others in the group observed that patriarchal value systems borrowed from both the African patterns and colonial system were supported by religious beliefs of the Zambian churches and exerted social belief in male superiority and female inferiority. One of the participants accurately observed:

> Because Christianity emerged in a culture which was guided by strong patriarchal tendencies, which were real and quite durable, that is to say, a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women, the oppression of women is clearly visible in the Zambian Church.

I then asked the students to outline the ways in which patriarchy shows itself in the church. The following were the students' observations based on their own experiences and those of others:

- Gender is the major determinant of the division of labour within the church.
- The major decision makers and functionaries are, and remain, men.
- The main figures in the church are the bishops, elders, administrators, etc. These are mostly men.
- Women, though highly regarded as extremely important and absolutely essential, are simply considered as facilitators of the men's religious activities.
- Most women are not aware of their own giftedness, dignity, potential and self worth because they are unconsciously victims of male domination, social prejudices and discrimination.
- In many incidents the women's valuable contribution to the church is either insignificantly appreciated or not at all.
- Men consider themselves to be superior to women and their roles exceed in number and importance, so women are denied equal opportunities in church.
- Women are not appointed to the critical areas of decision-making and church government does not allow their entry into these roles.
- Women only play the same domestic roles that they fill in other areas of life such as cleaning the church, cooking and serving during church functions and visiting the sick.
- Women are only allowed to be leaders of Church Ladies' meetings and Sunday school.
- There is also the traditional belief that female sexuality is polluting and contaminating to all things. Thus a woman cannot take Holy Communion if she is menstruating or one who has just given birth.
- Men perform religious rituals (e.g. Baptism), formulate dogma, provide divinely inspired ideas, control the powers of female reproductivity and dictate the social and cultural roles of women.

This list surprised the participants. One of them commented: "I did not realise that our women face such oppression. I think it is good to think seriously about the position of our women in church". Another male participant said:

> When we were asked to make a list, I thought we would come up with two or three ways in which patriarchy manifests itself in the church. Honestly, I am amazed that we have come up with such a long list. I also think that it would be for the good of us all to do something about this situation.

It was good to see that gender consciousness was being raised through this research process as participants learnt about experiences of others and new knowledges created were being used for activism to take a stand against patriarchy.

10. CONCLUSION

Both men and women in the church need to develop a consciousness of gender related issues. Both long term and historical effects and present day realities need to be understood and evaluated as far as this is possible, and the issues standing in the way of raising gender consciousness be dealt with honestly. Finally, men also need to be liberated from the attitudes and structures that bind them. Male and female liberation are two sides of the same coin; both are indispensable for liberation and fulfilment of the church's mission. It is my sincere hope that the workshop and subsequent research findings by the students did not only raise gender consciousness among the participants and those in their spheres of influence but that they would be activists in their fight against gender discrimination.

The next chapter will be what I would call "a reflective" one. In this chapter I seek to undertake an analytical reflection of the whole research process. This analysis ranges from the research methodology to participants' responses and reflections and indeed my reflections as a facilitator.

Chapter 6

Reflections

1. Introduction

In this chapter I position myself as a witness to the research process and to the outcome of the research. I seek to undertake an analytical reflection of the research and situate the research within various discourses i.e. what this research has to say about various discourses and what these various discourses have to say about this research. I look at how this research has impacted the participants, myself and the wider community as well as reflect on the new knowledges learnt and how these knowledges interface with existing ones.

2. General reflections on the research methodology

I am indebted to feminist's participatory action research for the methodology in this research. This particular feminist research approach that I was guided by, illustrated clearly its commitment to the emancipation of marginalized and oppressed groups. It was of particular comfort and encouragement to the participants and facilitators to witness how, during the research, we all honoured the principles of respecting, valuing and bringing into the foreground the lived experience and indigenous knowledge of all the participants. Positioning myself as a feminist researcher, I approached the research with the understanding that there would be no hierarchical relationships between the students and myself, hence I employed a genuinely collaborative approach throughout all stages of the research process (Reason 1994:324-339).

Constantly, I had to remind myself that I am not "the sole possessor of truth and knowledge" and hence challenged the traditional academic model in which researchers, guided by theoretical questions of interest, or past research, would formulate a research hypothesis, identify the data requirements, and set about the task of conducting the research and then encourage the community to define the questions they see as important based on their own experience. Commenting on the need to develop the research curiosity or research questions from peoples' lived experiences, Grant (1999: 9) states that "research questions [may] derive not from prior research or theoretical considerations, but from the 'work-a-day' worlds of people who themselves are seeking creative solutions to the challenges they face".

A feminist research approach made the participants and facilitators become aware that we needed to address the masculinist conceptions of knowledge and gender dynamics within the research process which impede the "foregrounding" (bringing to the forefront) of female participants' experience and the full participation of research participants.

During the research process I did not consider myself as an expert on the subject under research. As a facilitator I, throughout the research process, deliberately questioned my preconceptions. For example, when certain contributions, that I did not necessary agree, with were made by the participants, I refrained from speaking out strongly against such contributions. I did not want my experiences to silence and overshadow the experiences of the participants. I reminded myself that I needed to do a lot of deconstructive listening (Freedman & Combs 1996:46) for it is in such listening that one learns a lot about oneself and others. The students' participation in designing and carrying out this research increased the accuracy of the research for at least two reasons. Firstly, this process helped to ensure that the issues that students and myself saw as most pertinent were negotiated at the onset of the project. Secondly, it meant that as well as co-directing the research process, the participants jointly "owned" the research. Such democratisation of the research project empowered the participants because they had become co-researchers (Reinharz 1992): a development that made the students view

themselves as agents of social change. How did the students view themselves as agents of social change? This transpired as they listened to stories and experiences of the marginalized – stories that disturbed them and created in them a desire to change the disadvantaged position that women have in society.

3. Deconstruction of my power

The unequal power relationship between the participants and myself was restructured to validate the perspective of the participants. The premise was to remove the hierarchical relationship between (myself) researcher and (students) participants. Changing research terminology from one of hierarchy to one of equality was one of the first steps we took. We referred to students as "participants" as a preferred term instead of "subject" or "researched" or "student'. As a researcher, I was aware that addressing the imbalance in power relations between researcher and participants was more than simply changing the language of research. It also entailed involving the participants at all levels of the research process. Reinharz's (1992:179) enlightening comments were of particular help to me in this regard as she states:

> In participatory or collaborative research the people studied make decisions about the study format and data analysis. This model is designed to create social and individual change by altering the role relations of people involved in the project…[I]n participatory feminist research, the distinction between the researcher(s) and those on whom the research is done disappears. To achieve an egalitarian relationship, the researcher abandons control and adopts an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual disclosure, and shared risks. Differences in social status and background give way as shared decision-making and self-disclosure develop.

If I had not deliberately deconstructed my power, it would have been difficult to raise gender consciousness among the participants, as my power and authority would have stood in the way as the participants storied their experiences and findings in gender discrimination.

4. Research curiosity

I stated earlier on that both growing up in a culture and working in a Christian discourse that is patriarchal and authoritarian (Fillingham 1993:10) and insensitive to gender issues have made me become very curious about how students at my place of work, the Gospel Literature Outreach Bible College:
· understand and construct gender issues.
· how these ideas and beliefs about gender issues influence their church ministry and relationships with the female gender; and

· how they may be assisted to deconstruct dominant gender discourses that disempower and marginalise the female through the mechanism of raising gender consciousness.

5. Purpose of the study

Have I achieved the purpose of the research? This is a question that I as a researcher cannot answer alone and thus I referred the question to the co-researchers to give their opinion on this matter. Before I reflect on what they had to say, let me once again state the purpose of the study. It was my intention that participants and facilitators:
 · begin to question and challenge the perpetuation of dominant gender discourses that disadvantage and dehumanise the women as promoted by:
-   Zambian culture
-   Religion
-   Contemporary work culture
-   Poor economy
· challenge their subversive internalised ideas and beliefs about women.
· have their gender consciousness raised.

For the purpose of this study I recruited:
· a fulltime woman home maker from a very economically poor location to story her experiences of gender related issues.
· a female pastor to story her experiences of gender in her congregation and from her own experience.
· a working house wife to story her experience of gender at her working place.

Furthermore, I:
· facilitated workshops among the students where gender issues as constructed by biblical hermeneutical understanding and traditional culture were deconstructed.
· allowed for stories of gender as experienced by the participants in their cultures/customs and
· allowed for students to listen to gender ideas of other people as collected by the students (See appendix A)

During the study, participants explored individual as well as collective experiences of gender. They allowed for the sharing of individual experiences as represented in the group setting; participants arrived at collective rationalizations for their beliefs or their actions through the process of observing and commenting on their similarities and differences. Below is a sample of what some of the participants had to say regarding the study. One participant stated:

I think it was good that we were able to listen to a cross-section of women from various backgrounds as this gave me an opportunity to understand how patriarchal discourse works against women in various walks of life. To be quite honest, I wasn't even aware that my treatment and view of women was discriminative against them. I now have to think twice before I carry out any action that relates to women.

Another said:

Before this study I wasn't even aware about issues of gender or gender discrimination. For me, women were women and men were men; they were made differently and had different roles to play in society and family. I just accepted everything I knew, or was taught by my culture, about men and women. Now I look at the whole subject of gender differently. I really want to thank my fellow participants but especially the facilitators for opening my eyes.

Yet another commented:

This research project was like… it removed me from the salvage yard of gender where I had been sitting all this time. I came out of this yard and looked back at the yard. Then I saw what I had not seen before. You know what I discovered? While there were a lot of good things in this yard there was yet a lot of junk in it. The junk is the patriarchal discourse that has for many years and still today continues to work against our women.

From my perspective as a researcher, I derived great satisfaction from comments such as the ones made above. By the same token, it was with much trepidation that this research was undertaken. I know that I have put my neck on the chopping board by addressing gender issues in a community that is highly patriarchal and sees this discourse as its birthright. I am aware that many people who read this research will react differently depending on their belief system on matters of gender. For those individuals who choose to remain strong adherents of the patriarchal discourse, I ask one thing: begin to engage in meaningful conversations with women from all levels of social status. For once, lay aside your prejudices and begin to listen to voices of those discriminated against. Once you begin to listen to these subjugated voices you will be very surprised at how society's view of women has not only just enslaved women, but that it has also enslaved society. Real freedom is when the oppressed and oppressor are both emancipated.

6. Personal reflections

Reinharz (1992:194) observes: "Although changing the researcher is not a common intention in feminist research, it is a common consequence". It has been a great privilege for me to be associated with the students, as we have together undertaken this research. It was a voyage that sometimes required navigating difficult waters. Right from the beginning, we all planned the voyage together and were committed to sailing until we landed on the shores of our final destiny (wherever this may be– as I

have learnt that research is an ongoing process). I am grateful to my co-captains (co-researches and facilitators) who gave me the opportunity to learn more about myself and discover the side of me that was hiding within me – I still had some sympathy for patriarchy. I must say that, employing the feminist participatory action research as a man was very liberating in many ways. For example, I discovered that the freedom of women is closely tied with the freedom of men. In other words, men may discriminate against women in order to hide their insecurity. Hence, in order to do away with this insecurity, men need to face up to the issue that they are no better than women.

As a researcher I sometimes struggled, fighting back the temptation to exploit my co-researchers by having their valid experiences dismissed or re-interpreted in order to fit within a dominant patriarchal discourse, which has been shaped by hundreds of years of dealing with women. Though I strongly subscribe to feminism, it seems I still have remnants of a patriarchal discourse that I need to deal with. I also needed to learn that the research participant has a right to the construction and meaning of her own experience, and preserving this meant that I had to critique the positivistic model I had been used to where the researcher is positioned as subject and the participant as object. I suppose that this positivistic model was in the past attractive to me because it paralleled the church government I had grown up with where there is an attitude of "them" and "us" referring to congregation and leaders respectively. In this case, the congregation (laity) was the "object" and the leaders (clergy) were the "subjects/experts". It seems rather absurd that there should be a link between these two different disciplines but that is how it has worked out for me. Oakley (1981) and Finch (1984) have suggested that the establishment of a close and equal relationship between the participant and researcher can lead to the acquisition of more significant and meaningful data.

One of my biggest struggles in this research was for me to seek to remain very calm as we dealt with examples of gender discrimination in the church, especially when some female participants shared their experiences. I guess this was so because I have been engaged in counselling individuals that are spiritually abused by their church leaders, all in the name of "Biblical gender roles in the church". It seems to me that every story of gender discrimination in the church resurrected memories of the agony I have witnessed which the spiritually abused go through. I learnt during this research process that I shouldn't let my emotions overcrowd my sense of judgment. While it was important for me to be in touch with my past, as this would assist to embody the experiences of the spiritually abused, I needed at the same time to remain emotionally calm so as not to make a biased assessment. I had to make my emotions accountable to the participants by asking them to tell me whenever they detected this bias.

Also, following the workshop with Jessie, my appreciation of working housewives was enriched. I began to see career women in a new light. While I personally do not condone sex-for-favours in working places I, however, now understand why some women engage in sexual activities at work. Instead of altogether condemning their activities, I realized that I need to engage with them in meaningful conversation without them feeling that they are being condemned or judged by me. I have

often looked at women who have sex-for-job-promotion at places of work as people who only deserve to be condemned. I now understand that these women have little or no choice in the matter as they seek to advance themselves professionally. They are victims of sexual exploitation and sexual harassment. These women need the help of the community as much as the community needs their assistance. Listening to such women's lived experiences so as to view life from their perspective and then find ways of helping these women can assist the community. Sexually exploited women can assist the community by suggesting ways of how they need to be assisted. There is, therefore the need to dialogue. I guess the lesson I have learnt here is that I cannot positively contribute to, and enrich, sexually exploited women's lives by prescribing what I envisage as solutions to their "problem" without engaging in meaningful conversation with them – allowing them to speak and listening to them – hence creating new knowledges as to how we can assist each other. This is the way gender consciousness is raised. Writing as a Christian leader in my nation, I see the need to engage in meaningful conversations with people who are criticized and condemned by the church for engaging in sexual activities at places of work, in order to raise gender consciousness.

7. Relating research knowledges with existing knowledges, 'theory'/discourse.

7.1 Women's language

The research attempted to address some questions women have about the world and areas they experience as problematic issues such as, discrimination of women in the church and in culture. If indeed raising gender consciousness would be achieved, it would be necessary to attend to language when trying accurately to represent women's perspectives and realities. Taking the women's standpoint as the grounding for this research meant attending to how women construct and articulate their experiences in their own words: "the essential meaning of women's meanings can be grasped only by listening to the women themselves" (Kasper 1994:266). Since the writing of social reality is grounded in a language that reflects male power, male perspective and male control of the definitions of the world, I felt I had the moral obligation to employ feminist research methodology in order to deconstruct male definitions of the world.

Language does not equally value women and men and "language, to some extent, shapes or constructs our notions of reality rather than labelling that reality in any transparent and straightforward way" (Ehrlich 1995:45). Take, for example, the commonly used word in the church "brethren"- it is essentially a male term which may exclude women and yet some women may use this word to refer to themselves as well. As DeVault (1990:96) suggests, women use a language not their own to articulate their reality. She uses the term "translate" to illustrate the process women experience when trying to use language to convey their perspectives. The participants realized that listening to how women use language to translate and convey their experiences as women was important in order to raise gender consciousness. The participants and facilitators noted that since women are the experts and authorities

in the situation, the way they create and give meaning to their experience becomes of central significance. It occurred to the participants that language shapes the words, concepts and stereotypes of society, and in turn also shapes actions, behaviours and expectations. This resonates with what Kotzé (1994:35) says:

> Language thus constitutes meaning. Life is experienced within language and how we experience is given meaning to within the parameters of our language. The language we grow up and live in within a specific culture, specifies or constitutes the experience we have.

7.2 Research language

Sexism is present in everyday language and hence it inevitably features also in the research process. As a feminist researcher, it was important for all the participants and myself to recognize how language is used to construct and recreate the dynamics of a research situation. I had to attend to how research questions were organized and the implications suggested by the choice of words (Anderson et al 1987:114). For example the interview schedule (see Appendix A) was designed with this background in mind. Taking the perspective of the marginalized and subjugated language as the starting point for feminist research meant using the language and meanings given by the participant within the research. We realized that it was not sufficient for us to reinterpret and depict the research subject by using language from outside the context. We had to conceptualise our language. Listening to women participants and the meaning they gave to their experiences and using their meanings within the research was central to raising gender consciousness. For all of us as co-researchers in this project, listening included hearing how women reflected upon their experiences, the feelings and meanings that were conveyed through their use of language (Anderson et al 1987:111). This type of listening was not easy to employ initially, but as the research developed and women shared their touching lived realities, we began to listen indeed. I recall one of the female participants' comments as we were reflecting on the experiences that Grace shared i.e. the struggle that she goes through to fend for her family. She commented, "I could see all the men listening attentively and their heads either moving up and down or from side to side as if they had suddenly embodied this poor lady's experiences". "You know why, don't you?", retorted another lady, "It was because for once the men listened to a woman's language with a woman's ears, - that is with their heart". These observations by these women resonate with what Heshusius (quoted by Kotzé 2002:4) calls:

> [t]he larger participatory consciousness of the 'hermeneutics of connection', where the self and the other are seen, not as separate entities, but as an ontological and epistemological unity.

The men listening in this manner showed that some connection had taken place between Grace's story and the men's hearts. It was a listening that not only empathised with Grace but agitated the need for men to take responsibility for the way they relate to women.

8. Implications of the research for research

The participants and facilitators discovered that doing research is a process that involves an on-going series of decisions and choices. I found that feminist research is unique because it is feminist beliefs and concerns that acted as the guiding framework to the research process. In retrospect, I can state that methodologically, feminist research differs from traditional research for three reasons. Firstly, it actively seeks to remove the power imbalance between researcher and participant(s); secondly, it is politically motivated and has a major role in changing social inequality; and thirdly, it begins with the standpoints and experiences of participants (Harding 1987). This meant that all the participants' stories and voices were respected and listened to carefully. I hope that this process resulted in raising gender consciousness among the participants.

This research did not only offer a critique of aspects of society; it was change-oriented as it helped participants to individually, and also collectively, change their consciousness by fostering collective identities and solidarities. Participatory action research is said to facilitate such connections because it can go beyond uncovering "already existing meanings produced by already constituted subjectivities", (Modleski quoted by Montell 1999: 54); it can bring into being new meanings and new knowledges. In this way, participants gained access to new information, new ways of thinking and being, in the sense that they had the right to speak and the authority to act: in short, a sense of emancipation (Goss & Leinbach 1996).

Participatory action research was particularly helpful in that the participants' stories were often enriched as fellow participants narrated their own experiences of gender. Moreover, in this research, methodology power relationships were mitigated since each participant did not only tell her own story, but she also questioned and challenged the other participants in an effort to gain understanding and new knowledge. Participatory action research thus created the possibility for meaningful conversation among participants, which was potentially empowering as participants:
• came to "recognize the patterns in their shared experience" (Montell 1999: 52).
• were encouraged to participate in developing "a vision of the future as well as a structural picture of the present" (Cook & Fonow 1986: 13).
• were made to begin fostering collective support of people as they recounted difficult experiences of gender discrimination.
• co-researched over a period of time. I would assume that because the research stretched over a long period, participants had the opportunity for such empowering conversations because they had the time needed to break the ice, test the waters and build up trust and confidence among themselves.
I want to believe that, as a consequence of the four points mentioned above, gender consciousness among the participants was raised.

9. Working with a homogeneous body

Although the student body was heterogeneous in terms of social class and gender and to a less extent in power differentials, the students felt comfortable expressing their opinions and sharing their experiences with minimal sense of intimidation or judgment. Because the research was situated within a particular homogeneous group (i.e. students) there wasn't much room for power inequality. Why did I consider homogeneity important? It was because in a homogeneous group, participants felt more comfortable expressing their opinions and confident that other participants would understand each other at a basic level and not violently shoot down their ideas. This sense of confidence also facilitated expression of emotive or politically sensitive issues which the participants would not have felt comfortable expressing in an individual interview. However, at the onset of the research men did have a more than equal position and participated from this position. It was interesting to observe that, as the research progressed and gained momentum with facilitators and some participants sharing their stories and experiences of gender discrimination, men finally began to participate from an equal position with women. The change in position seems to have been an indication that gender consciousness was been raised.

Whilst subscribing to participatory action research as the most effective way of conducting research in my view, during the research process I encountered one major dilemma. I suspected that in general, the very dynamics of participatory action research created an artificial impression of consensus and conformity as some members felt unable to offer nuances or to express their dissent. For example, at times most participants expressed viewpoints that were clearly at one end of a continuum of attitudes. This sometimes lead to a dynamic in which the strength of opinions at this one extreme were magnified; dissenters then felt they must remain silent, leading to possible serious problems of interpretation. However, as a facilitator it was my responsibility to ensure that all participants expressed their views. During this research I also became somewhat aware that there may be a variety of barriers and limits in implementing participatory principles. For example I became aware that though the research was aimed at raising gender consciousness among the participants, this consciousness raising could not be employed in a very simplistic way. From my conversations with one of the male participants I would state that the research project had little effect on his life. Although this person acquired, through the research, a greater understanding of gender discrimination that he experiences in an individual and personal way, he still felt disempowered because he needed community structures that would support and sustain his gender consciousness. From this research I also realised that raising gender consciousness was not a "thing" to be given by the researcher nor something to be simply "taken" by the participants. It was a process that was constantly negotiated between all the participants and facilitators throughout the research process.

10. Implications of the research for social change

Research for the sake of research is insufficient (Mies 1983:135). This research was aimed at raising gender consciousness and serving the interests of the marginalized women and of creating a more just and ethical society. It is my hope too that participants as future pastors and church leaders would make a positive contribution to society as they take a stand against gender discrimination. The research was intended to deconstruct the dominant masculine worldview. As a feminist researcher, I would not desire that this research project simply be abstract and removed from the subject of study but instead, that it have a commitment to work towards societal change. This research does not exist to make good reading or simply seek to present data and information; it is research for women and men to use in transforming their sexist society (Cook & Fonow 1986:13). My commitment to feminism as the underlying motivation to feminist research means that research and action cannot be separated. As indeed Reinharz (1992:175) puts it, "[F]eminist action research must be oriented to social and individual change because feminism represents a repudiation of the status quo".

I am aware that a commitment to societal change involves a commitment to the participants of the research. I want to think of this participatory action research in terms of consciousness raising for the participants. Being involved as active participants of the research process gave students the space to question and critically assess their experiences. It also allowed the students to recognize and identify the connections and links between events in their lives as well as the connections to the social world. As the participants found out, identifying the connections or relationships between individual experience and social relations can facilitate personal analysis and transformation (Kasper 1994:273). Following this research process, I noticed that there was a change in the way the male students began to relate to the female students. Of particular interest was the manner in which husbands began to treat their spouses. I could see husbands bathing their children and helping with the laundry. One wife commented: "I wish we had done this research shortly after we got married. My husband has suddenly become so loving and helpful I hope he continues with this attitude". Another young single female student said to me:

> You know sir, since the research project started all the married men are giving me such respect that they never used to. You know, now they are even able to encourage me in the things of the Lord and I also do the same and they listen to me so attentively. Waaah! It feels so great.

As I listened to these stories I was encouraged and yet at the same time I wondered how long these men's changed attitudes toward women would last once they left the college and went back into societies that were strong on patriarchy. I feared that they may lose commitment and the dominant discourses could disempower them. As a way forward the participants and myself agreed that we work at producing publications on gender that would be used to sustain this consciousness and also would assist in raising gender consciousness among the readers. The mechanism of how this was to be undertaken is discussed later on in this chapter under "Implications for the research for the future".

11. Construction of women's lives

The research led the participants to realize that knowledge of women's lives has been absent or has been constructed from the perspective of men. For example, what is considered as the role of women in community is of interest to men. Women's experiences in public places are made invisible or are spoken about from the view of men - what they think are the important questions to ask about the public world. "The overt ideological goal of feminist research in the human sciences is to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience" (Lather1988:571). This research took women's situations, concerns, experiences and perspectives as the basis for research. It embodied women's experiences in the social world from their own interpretation and using their language. This led the participants to become aware of how much the women are discriminated against. One of the male students passed this profound comment:

> I presume not many men especially husbands are aware that they are the ones controlling women's lives. It seems to me that women are denied the right to construct their own preferred lives. I really think this is tantamount to slavery. I want to believe that gender discrimination is the present day slave trade. We cannot claim that the slave trade has been abolished as long as gender discrimination remains unchecked and unchallenged.

This comment was applauded by the participants and it provoked other comments that were aimed at letting the women construct and define their own lives. I was particularly encouraged in that these comments were mainly made by the men.

11.1 Women's lived experiences: A priority

The research attended to the meaning women give to their experiences; what they identify as being topics that concern them. This research confronted the participants with the awareness that women's societal identification with the private sphere has meant that issues of importance to women's lives in the private realm (e.g. the experience of being a woman in Zambian culture) have been ignored or not defined as issues of importance in a patriarchal dominated society. What society views as important questions to ask and what social phenomena get defined as problem areas for exploration have been defined by patriarchal discourse. Women's lives, experiences, ideas and needs have been ignored or subjugated because we live in a world which values male knowledge and perspective and defines it as being objective truth. "A male view of the social world has become *the* view" (Maguire 1987:82). It was therefore of utmost importance to note that the participants allowed for the female students and facilitators to story their lived experience of gender discrimination. This led the male participants to begin to see gender discrimination from the women's perspective. One of the male participants, who in the initial stages of the research was very out spoken about gender related issues (he was basically very patriarchal in his contributions), later on commented, "Guys, if you want to end up with an ineffective church and a lousy nation, then go ahead treating the women the way we have done since time

immemorial… this is the 21st Century, its not the Stone Age. Let us listen to our women. They have a lot to teach us as men". I was curious to find out why this particular participant had such a change of mind. His comment was:

> You know, it is one thing to hear at a distance about gender discrimination and it is a different thing to actually face and listen to a victim of discrimination right there in front of you telling her story. As Grace was telling us her story I was thinking this could be my mother.

Hearing such comments was of great encouragement to me. In spite of the fact that the research was hard work, it was worthwhile. I was thinking that if this man could shift his position, there is hope that most men can change as they are confronted with actual victims of gender discrimination. As a man I felt proud for once and I literally hugged this participant and encouraged him to share this story with others.

12. Implications for the research for the future

According to Maguire (1987:79) feminism is:
· a belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation;
· a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression, in all its forms and
· a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression.

I subscribe to the assertion that feminism has a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression. And therefore for me the writing of this thesis does not mark the end of the research process. I see this thesis as a small contribution in the ongoing and non-stop battle toward gender equity. The participants' role has also not ended with the completion of the research project. The students view themselves as co-travellers on the road to end all forms of gender discrimination and oppression. As one of them commented, "To end all forms of gender oppression is our goal, especially in the church where we shall have the influence to do so. We want to plant this vision in all our church members until it becomes their vision too". While this was a very welcome statement, I was aware that there is a very big challenge that we men face to transform men's culture. I think it is only as men begin to engage in meaningful conversations and listen to women's subjugated voices that our own presuppositions and prejudices about women will begin to change. The task to challenge and stop gender discrimination should not be left to feminist women and men. I sincerely hope that these participants who are pastors and church leaders would not only use biblical texts with their congregations to teach gender equality but would also enable their church members to witness first hand stories and experiences of women who are discriminated against on the basis of their gender.

The students were well aware that while the expressed goals of feminist research are to empower the marginalized; take the marginalized standpoint; and restructure power imbalances in the human

relationship, attaining these goals can be frustrated by various external forces. These external forces (in the case of this project) may include the following: the dominant patriarchal discourse within the church; Zambian traditional culture which is extremely patriarchal; the political and social systems that are biased toward the male etc. How therefore can the research results be sustained in such a hostile environment? What are the possible ways of addressing gender discrimination? A number of proposals and initiatives were suggested as reflected below. Firstly, the participants strongly recommended that they initiate and encourage programmes of workshops in their individual churches where issues pertaining to gender could be discussed. This would need to be done in a very discreet manner since the mention of gender among many church members would immediately lead to suspicions and misunderstanding. One of the bright comments passed was:

> For example, we might need to say we shall be looking at how women can contribute to church life and development within the community. In this way, people will be thinking about development and not necessarily about gender issues. In the process of discussing development we can then show how development is closely linked with gender issues.

Secondly, a suggestion was made that the participants would hold "Prayer and testimony" sessions in homes of Christians where persons who have been oppressed by the patriarchal system would story their experiences. At such gatherings the participants would pray for the victims of oppression and also suggest practical ways of supporting the victims. Cases of abuse and discrimination that require the intervention of the Law should be reported to the appropriate authorities. Thirdly, one of the participants suggested that they start collecting all newspaper, magazine and book articles that they come across that highlight gender discrimination. These would then be exchanged and distributed to others who would then share these articles with their friends in the community and churches. One of the participants even suggested the possibility of starting a small annual publication that would highlight gender discrimination. This publication could then be circulated among the participants who in turn could share this information with friends and church members.

When I listened to this suggestion, I thought to myself, "As a training institution we already have a quarterly publication that is read widely both inside and outside Zambia. What would prevent us from including some of these suggestion brought about by the students?" At the time of writing this chapter we have already put his suggestion into practice. We are starting a series of topics on "Christianity and Culture" in which, among many related topics, we shall be addressing the issue of women. Fourthly, another step to be taken would be to run workshops on gender related issues during the annual Bible youth camp which takes place here at the Bible College. This camp attracts more than two hundred young people each year.

Lastly, but not least, one participant encouraged all the participants to join organizations in their localities that seek to promote gender equality. One elderly male student commented:

> I think we have all been touched by stories we have heard from the facilitators. If we truly claim to be Christians worthy of our salt we cannot simply sit back and bury our heads in our Bibles and claim that the gospel is about giving people freedom and love.

He then went ahead to quote from Micah 6:8: "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

I am aware that Zambian real life circumstances may make it difficult for the participants to apply their new knowledges gained from this research. This is because, as mentioned already, the culture or society in which the research has been conducted impacts on the new knowledges acquired. Indeed even the participants also realize that negotiating the chasm that exists between the reality and the ideals of feminist research raises a big challenge. However, the participants having become aware of the rampant gender inequalities and discrimination, I believe, stand ready to defend and promote a kind of knowledge that liberates humanity. Having to conform to societal expectations based on gender that are contradictory to one's own identity would be difficult for participants to accommodate. I want to believe that from the few examples cited above, the participants are willing to take a risk and stand for the oppressed and marginalized in their communities. In order to provide some kind of accountability and support, so that with the passage of time the dominant discourses do not disempower participants, I plan to run workshops on gender with them in their respective church constituencies whenever I visit them. In addition to this, our College publication will have a column where the participants shall story their experiences of gender as encountered in their pastoral ministry. It is hoped that these visits and shared stories shall be of much encouragement to them.

13. The participants' responses and reflections

It was of utmost importance for me to recognize from the onset, the participants as the experts and authorities of their own experiences. Participants are part of the social world and as critical thinkers are also conscious and aware of the patterns of social relationships that can impact upon their own lived realities. As Ralph (1988:139) indicates, it is important that feminist researchers recognize and identify that the women engaged as participants are "often actively working to change the conditions of their oppression". One of my concerns as a feminist researcher was to ensure the accuracy of the research in depicting participants' lives and experiences. It was for this reason that I took finalized information back to the participants for verification, since they are the experts and owners of their own personal experiences. This is in contrast to the standard within traditional social science research which sees the research as "owned" by the researcher. Feminist research that seeks to restructure inequality also seeks to remove the notion of ownership of knowledge (Wolf 1996:3). I tried by all means to maintain the originality and authenticity of what the participants said because this was one way in which the balance of power was constituted. This resonates with Edwards' (1990: 489) observation when doing research

among abused women: "A feminist method gave me the flexibility to be able to relate to women in subjective ways on their terms rather than in objective ways on the researchers' terms". This way I made myself accountable to the co-researchers; the participants.

Although participatory action research has empowerment possibilities, an unequal power relationship remains, because as a researcher I initiated the procedure, selected the participants and set the agenda at least to some extent. I also had a leading role in negotiating the direction (programme) of the research. Furthermore, there was the temptation to think that I as the researcher was still ultimately responsible for the analysis and interpretation of data even if such information was made accessible to the participants for their comments and approval. That is all the more reason why my taking back the finalized information to the participants and facilitators for verification made me accountable to them. As shall be seen below, I allowed the participants to critique and correct me where necessary. Some participants commented that the language in this research paper was too academic. "It would have been better if you had simplified everything in this paper for some of us who struggle with the English language as a second or even third language", one of the female participants commented. Another one observed, "If you intend to publish this thesis for public consumption then you would do better to simplify the language and avoid the use of too many technical words as the average reader in Zambia would fail to make sense of the content". This statement was a big challenge to me and I learnt that it is possible for my research language to estrange me from the very people that the research would want to serve. The struggle for me was to remain both academic and be able to effectively communicate in such a way that the people that the research serves understand and appreciate the content.

A male participant made a strong submission that at many intervals during the research process I perhaps unconsciously and deliberately showed my bias toward the females whenever issues of gender discrimination were discussed. "As a result, personally, I sometimes found it hard to air my views and share my experiences as I felt rather intimidated …you know as a lecturer we felt we could not compete with you", he commented. This observation was of great help to me so that in future I would be careful to avoid such polarisation. However, I am yet to learn how I would avoid this other than through the methodology I had employed in this research. In spite of my well meaning efforts to make the research truly participatory there was still in the mind of some participants the notion that I was the "expert" simply because I had initiated the research project. The other complication was that being a lecturer to the participants had already placed me in the position of power. Throughout the research process I constantly and deliberately had to deconstruct this power by participating at the same level as the students.

At the onset of the research when the students took the interview schedule to the people in the community to gather information, one person made the following observation:

> Now that we have given you all the information you need to know about us and the
> circumstances under which we live and work, I hope you shall be able to do

something about our situation. You know we are tired of people who come to use us as their research projects and at the end of the day we really do not benefit from their research.

Yet another one commented:

We would be glad if you can come back to us again after your research and tell us how this research would have benefited yourself and us. Because you researchers, you promise so much but fail to deliver the goods we feel very betrayed when people like you use us to collect data and then we never hear from them again.

Such comments prompted the students to challenge me to get back to the people and give them a feedback on the outcome of this research project. I am of the opinion that the best way these people can share in what transpired would be for me to organise a short seminar with them. I would then invite one of the facilitators, Grace, and one of the participants who initially held very strong patriarchal views but later made a shift as he listened to facilitators' stories. Grace and this particular student would then share their stories. I hope that this would invite meaningful conversations during the seminar.

14. Conclusion

The research process could have come to an end but, as I have already alluded to above, the writing of this thesis does not mark the end of the fight for gender equity. The commitment that the participants have displayed in order to contest for the cause of the marginalized and exploited in our communities has been of great encouragement to all of us as co-researchers. On my part as a trainer in a Bible College, I plan to include a module on gender related issues within the college curriculum in order to keep raising gender consciousness among the students. Within the hearts of the participants a passion for justice and equity has been born. What has given birth to this passion? I believe it is the stories of these facilitators and students as they have experienced life. Theirs have been lives of perpetually being discriminated against. Lives of subjugating their knowledges. Lives as defined and controlled by men. Women and men are made in the image of God and God is neither male nor female. Away with gender discrimination.

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Appendix A

RAISING WOMEN GENDER CONCIOUSNESS

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR RESEARCH IN THE COMMUNITY

These questions are meant for the participants to take to people that they know and do some research on gender related ideas.

1.   What is woman? What is man?

2. Are man and woman the same? Explain.

3. How do you understand the relationship that exists between man and woman?

4. What are the place and role of women in the following disciplines:
   a) Social life
   b) Religious life
   c) Cultural life
   d) Family life

5. What concerns do you have regarding the place and role of women in the areas mentioned in 4 above?

6. Write down some proverbs in your language that refer to women.

   a) What do these proverbs portray about women?
   b) How are these used to marginalise and subjugate the women?
   c) How do you think these have influenced your perception and view of women?

7. Do you think it is necessary to create institutions that would assist in addressing the plight of women? Explain.

Appendix B

RAISING WOMEN GENDER CONCIOUSNESS

CONSENT FORM FOR FACILITATORS

I am in agreement with the aim of the study as described and explained to me.

I agree that my story be used during discussions of the students in presence as well as in my absence.

I agree that I shall have access to the summary notes of the discussion and that I shall have to respond to these.

I understand that I reserve the right to alter or delete any information about me that I may wish not to be included in the report.

I prefer that the following pseudonym be used for the purpose of the discussion:

……………………………………………………………………………..

OR

I prefer that my own name (as indicated below) be used during the discussion.

…………………………………………………………………………….

Name of participant:———————————————— Signature of witness ————————————

Signature of participant———————————————— Date:————————————————