

Social Construction of Gender, Language and the Reduction of Women's Space in the Ndebele Culture

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Abstract

This article is an analysis of social construction of gender in a Ndebele culture and the reduction of women's space in that culture. It is also an assessment of the portrayal of Ndebele women in Ndebele language texts. Socially constructed women's constricted space and dependency are also discussed. Theories of gender socialisation explain socially constructed differences between men and women. The interactionist theory and development of self-concept explain women's perceptions of themselves and how they are perceived by their communities. Reproduction theories serve to explain the perpetuation and maintenance of existing perceptions. The ABC of gender analysis Framework in particular, the narratological model was applied to analyses illustrations, language and interaction of males and females in a Ndebele culture. The content analysis of Ndebele novels was done to elicit qualitative data on portrayal and perceptions of women. Findings revealed that socialisation in general results in gendered skills. Gender socialisation in a Ndebele culture is not only for exclusion, but also for demeaning, controlling, manipulating and marginalising women. Males are prepared for the public and women for the private sphere. Marriage is valued as a form of control of women in both the public and private spheres. The paper recommends (Gender and Development) GAD approach to development, deconstruction of stereotypical language and gender attitudes. Also crucial is the redefining and defying of existing norms. Resocialisation which is designed to change existing attitudes and beliefs is also necessary to instil public norms, values and behaviors expected in different modern public institutions. Gender resocialization, gender education, conscientisation and awareness campaigns are important to deconstruct gender attitudes and stereotypes.

Key words: Gender Socialization, Social Construction, Gendered Language, Gendered Attitudes, Woman's Space

Introduction

Women's space in a Ndebele culture is determined by socially constructed perceptions of women embedded in the Ndebele language and culture. Gender socialisation processes shape women's identities, self-concept, privileges, benefits, responsibilities, and treatment and behaviour expectations in the interaction process.

The woman's space and freedom is constricted. Women's participation and visibility in public institutions like workplaces, churches, educational institutions,

and community depends on socially constructed differences between males and females and how a woman is perceived in the Ndebele culture. Relations between males and females in the interaction process either create distance between the two genders or remove women from the public space to confine them to the domestic sphere. Women and men live in different worlds.

Language is one vehicle for gender exclusion and everyone growing up is socialised through a language tradition with its forms of speech which shape gendered attitudes. Language can be used to belittle, bestow status, exclude or to control behaviour through the negative social constructions of language. It is for the above reasons that the paper seeks to assess social construction of gender, gender socialization through the language to assess the implications of these on women's space in the Ndebele culture. Language reflects women's conditions, status and independence in their societies. Language can be used to mock, belittle, demean, embarrass, exclude or to control behavior through positive or negative social constructions of it.

Methodology

The paper discusses the perceptions of women in a Ndebele culture within a constructionist perspective. Theories of gender socialization for example manipulation, canalisation, imitation, self-socialisation and role play are discussed as explanations for gender differences. The interactionist theory, in particular, the development of identities and the self-concept serves as explanations for how women are perceived by themselves and the society at large. Social reproduction theories explain the perpetuation and maintenance of existing women's perceptions.

An ABC of gender analysis model which uses the narratological analysis is used to explore portraits of women in written documents, language use and social interaction. The model operates largely within qualitative design. The focus of the model is on gender identity of actors, activities in terms of gender, hierarchy of actions and activities and technology used. The nature of speech is also explored that is, who speaks and is listened to in terms of gender and whose speech carries more weight in terms of gender? Focus of activity by gender is also considered, that is where the activity takes place, public or private and also the value given to the environment. Issues of power are also crucial to explore. For example, the source of power, its nature, that is, who has it, exercises it and how it is maintained and perpetuated? Wanjiku and Masheti (1995:16) assert that "language is the most subtle way of cementing gender biases through conventional habits of speaking and writing". Forms of gendered speech will be discussed in this paper, namely, naming, order of presentation of males and females, that is,

whether males and females are autonomous individuals or are only in relation to males? Also whether they are corollary or complementary to males? Generics meant to be neutral is analyzed rigorously because they carry unacknowledged gender biases through use of language of dominance, difference, indirect, relational or social verbal aggression (Cameron, Eckert, Holmes and Tannen, 2013). These are applied to Ndebele literature and in everyday use of language in interactions in the Ndebele culture.

Theoretical (Framework)

Perspectives on the formation of female identity and self

The perspective underlying this study is the constructionist perspectives that posit that gender and language are man-made (social constructs). Wood (2011) notes that language, verbal and non-verbal reflects and reinforces cultural views and values about gender. A number of processes, for example, manipulation, canalisation, verbal appellations self-socialisation work together to produce a gendered individual (Wharton, 2012). She further notes that children live in a gendered social world and these experiences shape their development as females and males. Coltrane cited in Wharton (2012:145) point out that '... even before they are verbal, young children are developing gender categories and making generalizations about people and objects in their environment.'

According to the interactionist perspective, social interaction is important in shaping gender, language meanings and human behaviour. It is what people do when they are in one another's presence (Henslin, 1999 and Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). Social interaction refers to everyday encounters that we make with other people. In interaction, there is social action which is 'the sum total of behaviors that occur when two or more people come into contact for any purpose at any time in any situation' (Menzies, 1982:46). Interactionists are of the view that, human behaviour is not pre-determined by internal biological influences but respond to meanings attached to action. Personality or identity is not inborn but socially constructed during interaction (Horton and Hunt, 1984; Schaefer, 2006). In the same vein, George Herbert Mead in Barnard and Burgess (2004) and Wharton (2012) argue that an individual's social identity and understanding of the world is based upon the shared experiences of interacting with others. They further point out that one becomes a social being through socialisation which is the interaction between the child and those around. As children interact with parents, brothers and sisters in the family, they learn who they are and how to behave in a particular situation. Similarly when girls interact with family members they learn how to behave as girls. Coltrane cited in Wharton (2012:145) argue that 'infants enter the world much more prepared to extract information from their environment than social scientists once thought...'

Development of Self-Concept (identity)

Charles Cooley's Self-Concept

He argues that people develop feelings on the self based on what we believe are other's judgments of us. We behave according to self-feelings of these judgments. We see ourselves through the eyes of other people. Mead in Barnard and Burgess (2004) views this as taking the attitude of others and Charles Cooley calls this looking glass self. This means that the person views himself from the point of view of others. Other people are looking glass on which we see our image. We pay attention to behavior cues of others (Schaefer, 2006). Children develop self-identity by putting themselves in one's position and look at their actions from the other person's view. Cooley's argument is that self-concept is socially created during the process of interaction. Individuals and society are partners in shaping personalities and behaviours. This is supported by Herbert Mead's belief that self is made of (I) the individual, and the (me), the socialized self that thinks in line with the expectations of others. Women view themselves through the eyes of the society or culture in which they live. A woman uses the society's perceptions of a woman, as a looking glass-self. It is these perceptions from the significant and generalized others that shape women's identity (self). If the self is made of (I), the individual that wants freedom, she is labeled as not 'being a woman'. She is viewed as a woman if the self is made of 'me' that fulfils the expectations of society.

Labeling and self-fulfilling prophecy

Labeling focuses on significant labels like names and reputation given to people. These become part of self and help to set people to internalize behavior according to labels (Henslin, 1999 and Newman (2010). By accepting judgments and labels by others; we are socialized into accepting prophecies which others make about us (Mead in Barnard and Burgess, 2004). Right from birth up to adulthood, a Ndebele woman is socialised to fulfill and internalise the view of being a child or a little person. This perception is learnt during different interaction processes discussed in this paper.

Reproduction theories, for example, Pierre Bourdieu and Louis Althusser in Haralambos and Holborn (2004) argue that values of dominant classes are produced in capitalist systems in order to maintain privileges for the powerful. Pierre Bourdieu views socialization in the family as reproducing and maintaining existing status quo by producing values and norms expected in that culture (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985; Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). Marxists feminists also believe that cultural and patriarchal values that benefit men are reproduced in the family through socialisation. Sheldon (1990) points out that socialization inculcates into children the society's negative attitudes towards women. This is

echoed by Wharton (2012) who posits that males have stronger motives to avoid all that is associated with females and femininity and children become skilled in decoding gender messages in the world around them.

Females are rarely referred to, everyday, everybody uses a 'he' more than a "she" even on things that may not be a "he". Female invisibility is a way of demeaning (Sheldon, 1990). Women are socialised for exclusion and invisibility. Male generic language excludes females, for example, mankind, businessman, spokesman and fellowman (Wood, 2011). This is supported by Cameron et al (2013) who says gender language of dominance reflect power structures in society.

Women are culturally deprived just like children from middle class backgrounds. Nell Keddie in Barnard and Burgess (2004) point out that the concept cultural deprivation implies that the culture that the targeted children are part of is in some way deficient. The concept was first put to describe and explain what was happening to prevent certain children from doing well in schools. The inability arises due to the values and attitudes they brought to the school evident in their language, life experiences, personality and ability to think. Their culture is not recognized just like women's cultural values thereby reproducing culture of subordination on the part of women which Pierre Bourdieu refers to as cultural reproduction (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002 and Chobby, 2011).

Middle-class children and women also lack the cultural capital demanded by public institutions like schools and workplaces. Cultural capital according to Beinstein in Blackledge and Hunt (1985) and Barnard and Burgess (2004) and refer to linguistic codes, values, experiences and attitudes demanded by public institutions like schools and work places. Schools, workplaces and community expect children in this case females to exhibit the cultural capital of the dominant class which is congruent with schools and workplace values. Children from lower class backgrounds like women are culturally deprived of the characteristics of the middle class school and consequently the workplace. Their behaviour contradicts with the expectations of public institutions thereby limiting women's space in public institutions.

The theory of cultural capital and cultural deprivation applies to gender socialisation which equips boys with the cultural capital for public institutions and deprives girls of it. The dominant class imposes their culture as legitimate just as men impose their knowledge as "the" knowledge. Michael Young cited in Blackledge and Hunt (1985) and Squires (2008) note that monopoly and control of knowledge is very crucial. Middle class defines knowledge, intelligence and classifies it for schools ignoring lower-class children's experiences. Similarly women's knowledge and everyday's experiences are not valued.

Gender Socialisation in a Ndebele Society Imitation

Bandura in Schaefer (2006) argues that imitation plays a significant role in socialising children into adult's roles and responsibilities. Girls and young women in a Ndebele society imitate the subordinate roles and characters played by adult female counterparts. They are perceived and perceive themselves as people of low self-esteem who should play submissive roles. Adult females need material and non-material protection. Indra (2010) reveals that patriarchal powers are still prevalent throughout the world. Patriarchy is also preserved at the expense of human rights doctrines. The provisions of Human Rights have that women have a right to liberty, security, property and freedom of expression and conscience. CEDAW as a powerful international human right instrument reflects global determination to achieve gender equality through enhancing women's rights. Despite these revolutionary efforts, women continue to play subservience role compared to men.

Canalisation

Oakley in Haralambos and Holborn (2004) points out that canalisation does not only affect behaviour, but does prepare boys and girls for future occupations. Boys play with toys like wire cars, bicycles, blocks of bricks, guns, arrows and radios. These enable boys to be physically strong, protective, and mechanical and to be precise.

In Ndebele society every man has to have a spear, a knobkerrie, an axe and a knife. These are symbols for defense. A man who does not have these in his possession is viewed as a woman, a coward. At the burial of heads of families, the son, who is the heir stands in front of the grave holding the father's spear throughout the burial process (Ndlovu and Ndlovu, 1995; Bozongwana, 1983). This is an indication that (the heir) takes over the headship, which is symbolised by the father's spear, he is now holding and possessing. Wives, mothers, sisters and daughters sit and cry with faces looking downwards. The heir and other sons are not to drop tears. '*Inyembezi zendoda ziwela esifubeni*' (a man should not drop tears). Women in this family depend on the protection of the heir and other sons. To prepare for such roles, Ndebele boys play with toys of this kind; stones, sticks, knobkerries, homemade knives, axes, wires and dog pets. Such toys and roles enable them to be independent and take tough and leading roles at home, school and work places.

Wharton (2012) cites that parental socialisation is the primary source of most gender differences in traits and personality disposition. Maccoby, Snow and Jacklin

cited in (ibid) say one such area of differences concern toys, games and childhood activities. Boys tend to be given activity oriented toys that make them to be tougher and more physical than girls. On the other hand, girls play with kitchen utensils, for example, tins, broken pottery pots, sticks (as pins) bucks (as spoons), dolls, grass and reeds for making mats (*icansi*) and dishes (*izitsha*). Girls also use mud (*umdaka*) to make clay pots, floor their huts while boys use clay to make bulls for fighting, during their competitions (Ndlovu and Ndlovu, 1995). The skills that girls acquire are exclusively for domestic purposes, for example, loving, caring, craft work and household care. Such skills even when transferred to the work places are not valued as Marxists feminists argue (Bryson, 1992). Household work is either not remunerated or has a low wage.

Role Play (*Amandlwane*)

Maccoby in Wharton (2012) views role play as self-socialisation where children become active participants in their socialisation process at an early age. Crossing gender boundaries has social consequences and fathers react more negatively than mothers towards sons engaging in cross-gender typed play and toys. During role play boys concentrate on outdoor activities like hunting, farming, livestock herding, clearing forests and fencing while girls do reproductive roles like household chores, provision of emotional support and care for others. This has implications or messages relating to work in the private (home) and public sphere (workplace). Males are public figures while women should spend most of their time in the home and its surroundings. As boys herd cattle in the forest, they experience independence in decision making. They explore nature to make discoveries. Girls do most of the home duties under the guidance of grandmothers, mothers and sisters. This creates dependency, hinders initiatives and destroys confidence in girls. This happens when they search for wild vegetables, prepare meals, grinding, pounding, flooring among others.

Language and the Perception of a Ndebele Woman

Cameron et al (2013) noted that there is social verbal aggression which is directed towards damaging women's self-esteem, social status sometimes demeaning and embarrassing. In a Ndebele society a woman is viewed as a perpetual minor symbolised by the term *owesintwana*. The origin of the word can be traced to grammatical Zulu constructions, names (*amabizo, umntwana, intwana or umuntwana*). *Umntwana* is a child. The name (*ibizo*) *Umntwana* has the prefix (*isiqalo*) *um* – and the stem – *ntwana*. The name is found in *isigaba* (class) 1 according to the classification of Doke and McIntof in Nyembezi (1956). The plural is *abantwana* children found in *isigaba* (class) 2 of names. Perception of a Ndebele woman is evident in this language.

Another meaning can be derived from the name (*ibizo*) into (a thing). According to Nyembezi (1956) and Mnkandla (1999), *ukunciphisa* (to make something small) will change this word to *intwana* meaning a little thing. *Into* is in *isigaba* (class) 9 and 5 according to Meinhof and Doke respectively (Mnkandla, 1999). To change *into* to *intwana*, the last vowel *o* is changed to *-w-* or removed so that *-ana-* or *-wana* is added as (*isijobelelo*).

Ukunciphisa examples (*izibonelo*)

Into > w+ ana = - *intwana*

Into > - o + wana = - *intwana*

Into + *Kazi* for *ubulili intokazi*. -*Kazi* shows femaleness (*ubulili besifazana*).

Umntu (a person) is another name for (*ibizo*) in *isigaba* (class 1 and the plural is *abantu* (people) *Ukunciphisa* (making small) demands that either the last vowel - *u* be removed so that *-wana* is added or that the vowel be changed (*ukulwangisa* to > - *ntsh* - . *Ukunciphisa* (*isibonelo* 1).

Umntu (-*u* + *wana* = *umuntwana* (small person)

Ukulwangisa (*isibonelo* 2)

Umntu- nt -> - *ntsh* - + *wana* = *umuntshwana* (a small person).

Whichever word is formed *Umntwana*, *intwana* or *umuntshwana*; all refer to either a child, something small or a small person. *Intokazi* shows feminity that the object or person is a she. -*Kazi* in Ndebele/Zulu grammar designates feminity (female sex). *Owesi* - means she belongs to a group of minors or children. Examples are evident in greetings. If one asks a man '*Banjani abantwana?*' (How are the children?). This is inclusive of women. However, if the same is directed to a woman, it does not include the man. A man can also introduce the wife and children saying: *Laba ngabantwabami* meaning these are my children. How a woman is viewed and treated in a Ndebele society is based on the above perceptions.

Language and manipulation in a Ndebele Culture

Manipulation has to with attention given to the boy or girl child. Oakley in Giddens (2001) points out that parents tend to be softer with girls than boys. Girls are attended to immediately when they cry or get into trouble instilling softness and tenderness in girls. The following are Ndebele terms used in a Ndebele culture to refer to little girls when they cry or get hurt.

Dade - shortened word for sister (*dadewethu*)

Nka or *nkazana* - meaning little girl

MaMo or *MaNcu* - shortened for *MaMoyo* or *MaNcube*

MaMo or *MaNcu* means the little daughter of *Moyo* and *Ncube* respectively. Girls through this are encouraged to be soft-hearted, gentle and to be interested in

personal relationships which Tallcott Parsons in Haralambos and Holborn (2004) refer to as expressive roles. Girls are likely to concentrate on comfort or seeking attention instead of perseverance and independence. Boys are taught to be aggressive, enduring and independent. Wood (2011) point out that women are also trivialized as little darling, sweet thing, baby or chick which all reduce women.

Language of Appendage and Control

Language and symbols make the main medium of social interaction. (O'Donnell, 1992). It is the chief means of constructing and communicating meanings. A rigorous analysis study of the Ndebele culture and language reveals that women are viewed as not autonomous individuals. Lakoff cited in Wood (2011) reveals that language reflects women s' conditions .They do not even have their own names, but bear the father s' until they exchange it for that of a husband. Wanjiku and Masheti (1995) refer to this as being 'corollary or complementary' to males. References to them are through male relatives. The following are examples from Nyembezi (1956).

Nkosazana Masuku (unmarried daughter of *Masuku*)

MaNdiweni (daughter of *Ndiweni*)

MkaKhumalo (wife of *Khumalo*)

OkaZikode (child of *Zikode*)

Nkosikazi Dube (Mrs. Dube)

On the other hand, men are independent and their titles can stand on their own.

Examples are:-

Nkosana (first born heir)

Ngqabutho (first born boy)

Umnumzana (man among men)

Siwela (Mr. Siwela)

The implication is that, while men are complete on their own, females are incomplete without a male. Man is designated as an individual whereas the wife is defined only by her relationship to the man (Wood, 2011).

Naming

Wanjiku and Masheti (1995) note that naming does not only shape gendered attitudes, but also bestows status and character. This is also echoed by Mead in O'Donnell (2000) who points out that ability to name objects, feelings and ideas enable individuals to talk with others and engage in dialogue with themselves in order of presentation. They are considered after men and whatever they do is viewed as complementary.

The name has meaning to the owner and those around. The two end up having a shared interpretation of the meanings during everyday social interaction. Vander-Zanden (1979) noted that boys are given short, brisk and hard hitting names. These relate to expected personalities, responsibilities and positions in the family and society. This result from gender stereotypical belief that men are active, rational and strong and that woman are passive and emotionally weak (Wood, 2011, Wharton, 2012). In the Ndebele society names for boys are achievement or task oriented while those for girls show motherly love or expected behaviour of a woman which is not achievement oriented.

Examples of boys' names:-

<i>Mqobi</i>	(conqueror)
<i>Mehluli</i>	(victor)
<i>Mandla</i>	(power)
<i>Busani</i>	(rule)
<i>Nkosana</i>	(heir)
<i>Nkosi</i>	(king)
<i>Nduna</i>	(chief)
<i>Butho</i>	(regiment/soldier)
<i>Mbuso</i>	(kingdom)

The above names' either bestow power and status or shape the character of the boy.

Examples of girls' names:-

<i>Nobuhle</i>	(mother of beauty)
<i>Nothando</i>	(mother of love)
<i>Nosisa</i>	(mother of mercy)
<i>Nesisa</i>	(mercy)
<i>Sithabile</i>	(we are happy)
<i>Siduduziwe</i>	(we have been comforted)
<i>Sibongile</i>	(we are thankful)
<i>Sidanisiwe</i>	(we are disappointed)
<i>Sehlulwe</i>	(we are defeated)
<i>Simangele</i>	(we are surprised)
<i>Sideliwe</i>	(we are rejected)
<i>Sigconiwe</i>	(we have been smeared)

While boys' names have to do with success, girls' names have to do with the service they should offer (love, mercy, expected physical appearance (beauty) or about the feelings of the family at her birth. For example being happy, thankful, surprised, disappointed and defeated. Women are excluded from achievement

oriented tasks that are viewed as male domain/space. For example, rule, power, struggles, victories, heir ship and kingships are all male domains.

Gendered language in conversations

Squires (2009), Lakoff cited in Wood (2011) and Cameron et al (2013) posit that language is sexist and tends to exclude women from certain styles of language talk, topics discussed and arenas. Research by Lakoff revealed that men talk more in public meetings than women because they are more comfortable than women. Men spend 10.66 seconds compared to 3-10 seconds for women. Men were also found to be talkative when it comes to politics, sports, education and businesses while women talk more about family and community issues. Men stories revolve around them while those for women revolve around men and children. Men use report style of factual information while women use rapport style concerned with building and maintaining relationships (Deborah and Tannen cited in Cameron et al, 2013). Feminine speech support others, consider feelings, foster closeness, invite others to speak and encourage personal disclosures (Lakoff in Cameron et al, 2013). She further notes that men's questions are genuine demanding an answer while those of women are rhetoric to engage the other person in the conversation. As a result women ask more questions.

Men interrupt women and do not give verbal recognition of the contributions made by women in the conversation. In the Ndebele culture for a woman to interrupt a man in talk is highly regarded as being rude. However, in some cultures it is regarded as a token of engagement and interest in the conversation. Cameron et al (2013) observed that girls and women link their utterances to previous speaker rather than introducing new topics. This excludes women from decision making and from being initiators of the conversation. Women are also expected to be polite and apologetic in speech. All these factors tend to silence and disadvantage women.

Exclusion of women from hierarchies of position in the Ndebele culture

An analysis of Ndebele language reveals that titles and hierarchies of positions are gendered. Males assume powerful posts associated with privileges. They make decisions and have the ability to force others to do what they prefer (Wanjiku and Masheti, 1995). Male generic language excludes women from the world of business, work and leadership positions (Wood, 2011). Titles of positions in a Ndebele society reveal one's gender (ubulili) (Nyembezi, 1956). Being male or female is shown by (isijobelelo) - *Kazi* reflecting femaleness. Though grammatically, the titles for female positions can be worked out, in everyday language, such titles do not exist because traditionally, women did not and were not expected to hold any positions of

authority. Most powerful positions were stereotypical, male centered because they were based on masculine characteristics like courage, hard work, power, leadership and control. Women were not socialised to acquire these in a Ndebele patriarchal society.

Male positions

Inkosi (king)
Induna (chief)
Umlisa (headman)
Indunankulu (provincial chief)
Umtshutshisi (prosecutor)
Umantshi (judge)
Dokotela (doctor)
Umlimisi (agritex officer)

Female counter parts

Nkosazana (princess)
Indunakazi (female chief)
Umlisakazi (female headman)
Indunankulukazi (female provincial chief)
Umthshutshisikazi (female prosecutor)
Umantshikazi (female judge)
Umongikazi (female nurse)
umlumisikazi (female agritex officer)

Titles like *indunakazi*, *indunankulukazi*, *umtshutshisikazi*, *Umantshikazi* and *Umlisakazi* do not exist in everyday Ndebele language because these titles and positions of power were exclusively for males. Changing the title to femaleness, in some instances, leads to the changes in the meaning. For example *Umongikazi* does not mean a female doctor but a nurse or one who takes care of an ill person even at home (*umongi*). *Umlimi* is a farmer but *umlimisi* or *umlumisikazi*, however, refer to a male and female agricultural extension officer. Such titles do not only affect female carrier aspiration but even participation in community leadership roles thereby constricting women's space. Traditionally, the positions were considered to be out of reach for women. For the few women who have taken up the positions, the tendency is to use titles for males. Women were and still have limited space in public affairs of the community. This was echoed by Wood (2011) who noted that parallel language differs in meaning. For example:

Master	mistress
Wizard	witch
Patron	matron

The above do not carry same messages about men and women's roles in society.

Games played: Formation of gender stereotypes and gendered skills

The types of outdoor games played by boys and girls in a Ndebele society differed. The skills imparted by these games had implications to both public space and skills for men and women. According to Ndlovu (1995:69) in most instances boys played games that prepared them for the public space. Those that imparted skills of counting, protection, physical strength, aiming and courage. There were also games which boys and girls played together but these also shaped boys and girls to be different, for example

Nyama yembongolo kheth' omthandayo

In this game boys and girls were separated and boys were given the opportunity to select girls they love. Girls did not make any choices but had to submit to boys who would have chosen them whether they wanted them or not. Boys initiated and girls submitted unquestioningly. This taught boys to be initiative and girls to be submissive. The other game was *Bantwana Bantwana wozani ekhaya* (children come home). In this game in most instances, lions are boys. Girls are either mothers calling their children or are children being called home. The children run home trying to avoid being caught by lions. The game was meant to instill courage to children and males were assumed to have the courage already.

Beside mixed games played at home in the evenings, boys had games they played in the forests while herding cattle. These were:

Ukubhukutsha (swimming)

Swimming was meant to build physique through using legs and arms on water. It was also for survival tactics and rescue operations when one drowns. The skills learnt were *ukuntsheza* (sustaining one's self above water), *Ukucwila* (immersion) and *ingeqe* (backstroke). As a result during the rainy seasons boys crossed flooded rivers. Though girls did and still do swim they rarely do *ingeqe*. Boys could swim everyday herding cattle. In most cases females were and still are assisted by males when crossing flooded rivers. Rescue operations in wells, pools, dams and rivers are mostly done by males even today.

There was also *ukubhaqa insema* (using sharpened sticks) to pierce a rolling melon. This taught precision and aiming. Males were expected to pierce wild animals in motion using spears or arrows during hunting expeditions. They were also supposed to be precise in wars piercing other warriors in motion. Hunting and wars were public ventures for men. These games were and still are a preparation for future role in the public space. Another game was *ingqindi* and *ukuqwaqwazana* for boys (Ndlovu and Ndlovu, 1995) which was fighting using fists or sticks to instill endurance to pain and also to teach the spirit of competition. In whatever boys encountered or encounter, the Ndebele society expects them to persevere and not to surrender. As a result in homes, workplaces and communities, men persevere more than women when the going gets tough, especially in violent situations, which demand emotional and physical strength.

Women s' Private and mens' Public sphere

Herding is a male responsibility in a Ndebele society. Females herd livestock if there is a labour crisis. Herding enabled boys to spend most of their daytimes in the forests while girls spend most of their time either in the home or fields. Important economic activities took place in the forests or fields. Every evening cattle and

calves are counted to ensure that they are all in and secure. This helped boys to familiarise with numbers. They also learnt colours of cattle, types of pastures, grass, trees, roots, animals, mountains and rivers. In Ndebele culture, cattle are named according to their colours. For example *ncwabakazi* if it is white and brown, *bhudungukazi* if it has a black head and *gwayimana* if it has big horns.

The Ndebele language especially proverbs are socially constructed through observations of wildlife, wild vegetation and domestic animals. In Nyamambi (1975) there are 315 Ndebele proverbs based on observation of the natural environment. Examples are:-

Wamlahlisa okwenyongo yenyathi (was thrown away like gall bladder of a buffalo)

Walithatha iqanda lentshe (has taken the egg of an ostrich).

Imamba yelukile, ubuchakide buchelesile (The snake *Imamba* is out grazing and the weasel is happy)

Umkhwenyana yingxoza (a son in-law is a bark to be used by anyone)

Ingwe idla ngamabala (beauty of a leopard is seen by its colour)

Umthwente uhlaba usamila (a thorny plant pierces even in its infancy)

Oginya amaganu ngolomphumelo obanzi (the one who swallows gums knows the waste opening is big enough)

To draw meanings of these proverbs one has to understand nature. Males, because of their interaction with nature have a better understanding of it. This is echoed by eco-feminists Vandana Shiva in Momsen (2004) who argues that women are excluded from natural environments and scientific knowledge that relates to the natural environment. In the forests, boys deal with countable nouns, fruits, cattle, animals, stones among others. On the other hand, at home and the fields girls work with unaccountables like grain, water, mealie-meal, soil, milk, vegetables, serve for plates, cups, pins and pots which make up few items. Girls also work with buckets or dishes of water, basket of mealie-meal, and bundles of vegetables. There is no need of additions and subtractions but simple mixing for example water and soil, water and mealie-meal, *sadza* and milk. Boys are likely to learn counting, subtraction and addition at an earlier age than girls. This might have some implications on women's space in the public sphere in particular the fields of maths and accounting.

Demeaning and Discriminatory Relations Between men and women

In a Ndebele culture some phrases used to refer to women reveal that women are not only perceived as children but are looked down upon. They are sometimes referred to as *Isidwaba* (dress). *Isidwaba* originally is a skin of a cat. The phrase is more of an insult because a cat is an animal looked down upon though useful. It is praised mostly for smartness which is a gender stereotype for women. A cat is

also cunning when dealing with enemies. Women are also viewed as dangerous and cunning especially when dealing with enemies. The term *Isidwaba* is commonly used in a Ndebele society to refer to a woman *umfazi* or *Umntu wesintwana* (female). The common sayings are:-

I do not discuss with *Isidwaba*

A proper man is not expected to spend the whole day with *izidwaba*.

The above means that there is no fruitful discussion that one can make with a woman and men should not waste most of their time with women.

In a conversation between a Dynamos and Highlanders supporter, a Highlander supporter on radio had these words:-

Dynamos cannot do anything to us Highlanders.

I Dynamos *ngumfazi* (Dynamos is a woman)

Highlanders and Dynamos are two powerful soccer teams in the Zimbabwean soccer league. The words of the supporter revealed that a woman cannot do anything to a man. Men should not be outdone by women in any venture. Men and women do not operate at the same level, women cannot compete with men.

Males are also viewed as enemies of females and not their counterparts. Female relationships with males are viewed with suspicion. This is evidenced by sayings like:-

Owesilisa yisitha sowesifazana (males are female enemies.)

Ukuthi Umntu agcine ubuntombi bakhe kumele aphunge izibungu lenyoni. Laba ngabafana labadala angakhuliyo (Mnkandla, 1999).

For a girl to remain pure she should be careful with insects and birds who are reckless boys and men.

The above cautions girls to be careful when relating to boys and men. They should distance themselves from them. Females are not to trust and to be close to boys and men as colleagues in class, workplaces and in the community. This confines women to the domestic sphere away from 'dangerous male' environments. Male environments are not 'safe' for women. This is echoed by Butter in Wood (2011) who cites that even in non-verbal language women are expected to distance themselves from men. They should regulate body interaction, posture, eye contact, personal space and touch. Women also have cultural ways of expressing their humour. Such beliefs go against current gender and development approach that calls for equal opportunities, participation and peaceful co-existence of males and females, in all spheres of life (private and public) (Moser,1993, March ,Smith and Mukhopadhyaya,1999).

Behaviour Expectations of Males and Females

The theory of cultural capital and cultural deprivation applies to gender socialisation as gender socialisation conditions gender behaviour for the private and public spheres. It can be argued that in the Ndebele society, girls are culturally deprived because they are not socialised into norms and values of public institutions as preparation for future occupations. Some norms and values contradict with the expectations of public presentations. For example, children in a Ndebele society, looking straight into an adult's face especially girls is a sign of disrespect. However, in schools and work places looking straight to the teacher, or manager or instructor is a sign of attentiveness. Girls in a Ndebele culture have to lower their eyes *ukukhophoza* especially when dealing with elders and males. Sileya, (1980) argue that the school and home culture may contradict with moral values. The same applies to public or workplaces. For example in public places, girls (women) are expected to argue logically and confidently whereas at home, the Ndebele culture discourages them from being argumentative (*inkani*). A woman has to talk when asked to do so. Such views are strengthened by idioms like *ukumisana lowesilisa kubi* (Mhlabi, 1981), meaning that challenging a man is a bad thing. If an argument breaks out, a woman has to be quite or pretend to agree with the speaker (Cameron et al, 2013).

However, schools, workplaces and community activities demand that they actively participate in debates, discussions with colleagues and to make decisive decisions. Both males and females are expected to be initiative today's public institutions. The common reproach is *Umntu ongumfazi kahambeli isilisa phambili* meaning that a woman cannot lead or decide for men. Girls and women lower their voices and tilt their heads in an apologetic manner when talking (Wood, 2011). However, they are expected to speak with authority in today's public institutions. Their contributions should be heard at the back of the classroom or in a community or workplace gathering.

At home girls are not called to participate in discussing important matters but can be called to listen to a discussion. The common saying is *umfazi angakutshelani* meaning that nothing useful or fruitful can come out of a woman. However, in meetings, workshops and interviews nowadays females are expected to be competent in mixed groups sometimes leading the discussions. As a result of such gender socialisation, males are likely to dominate and to be competent. Such type of socialisation instills passivity, obedience and conformity of females thereby limiting their space and full participation in the public sphere.

Majoring on 'Minors': Beauty and Presentability

In addition, women's time and attention tends to be wasted in attempts to meet behavioural expectations of their culture. Women's beauty and being presentable

is emphasised in a Ndebele culture. Girls and women attend to their faces at break, lunch and home time instead of competing in completing work for the day. They carry to work and school mirrors, combs, scrunches, hairpins and face powders in their handbags or satchels. Precious time is lost in these endeavors while men devote their time to schooling and work. Women also pay attention to their dressing, walk, talk, sitting manner and even laughter. Girls are cautioned against careless laughers. *Ungahleki isikhwe uhleko lwenkunini lokubiza abafana*. Girls are not to laugh like whores fetching firewood trying to draw the attention of males. Wood (2011) cites that women have their cultural ways of expressing their humour. Boys and men do not bother about how they laugh, dress, talk or sitting manner. In fact boys' styles of sitting at home, school and workplaces enable them to stand up fast. Males at home sit on stools while females sit on mats made of goat skins and reeds, with legs folded one on top of the other. Standing up is slow and attention has to be paid to dresses. Women are subjected to strict code of behaviour expectations in the home, school, workplaces and community. Women's freedom of space and action is limited hence constricting their full participation in public spheres.

Marriage, a form of Women's Control in the Private and Public Space

The standard measure for a good woman in a Ndebele culture is marriage not achievement. In fact marriage itself is an achievement. Women are counseled to seek and endure in marriage. Failure or success of a marriage depends on a woman, *nguye owehluleka ukuqiniseka uzenza uminamina*. This means it is the woman who has failed to endure. Marriage subordinates women and make them invisible without male counter-parts. Marriage is a way of keeping women in their rightful places under men. This is evidenced by the following sayings:-

Umfazi ngoleguma

This means that a good woman is the one who has a home and a husband of her own.

Emendweni kuyabekezelwa,

In marriage one has to endure. Marriage takes precedence over educational and professional achievements for a woman. A woman should endure the burdens of marriage. Failure of a marriage is failure of a woman. Evidence from proverbs in Pelling (1977) reveals that males are given a leeway for infidelity. For example:

Indoda libhetshu lomziki

Indoda yinja, ihlanza ibuyele amahlanzo ayo

Umziki is a beautiful and attractive animal, so a man does not cease to attract. Everyone wishes to wear the skin of the attractive animal, so all women want to get hold of attractive men. A man is also likened to a dog which eats what it has vomited. A man can go to the former girlfriend and back to the wife. A former

girlfriend or the wives are likened to vomits. Such sayings are meant to make women patient with men's unfaithfulness and to view it as natural.

Derogatory language maybe used to refer to unmarried women. Sometimes they are scorned, mocked and insulted. For example –

Umcaba owasala emasimini (a stalk left in the fields)

Umabuya ekwendeni (the one who returned from marriage)

Umazakhela (a woman having her own home)

Umcaba owasala emasimini refers to stocks left in the fields during harvests because the stocks are useless. What is left is for the stocks to decay and be manure for the next planting season. Unmarried women would have failed to be chosen for marriage as a result they become useless like stocks left in the fields.

Umabuya ekwendeni is a woman who has divorced. Divorcing is viewed with a negative eye. It is a sign of failure. *Umazakhela* is an unmarried woman who has built a home of her own. This is discouraged and looked down upon in a Ndebele culture. Women should have homes built by their husbands. It does not matter whether the woman is able to do it on her own using her own resources, the prerogative of establishing a home lies with men.

Reasons for Marriage: Limiting Women's Achievements

The reasons for marriage differ for males and females in a Ndebele culture. Women are married for beauty and good behaviour.

The following comment may be given to praise a respectful girl;

Ihlonipha lalapho engayikugana khona.

This is a girl with exceptional respect for everyone even strangers. Respect plays a significant role in determining women's marriage.

A woman can also be married for her father's wealth, family name or history. Zinkabi, Mzilikazi's daughter got married to one of Mzilikazi's regimental commander Mbiko kaMadlenya because of her family name, her father's position and history (Sibanda, 1981). Even in modern world, marrying in royal or rich families is still prestigious. However, for males, the characteristics considered are their own and their father's achievements. It is the patriarchy (father and son) who should achieve. Mzilikazi gave his daughter to Mbiko because Mbiko and his regiment had fought and defeated the Boers on his way from Zululand to Zimbabwe (Sibanda, 1981; Nyathi, 1999). Mbiko was a courageous warrior and had made history. For this reason, he was given cattle, a wife and a regimental town to govern by King Mzilikazi. A man has to achieve. Homer in Vander-Zanden

(1998) and Dorsey (1989)'s researches revealed that women are not achievement oriented. It is also noted that this is not their nature but is a result of socialisation. Banks (1999) also noted that in modern societies, men's social mobility is largely determined by education or achievement. Women on the other hand can rise to an upper class life without education or achievement but through marriage. Such societal arrangements have implications to males and females' achievement, participation and visibility in the public arena.

Conclusion

Gender socialisation in the Ndebele culture impacts directly and indirectly on women's identity, visibility and participation in important roles of society especially in the public sphere. The language, interaction processes and behaviour expectations either domesticate or re-domesticate women (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003). Ncube et al (1997) referred to this as "paradigm of exclusion". Gender socialisation in the Ndebele culture tends to create, widen or legitimise gender differences between men and women. The language plays an important role in exclusion, appendaging and promoting women's invisibility. This makes it difficult for women and girls to compete with men on an equal footing in the public sphere. The games, roles and responsibilities prepare boys better than girls for work outside the home. Marriage is a form of control to women ensuring that they are always appendage to men. Women's achievement is not crucial hence they have to be appendage to achievers. Roles and responsibilities for women confine them to the home. Marriage itself is an achievement. Though society has changed significantly with modernisation as a way of life, some of the above aspects are still evident in both rural and urban settings. It must be noted however, that these are more pronounced in rural than urban areas. Women continue to perceive themselves lowly and males highly. Women continue to value marriage, dependency, and appendage and to fulfill behaviour expectations of their cultures.

Way forward

Gender and Development (GAD) agenda calls for peaceful co-existence of males and females and their full and equal participation in development issues. However, gender socialisation and language entrenches subordination leading to enmity between males and females. The Zimbabwe National Gender Policy (ZNGP) (2004) calls for mainstreaming of women in each and every public and private sector of the economy instead of exclusion. Deconstruction of the stereotypical language has been suggested by liberal feminists. Both attitude and language need to be changed. Resocialisation is important to change attitudes, norms and values already internalised by girls and boys, men and women. Achievement, education and the value of public participation by both genders need to be instilled in both men and

women through public awareness campaigns, gender education, empowerment and training programmes. Socialisation in the family should also emphasize public values, norms and experiences of both males and females thereby directing both towards the expectations of the modern school, workplace and the community at large. The above institutions especially the family should be gender responsive, that is taking action to correct gender biases in language, games and roles in its process of socialisation. (FAWE, 2004) (Not appearing on the list of references). Socialisation should be able to raise women self-esteem and motivate them to participate with men as equal partners in development. Women who have been conscientised and are now gender aware should redefine and defy existing norms like the belief that marriage is the ultimate achievement for women. The belief that men only are heads of households and breadwinners also need to be deconstructed. A number of families are headed by men who are either absent, non-residents or symbolic heads. In some instances the actual 'heading' of the family and 'winning' of bread is done by females as defacto or dejure heads. Women should also defy norms associated with stereotypical occupations like doctor, heavy vehicle drivers, pastors, agritex extension officers, judges, presidents and chiefs among others. Flooding of these occupations by women is likely to change the attitudes of both males and female. When many women are seen in these occupations, society will learn to accept them as leaders and role models. This can help change the attitudes of those women who think they 'cannot do it' and men who do not realise the potential in women. Unless practical strategies are put in place to liberate women from cultural and linguistic bondage, they will continue to be excluded and remain invisible in our public societal institutions.

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