

Shona Womanhood: Rethinking Social Identities in the Face of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe

by

Pascah Mungwini, Ph.D.

Philosophy Lecturer, Great Zimbabwe University

Pascah Mungwini (pmungwini@yahoo.com) research interests are in the areas of African philosophy, moral philosophy and feminist philosophy.

Abstract

The prevalence of HIV and AIDS places a new moral imperative on the Shona society and especially women for the need to revisit and possibly reconstruct their usual way of seeing themselves and the prevailing discourse about women in Zimbabwe. It is making it mandatory for Shona women to cultivate new ways of conceptualizing their identity and what it means to be a Shona woman in the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The pandemic places a new moral imperative on society that requires them to call into question the traditionally acclaimed perception of women. Among the Shona 'producing'ⁱ or childbearing and 'belonging'ⁱⁱ that is, being a wife, are key factors in the construction of womanhood. Yet in the current environment of HIV and AIDS both have become liabilities hence the need to revisit these somewhat taken for granted essences of ideal Shona womanhood. The work explores how issues of women identities that have always been taken as given and for granted need to be reconstructed to empower women to confront the pandemic. The new imperative requires a critical reading of not only the traditionally acclaimed picture of the ideal Shona woman but must also raise new questions about 'nativistic' tendencies in the process of constructing that picture of the ideal Shona woman today. Nativistic tendencies have always blinded debate on the emancipation of women by dismissing all efforts as not only alien but of Western imperial origin that are not only an affront to African tradition but at worst signs of moral decay. There is also need to confront some essentialist notions of both gender and culture together with what Nayan identifies as 'selective labeling', a tool employed by powerful members of society, in this case the males, to stifle the modification of tradition and any change that threatens the status quo.

Introduction

One of the major problems in sub-Saharan Africa at the moment outside ethnic conflict is the issue of HIV and AIDS. The scourge has created multifarious problems that even call for fundamental changes to obtaining social relationships and patterns of existence that had almost assumed an absolute character in many African cultural groups over the years. This work focuses on the impact of the HIV and AIDS disease on Shona society with specific focus on Shona women. The Shona constitutes one of the largest cultural groups in Zimbabwe. This work has been prompted by an upsetting revelation that rather than being a solution to the problem of HIV and AIDS marriage has become a heath on which the disease breeds and is then passed on to partners. According to the Zimbabwe Human Development Report more and more women are being infected inside marriages than outsideⁱⁱⁱ. All this has been blamed on the patriarchal social philosophy that condones wayward behavior as part of what defines the Shona man. While it may sound unfortunately like blaming the victim, the work argues that armed with their numerical advantage Zimbabwean women have what it takes to bring about positive change and reduce the spread of the disease if only they could transform themselves into agents of cultural change or incubators of a new social arrangement. The work considers how the Shona women over the years have been made vulnerable by the very identities which they have taken for granted or as given and therefore natural. Of particular interest to this work is the construction of womanhood among the Shona based on two elements of being a wife and a mother which are stipulatively taken by the writer as 'belonging' and 'producing' respectively. This work draws on the theory of social constructionism and the idea of agency to argue that in confronting the pandemic women can do well to 'think outside the box' provided by their own Shona tradition and culture in order to build new identities for themselves that can empower them to confront the pandemic. To bring about that positive change, women also need to confront cultural and gender essentialism as well as selective labeling^{iv}, weapons used by dominant members of a cultural group to maintain the status quo. The work goes on to make recommendations on how women can construct enabling identities that may reduce their vulnerability.

Theoretical Framework

This work is informed by the theory of social constructionism. Social constructionism as a theory emphasizes that we take a critical stance towards our taken for granted ways of understanding the world including of course ourselves. The theory of social constructionism is premised on yet another important assumption that all ways of understanding, that is all the ways in which we commonly understand the world and ourselves, the categories and concepts we use, do bear historical and cultural clothing^v. Nothing is therefore predetermined or absolute. Since the social world, including ourselves as people, is the product of social processes, it follows therefore that there cannot be any given nor are there essences about people that cannot be challenged hence the need to critique both gender and cultural essentialism.

Essentialism refers to the existence of fixed characteristics, given attributes and ahistorical functions that limit the possibilities of change and of social reorganization. As a theory social constructionism gives credence to human agency, that is, the view that human beings can change themselves and the world they live in through the force of their apparently independently developed and freely chosen beliefs and actions. Social constructionism as a philosophy is therefore potentially liberating for women as it allows them to put to question and hence deconstruct the patriarchally constituted and male tainted images of women that have almost assumed an absolute character. As we consider the HIV and AIDS menace, women as agents must therefore be capable of positively engaging themselves in the process of social transformation. Taking it from the philosophers Wittgenstein and Foucault, the constructive power of language in the construction of social identities and the constricting power of 'selective labeling' as a tool to preserve the status quo cannot be underestimated hence the need to confront the discourse in which women's identities are couched with the aim of deconstructing them as the first step in their reconstruction. Through both formal and informal means, such as jokes, social ridicule and insinuations, women are constantly reminded of what society expects of them. Women have to engage in some kind of deconstruction. Deconstruction, as the term suggest, involves the unmaking of a construct as women try to confront the current discourse on gender and sexuality among the Shona. In other words Shona women must confront their traditionally prescribed identity and confront the constricting power of selective labeling which is used with such acumen by their male counterparts and other conservatives to any liberative potential in women. It is only then that they can move to reconstruct a picture of their selves as the starting point in the progressive refashioning of tradition and culture in order to confront the AIDS pandemic. This is the new imperative confronting women especially rural women among the Shona of Zimbabwe. Women need to question their often taken for granted identity and transform it in order to reconstitute an identity that is empowering and one that would enable them to confront the pandemic. The rural Shona women have been selected for the simple reason that they are the group that the writer is most familiar with and that they are the very people on whom traditional expectations are most heavy as they are taken as the custodians of tradition in comparison to their urban counterparts who are often chided as wayward and more Western than African.

Constructing Womanhood

While debate continues on how best to respond to the HIV and AIDS pandemic gender is increasingly being adopted as a framework of analysis in studies that touch on a variety of issues including of course studies on HIV and AIDS. The perceptions of women among the Shona is at the heart of analysis in this work. Such perceptions are important as they shape the way people think about women and inevitably the way women think about themselves too. In view of these perceptions the immediate question to rise therefore must be: What constitute a woman among the Shona in Zimbabwe? How is an ideal women defined among the Shona? In other words what qualities of character, what dispositions does the Shona society expect from a well nurtured Shona woman?

It is from the responses given to these questions and the analysis thereof that will constitute the point of departure in the analysis of the social construction of womanhood among the Shona. A number of scholars have given descriptions about the ideal Shona woman already^{vi} among others and for that reason these shall not be the concern of this paper. This work which is somewhat meta-philosophical has selected two of what it regards as the most important markers of womanhood for analysis, which are; being a wife and being a mother, two elements which the writer alternatively represent as 'belonging' and 'producing'. To be one without the other renders one inadequate or incomplete unless one has been widowed for which case one may not be held to blame as this is taken as being beyond one's control.

Among the Shona it has been found out that women's social recognition and sense of womanhood suffer greatly when they are not married or when they are married but cannot have children. In other words without children they cannot attain 'motherhood' as they will not have 'produced' although culturally society has tried to reduce the effect of such eventualities by extending the denotation 'mother' to any woman who is within the child bearing age and old enough to be a mother. For the Shona being a married woman and therefore being somebody's wife gives the woman respectability because of the strong presupposition that a married woman is necessarily constrained in her behavior while a single woman living alone is perceived as a freelancer who does what she likes. The fact that there is no husband to put brakes in her social interaction turns her into a potential danger to the society.

The Shona are uneasy about unmarried women. The state of being unmarried is regarded with so much suspicion or skepticism unless there are clear reasons such as health problems. Because of their metaphysics the Shona explain being unmarried for females as something unusual to such an extent that all sorts of mysterious accounts or stories are generated to explain that status of being single. By shrouding this natural status in mystery as a result of their metaphysics, the Shona place a very heavy expectation on women which in most cases has driven them to marry men who are in some extreme cases almost senile or even very old more or less sexually inactive for the sake of being recognized as married. The desire to avoid and escape the curse of being unmarried has also driven many women into polygamous marriages which are known in most cases to bring no joy to them for their entire lives. Even such simple things as friendship patterns are greatly influenced by the marital status of the individuals concerned. It is culturally inappropriate for a married woman to be a close friend of an unmarried woman for the unmarried are seen as sexual perverts who can, through their influence as friends, drive their married friend into having an illicit affair. There is among the Shona the popular saying that goes *chii chaunodzidza pamukadzi asina murume kunze kwekuputsa imba yako, makuhwa nechihure* (there is nothing good that you can learn from an unmarried woman other than being taught vices that would destroy your marriage such as gossiping and unfaithfulness). In other words an unmarried woman's mind is seen as a workshop of destruction. She is analogized to the devil in the book of Job who was out to destroy.

Writing about the Shona women Gaidzanwa highlights that traditional Shona society viewed single women as unfulfilled and a hazard to established marriages and unions^{vii} to which Schmidt adds weight by asserting that women without husbands or children were held openly in derision by the society^{viii}. Women have come to accept marriage as a symbol of status.

More often than not if a woman gets angry with anyone, and the writer has witnessed this many a time on public transport and more recently in queues outside shops to buy scarce commodities and at banks, a woman in standing her ground, is quick to highlight that she is somebody's wife, that is she 'belongs to somebody' she is married and for that very reason she must not be equated to ordinary women. To put it in Shona the angry women often shouts *ndiri mukadzi wemunhu mazvinzwa musandiona semunhu wemangamanga*. Such discourse even though it may not be directed at them is an open denigration of those without husbands, those who in other words have failed to become wives. There was an interesting scenario in Zimbabwe in 2007 when debate about the now enacted law that is the Domestic Violence Act was raging on. A group of organized Christian women ran an advert in the daily and weekly papers which read *pahuku yomweni unodei?* Literally it means why are you taking a sit closer to the plate with chicken (a special dish) that has been prepared for a visitor when you are not yourself a visitor? This was in apparent reference to single mothers, divorcees and all other women who had failed to make it in marriage who were believed to be the brains behind the Domestic Violence bill. This group of Christian mothers represented the position of quiet a number of women who all suspected that these women who claimed to champion women's rights were not genuine at all but wanted to destroy families and marriages. The so-called activists were being dismissed as a bunch of disgruntled women who had failed to make it in marriage and therefore wanted to have a go at men as a way of revenge. For the Christian women's group this 'gangster' had no business moralizing about marriage when they were outside marriage.

Besides marriage, womanhood and selfhood for the Shona is also enhanced by yet another central feature in their lives which is 'producing' or mothering. 'Motherhood' is the traditional way of defining a woman's status, that is, a woman is seen as a woman only if she is a mother. Maternity is therefore the sole biological, psychological and social fact that marks and determines a woman's personality. In other words mothering is very much central in the definition of womanhood. While writing about Ugandan women, Ogden makes a very important point about mothering which is also true of the Shona women. According to Ogden "childbearing or 'producing', a central feature of a secure marriage, is an important element in the construction of womanhood. Childbearing is a culturally construed essence of womanhood; it is a central feature in the construction of female selves"^{ix}. She goes on to argue that motherhood is important in the construction of the self as a 'woman' and there is accompanying prestige and social esteem and respect deriving from mothering especially if the children are born within a marriage. This is also true of the Shona. For Oyewumu 'mother' is a preferred and cherished self-identity of many African women^x.

However, Lewis argues that while it is indeed a cherished self-identity this mother image reinforces familiar gendered roles and ultimately reproduces patriarchal prescriptions^{xi}. Due to the fact that motherhood has long been considered as glorious, women have come to enjoy the role without questioning its oppressive side. For the Shona once a woman agrees to marry there is no question about mothering and this has become one of the major challenges in this era of HIV and AIDS.

There are a number of reported cases in Shona society where male members of the family have chased their unmarried sisters away from the home because they are a 'shame' and that they may corrupt their wives because they have failed to have husbands and women who have literally divorced their husbands and opted to be sent back to their parents because they are failing to give children to their husbands. In extreme cases some Shona women have attempted taking their own lives because they could not live with the 'sin' or is it 'curse' that they cannot become mothers or 'produce'. Others have gone to the extent of feigning pregnancy or stealing babies from hospitals and being incarcerated and eventually divorced for the offences because of the pressure to fulfill marriage expectations of becoming a mother and preserving one's marriage. To meet the cultural expectations of womanhood some of the women are known to have done some things that are not only unthinkable but also dangerous and life threatening like taking harmful concoctions some of them cancerous just to become mothers. On many occasions those who could afford to travel have driven themselves into forced exile as a way of running away from their communities and as a response to the unbearable pressure to 'produce' as expected by the society. As a result of these expectations numerous stories are told of women who have created illicit affairs for the sake of having a child, affairs that stop immediately the woman realizes she has fallen pregnant. Now in the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic the pressure that these traditional expectations place on women is not only constricting on what women can do but has become dangerous too.

While being married and a mother (belonging and producing) are central in the construction of womanhood the Shona add other virtues of character that ought to go with this womanhood. Among these are being loyal and submissive to the husband and his kin, being altruistic, being stoic, forgiving, simple, faithful, industrious and unflinchingly hospitable. When the Shona say *uyo ndiye mukadzi chaiye* (that one is a real woman) this accolade must be understood as a confirmation that the woman has demonstrated those virtues of character listed above to the satisfaction of the members of her community. Such accolades add to one's respect but they invariably promote martyrhood on the part of those women and are therefore dangerous. It is precisely for this reason that the promotion or reification and replication of these qualities of womanhood need to be re-examined and much more seriously now than ever before because of the AIDS menace.

Marriage Ambivalence

According to the Zimbabwe Human Development Report, rather than marriage being a solution to the spread of AIDS, it has now become its hearth because of the difficulties of acquiring protection and the misleading notion that marital sex is safe and also the need for children. According to the report marriage has become potentially dangerous as more women are reportedly contracting HIV and AIDS from and because of marriage. This is the extent to which the AIDS pandemic threatens to subvert in a much more serious way the whole identity of women as wives and mothers. Recent research among the Shona has revealed that more and more parents are becoming ambivalent about giving their daughters in marriage. On one hand they would want to see their daughter 'belong' and 'produce' and hence become a real woman, but on the other hand they are fully aware of the dangers that they are exposing their daughter to, for it could be their last time to see her healthy a state which they have labored to maintain her in since her birth. While they always look forward and wish for the best as they rejoice at having been honored in nurturing a daughter who has been found marriage worthy, they also find joy in having grandchildren, yet they are painfully aware that their daughter has in most cases lost dominion over her own body and self.

A church pastor and colleague confided in the writer that very few parents remain enthusiastic about marriage today. Besides some who may be concerned about the loss of income as the daughters have proved more responsible than sons in looking after parents, most enlightened parents now regard the whole marriage institution with mixed feelings. Giving one's daughter in marriage is almost like capitulating on her life and safety, a life which they had protected since her childhood. Because of the Shona culture and what society prescribes as the norms that ought to guide a good wife, a woman stands a better chance of protecting herself against HIV and AIDS outside marriage than within it. Although most enlightened parents insist today that their children visit the New Start Centers for HIV testing with their boyfriends and girlfriends before marriage, that is as far as they can go and what happens after marriage they just have to surrender to fate. These are some of the hard realities that people are confronting as a result of the HIV and AIDS disease. While she may not be completely safe from infection, today a single woman can be argued to be relatively safe than a married woman in the exposure to HIV for there are no constricting cultural norms barring her from negotiating safer sex once she decides to have it. There appears to be more stigma now in being married and then becoming widowed through AIDS than in remaining as a single mother. Digressing a little, in these days of economic hardships in Zimbabwe unmarried women have become an important source of livelihood for most of their families. Because of the absence of restrictive control imposed by husbands and culture these women roam the world freely getting jobs in the Diaspora and as such play a significant role in uplifting the status of the rest of the family members with their single income. What an insurance cover for parents at old age!

Reconstructing Womanhood

'Belonging' and 'producing' as significant markers of womanhood have important implications for HIV and AIDS prevention. This work sees the need to confront such rigid or constricting notions of womanhood that render women vulnerable to the pandemic. Gaidzanwa highlighted that images are socially constructed, continually reconstructed, struggled against, reinforced and renegotiated^{xii}. The HIV and AIDS menace whose devastating effect seems to have no end in sight soon is placing a moral imperative on society in general to transform that identity which continues to make women vulnerable by deconstructing the very foundation upon which it is built, that is, patriarchy and male prejudice. There is need to actively engage women and the rest of Shona society in redefining the images of women which are in themselves cultural constructs, in a way that is constructive and liberating for the majority of the Shona women who stand vulnerable to the disease. As Furusa argues, "women need to take it upon themselves to break the interlocking system of lies that they have been told and lies that they continue to tell themselves."^{xiii} It is ironic that in the very areas where they dominate and do much of the work that is in the rural areas, rural women find themselves still under the control of a few men the majority of whom are old fellows who have retired from their work in towns. To equip women with the power to voice their concern could start by giving them positions of responsibility where village policies are debated. This could constitute an important step in challenging male superiority that they could even take to their own bedrooms.

The primary importance of childbearing and its place as a culturally constructed essence of womanhood placed side by side with the HIV and AIDS reality must force society to take a long and sober look at itself and its traditions. AIDS requires women and everyone else to seriously think of and possibly start questioning the socially constructed and upheld conceptions of the ideal Shona woman. There is a real imperative for society to assist women construct a viable self identity, one that does not only revolve around mothering or 'producing' and having a husband or 'belonging'. The traditional picture of the ideal Shona woman has become anachronistic as it appears to have outlived its usefulness as society battles to confront the AIDS menace. For Thomas Kuhn (1996) this calls for a revolution, that is, a complete change of paradigm as the normal and the usual can no longer answer the emerging or new challenges. There is a crisis that requires a new social paradigm in order to respond to it since part of this problem arises for the Shona because of sticking to their traditional value system even under circumstances that render the values inappropriate. There is therefore need, as Tichangwa notes, to question the continued valorization of the image of the traditional Shona woman and possibly modify the prevailing social attitudes that continue to cast Shona women in their traditional mould as child bearers, domestic servants and wives in servitude to their husbands as heads of households^{xiv}. This is also a challenge for philosophy as highlighted by the Frankfurt school of philosophy. According to this school, philosophy must serve as a critical theory of society, by providing both a diagnosis of the facts of existing society and contributing to the struggle for its transformation in the interest of the oppressed and the marginalized and in this case it is the women and the girls.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In order to shift the center around which Shona women have tended to construct their selfhood and identity, it is important to suggest other rallying points that they could emphasize such that they develop or mould new identities that can empower them to confront the pandemic. One way suggested here is for women to learn from their male counterparts by first getting to understand the response to the question: what makes a man among the Shona? Research findings have revealed that being a man for the Shona means attaining a level of financial independence, having employment, an income or some level of self-sufficiency and then starting a family. It is also interesting to note that men's social recognition and their own sense of manhood suffer greatly when they lack some work and financial self-sustenance, that is, when they are just like women. Women can also move to construct this kind of selfhood for themselves by simply constructing their selfhood around similar rallying points like a profession. Such things as a career where women begin to see themselves as this or that professional can shift the foundation of their identity from the one of just being a wife and a mother which has become a liability because of the AIDS pandemic. Once women begin to see themselves outside the confines of marriage and motherhood by enhancing their self worth through the pursuit of a profession they will be better able to assert their rights including negotiating for safer sex in their unions and deciding whether they can have a child or not.

There is also need for women and the whole Shona society to confront gender essentialism and cultural essentialism. According to Nayaran gender essentialism involves assuming and constructing sharp differences about the qualities, abilities, or location of men and women while cultural essentialism assumes and constructs sharp binaries between western culture and particular other cultures^{xv}. It has been found out that cultural essentialism is normally used by the dominant members of the group to stress certain components of culture as central to a people's identity. In a patriarchal social arrangement such as that of the Shona, these so called cultural essentials are used as tools in the domination of women by emphasizing that true and authentic Shona women are those who resist the 'contamination' of westernization by sticking to their culture. The effect is that it keeps the window through which women look at the world very narrow and as a result they become incapacitated to bring about radical changes that could overhaul the social arrangement and ultimately their status in the community. Women must be alert and be in a position to question the so-called cultural essentials. Women must not be blind to the fact that in these patriarchal societies those who have the power, that is the males, often abandon or modify cultural traditions when it suits them and women must not hesitate to do the same. It is therefore the point of this work that as a disease with multiple faces, HIV and AIDS requires individuals to develop images of selfhood that are empowering, even if they may be in contradiction to established tradition.

Endnotes

ⁱ This metaphor has been borrowed from the work of Jessica A. Ogden, ‘‘Producing’ respect: the ‘proper woman’ in postcolonial Kampala’, in Werbner, R and Ranger, T. (eds) *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, London: Zed Books Ltd 1996.

ⁱⁱ This a metaphor I have decided to use to bring out the value attached to being married and the sense in which most women in Shona society pride themselves in being a wife to somebody and this often and always in contradistinction to those who have ‘failed’ to get married. When the Shona woman says *ndakawanikwa* ‘I am married’ meaning I am no longer a free lancer, the implication is that she now belongs to somebody as his wife and according to Shona culture she can no longer entertain any suitors.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Zimbabwe Human development Report: Redirecting our responses to HIV and AIDS*, Harare: Institute of Development Studies, 2003.

^{iv} These three notions are developed by U. Nayaran, ‘Essence of cultures and a sense of history: A Feminist critique of cultural essentialism’ in P.H. Coutzee and A.P.J. Roux, *The African Philosopher Reader*, London: Routledge, 2003.

^v V. Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*, London: Routledge 1995.

^{vi} This is in apparent reference to a number works by a number of scholars among whom are: M. Gelfand, *Growing up in Shona Society*, Gwelo:Mambo Press 1979; M.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, Gweru Mambo Press 1987; M.F.C. Bourdillon, *Where are the Ancestors? Changing culture in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications 1997.

^{vii} R. Gaidzanwa, *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature*. Harare: The College Press 1985, 33.

^{viii} E. Schimdt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona women in the history of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*. Harare: Baobab Books 1996.

^{ix} Ogden, 176.

^x O. Oyewumi, *Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1997.

^{xi} D. Lewis, 'Editorial' *Feminist Africa: Changing Cultures*. 2 (2003) October/November.

^{xii} Gaidzanwa, 99.

^{xiii} Furusa, M. (2006) 'The muse of history and politics of gender representation in Zimbabwean women's literature' in Mguni, Z., Furusa, M. and Magosvongwe, R. (eds) *African Womanhood in Zimbabwean Literature: New critical perspectives on women's literature in African language*. Harare: College Press, 2006, 11.

^{xiv} W. Tichangwa, *Beyond Inequalities: Women in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Southern African Research and Documentation Centre, 1998.

^{xv} Nayaran, 417.

References

Bakare-Yusuf, B. (2003) 'Determinism: The Phenomenology of African female existence' *Feminist Africa: Changing Cultures*, Issue 2, October/November.

Burr, V. (1995) *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge.

Furusa, M. (2006) 'The muse of history and politics of gender representation in Zimbabwean women's literature' in Mguni, Z., Furusa, M. and Magosvongwe, R. (eds) *African Womanhood in Zimbabwean Literature: New critical Perspectives on Women's Literature in African Language*. Harare: College Press.

Gaidzanwa, R. (1985) *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature*. Harare: The College Press.

Jackson, H. (2002) *AIDS Africa: Continent in Crisis*. Harare: SAFAIDS.

Lewis, D. (2003) 'Editorial' *Feminist Africa: Changing Cultures*. 2 October/November.

Meena, R. (1992) *Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues*. Harare: SAPES Books.

Nayaran, U. (2003) 'Essence of cultures and a sense of history: A Feminist critique of cultural essentialism' in P.H. Coutzee and A.P.J. Roux, *The African Philosopher Reader*. London: Routledge.

Ogden, J.A. (1996) 'Producing' respect: the 'proper woman' in postcolonial Kampala', in Werbner, R and Ranger, T. (eds) *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Oyewumi, O. (1997) *Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minnesota: Minnesota University Press.

Schimdt, E. (1996) *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*. Harare: Baobab Books.

Sticher, S.B. and Parpart, J.L. (1988) (eds) *Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and Workplace*. London: Westview Press.

Tichangwa, W. (1998) *Beyond Inequalities: Women in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Southern African Research and Documentation Centre.

Vijfhuizen, C. (2002) 'The people you live with' *Gender Identities and Social practices, beliefs and power in the livelihoods of Ndau women and men in village with an irrigation Scheme in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press.

Zimbabwe Human development Report: Redirecting our responses to HIV and AIDS, (2003) Harare: IDS and UNDP.